Lucas den Boer and Florinda De Simini (eds)

ŚAIVA–BUDDHIST ENCOUNTERS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Studies on the History of Śaivism V



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Śaiva–Buddhist Encounters in Medieval India

Università di Napoli L'Orientale
Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo

The Śivadharma Project

Studies on the History of Śaivism
V

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Śaiva–Buddhist Encounters in Medieval India

edited by
Lucas den Boer and Florinda De Simini

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UniorPress
Nuova Marina, 59 - 80133, Napoli
uniorpress@unior.it



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ὕψος δέ που καιρίως ἐξενεχθὲν τά τε πράγματα δίκην σκηπτοῦ πάντα διεφόρησεν
(Pseudo-Longinus, *De Sublimitate* 1.4)

'Il sublime, invece, quando appare al momento giusto, travolge ogni cosa, come un lampo di luce'

A Enzo Conte († 2025)

Con gratitudine infinita,
Florinda

The blurred boundaries of traditions: introducing Śaiva–Buddhist encounters

Florinda De Simini*
L'Orientale University of Naples

The present volume has its origins in the conference *Śaiva–Buddhist Encounters in Early Medieval East India,* held on 13–14 October 2022 at the Università di Napoli L'Orientale, Dipartimento Asia Africa e Mediterraneo. The focus on East India that we gave to the conference is partly the reason for the uneven distribution of the articles in this book, where more than half of the contributions are dedicated to the area of present-day Bihar and Bengal. At the same time, as this introduction and the papers themselves will make clear, there are strong historical reasons to place particular emphasis on North-East India in a publication that delves into the relationships between Śaiva and Buddhist communities in the medieval period. When the conference became a book project, we decided to extend its scope to include other geographical areas, not with the aim of exhaustiveness but rather to enrich the discussion through a number of additional exemplary cases.

The purpose of the conference and the ensuing book was to advance the study of the interactions between the Śaiva and the Buddhist traditions, a topic that is hardly new but that still has plenty of aspects to uncover. The objective of our exploration was to identify the processes

* Research for this contribution and the *Addendum* was made possible by the ERC-2018-SYG DHARMA Project (GA no. 809994), 'The Domestication of Hindu Asceticism and the Religious Making of South and Southeast Asia.'

initiated by their encounter in different geographical areas and through a varied set of sources. The latter were selected from the fields of epigraphy, iconography and textual studies, and were read against the background of the historical developments in the relevant regions. The resulting papers highlight that the cultural encounter between the two traditions, which presupposes their co-existence or their geographical and chronological proximity, is often articulated along very blurred lines, as if they were adapting to a shared language rather than simply confronting or rivalling one another.

The timeframe adopted here, roughly spanning from the sixth to the fourteenth century, is one that sees deep changes in the political and religious landscape of South Asia, where the birth of regional states across the sub-continent is closely intertwined with the growth of organised Śaivism as a public religion. In the past decades, it has become increasingly evident how this process occurred alongside the composition and spread of Śaiva literature, both for the initiated and non-initiated, such as, among others, the Śivadharma texts. Just like Śaivism as a religion, its literary expressions had to confront and integrate existing structures and modes of expression. A deeper understanding of the dynamics of exchange between Buddhism and Śaivism thus also serves the more specific purpose of helping us read traces of this phenomenon in this early Śaiva literature addressing an audience to which it sought to promote a 'Śaiva utopia.'[1]

Since this volume was conceived in the framework of two research projects focussing on the history of religious institutions in medieval South and Southeast Asia and the impact of the Śivadharma on the religious history of South Asia,[2] in the presentation of its articles I will highlight two main dimensions of our research: the dynamics at play in the encounter between Buddhism and Śaivism, including the possible parallels in the strategies adopted across different contexts or types of sources; and whether these reflections can enrich our knowledge of the relationship, if any, between the Śivadharma and earlier Buddhist environments. While the first point on processes and dynamics of exchange emerges quite naturally from a close reading of the book, the latter, whose

[1] This is a nod to Bisschop, Kafle and Lubin 2021.

[2] These are the already-mentioned ERC-2018-SYG DHARMA (GA no. 809994) and the ERC-2018-STG SHIVADHARMA (GA no. 803624).

main considerations are collected in an *addendum* to this introduction, require a bigger effort for a rather modest result—which will nonetheless help us add a new piece to the ever-evolving picture of the history of the Śivadharma.

1. *Coexistence, Assimilation, Inclusion*

The Bengal region provides an important and unique example of the strong presence of Śaivism in an area whose ruling monarchs adopted Buddhist affiliation as a distinctive mark of their public persona. The Pāla kings (eighth–twelfth century) have been known as 'the most liberal patrons of Buddhist institutions in early medieval India' (Sanderson 2009, 108), fostering eminent monasteries that contributed to the flourishing of Tantric Buddhism. As a complement to this aspect of Pāla history, the contribution of **Ryosuke Furui** in this volume assesses the primary epigraphical sources that connect the Pālas to the sponsorship of Śaiva preceptors and institutions. These are five inscriptions whose production extends over a period that ranges from the kingdom of Śūrapāla I (*c.* 861–873 CE) to the reign of Nayapāla (*c.* 1035–1050 CE). The latter marks an important shift in the history of the Śaiva presence in Eastern India. From two documents dated to the rulership of this king we learn that his father, Mahīpāla I (*c.* 987–1035 CE), had donated a monastery in the region to a lineage of Śaivasiddhānta teachers of the Mattamayūra branch from the Golagīmaṭha, and that two of them were Nayapāla's preceptors (Bangarh stone slab inscription). This means that Nayapāla had most likely received Śaiva initiation, though still styling himself in his public documents as a *paramasaugata*.[3] This coexistence of various strands of religious affiliation revealed by the documents of the Pāla kings—before Nayapāla, Nārāyaṇapāla (*c.* 878–932 CE) had granted a Śaiva temple and made donations in favour of the Pāśupata *ācārya*s—brings Furui to define the Pālas' approach as 'multilayered.' He argues for the relevance of each of the three main layers, i.e. Buddhist, Brahmanical and Śaiva, to different yet contiguous domains.

[3] On this, see also Sanderson 2009, 108 and 114.

As shown by Sanderson (2009), Yokochi (2013) and Bakker (2014, 241ff), the site of Bangarh in North Bengal, seat of one of Nayapāla's stone inscriptions and identified with Koṭīvarṣa/Devīkoṭa (and various other names) in textual sources, was indeed connected to Śaivism long before Pāla sponsorship. The *Koṭivarṣamāhātmya* of the early *Skandapurāṇa* (sixth–seventh century), studied by Yokochi, associates the place with the cult of the goddesses, also called Mothers, led by Hetukeśvara, as well as with the composition of goddess-oriented Tantras called Yāmalas (Yokochi 2013, 308–314). One such Tantra, the *Brahmayāmala*, is indeed aware of Koṭīvarṣa as a location, and the hypothesis that the Koṭīvarṣa area might have been its region of composition, albeit one of several possibilities, 'deserves serious consideration' (Hatley 2018, 137). The phenomenon that Pāla inscriptions attest to in the tenth and eleventh century is thus the establishment of a branch of Mantramārga Śaivism, which is a more orthodox, *maṭha*-based Śaivasiddhānta lineage, in a region of North Bengal where both Śāktism and Atimārga Śaivism had been active for some time. On the one hand, the more institutionalised character of this Saiddhāntika branch is what possibly succeeds in attracting royal sponsorship; on the other, the inscriptions of Nayapāla attest that these Saiddhāntikas adapted to the local context and thus adopted the local cult of the goddess Carcā/Carcikā and Hetukeśvara. As Sanderson remarks, this connection with the fearful goddess, which would otherwise be very foreign to the Saiddhāntika tradition, proves in and of itself the strength of Śāktism under the Pālas (Sanderson 2009, 227). Processes of inclusion, adaptation and competition for patronage were constantly at play within the different strands of Śaivism itself.

Eleventh- and twelfth-century East India thus saw an already structured convergence of the Buddhist and the Śaiva worlds and institutions that had by then produced a vast array of texts and images attesting to their ongoing processes of mutual appropriation. **Claudine Bautze-Picron** examines this period from the angle of iconography. In doing so, she focuses on popular devotion, and thus on the study of larger images produced for public display, rather than on the descriptions found in texts and *sādhana*s—the latter being mostly intended for the initiated,. The growth of royal support and popularity for Śaivism after the tenth century, especially in the North of Bengal, translates into a very creative phase in the production of Śaiva images from that area. Bautze-Picron

examines several ways in which Buddhist iconography of the region reacts to this phenomenon, such as the assimilation into Buddhist imagery of motifs that had mostly been developed in a Śaiva context. At the same time, Śaiva imagery from this period assimilates Buddhist themes, among which Bautze-Picron identifies the representation of human beings—mainly devotees and teachers.

This exchange of motifs between the two communities sharing the same territory lies at the core of the contribution by **Pia Brancaccio**, which focuses on the religious history of the Western Deccan. Here the two communities had always lived close enough to compete for patronage in the same territory, while reciprocally providing models on which to forge institutions, scriptures, and imagery. Brancaccio observes that, when at the beginning of the Common Era an impressive rock-cut Buddhist monastery was built at Kanheri, the chosen location was only 7 miles away from an early Śaiva ascetic site, Padaṇa Hill, which was still a major ascetic retreat for Pāśupata ascetics at the time. As in other regions of South Asia, the sixth century marks the waning of patronage to Buddhism and the rise of Śaivism in the religious affiliations of kings. In the Deccan, this happens when the early Śaiva Kalacuri kings extended their sway from the Western Ghats to Southern Gujarat. This new form of Śaiva patronage assimilated pre-existing Buddhist models by adopting the type of rock-cut architecture that the Buddhists had in the meantime made popular in the region; however, as Brancaccio argues elsewhere (Brancaccio 2011), local Buddhist images in turn impacted Śaiva iconography, as is the case of the famous Lakulīśvara of Ellora 29.

As Brancaccio aptly observes, 'whether this interaction was driven by competition, reciprocal adaptation, or fertile exchange is hard to determine.' This is a crucial point in our examination, as it stresses the importance of not interpreting the many shared elements in the artistic, textual and architectural languages of these communities solely as a strategy to compete with one another. Rather, the specific territory in which they developed, and the 'syntax of devotion' that took shape there, made the adoption of similar modes of expression convenient from a practical standpoint. The reuse of the same spaces, imagery, or textual segments may carry an aggressive undertone and suggests that one of the two groups has taken over (or intends to do so). While this has been proven to be true in some cases, one should also consider

how texts, casts, and structures, just like the expertise of local artisans, workers, and chancelleries, simply function as existing building blocks, the basic components of a language understood and appreciated by a particular community of devotees who participated in a given visual and literary culture. These considerations do not rule out all the political and sometimes military underpinnings in the dynamic religious landscape of early and medieval South Asia, but add complexity to its interpretation.

This is also evidenced in the case-study that is the focus of **Lucas den Boer**'s contribution to this volume, investigating the continuity of Śaiva elements in the context of the Buddhist *mahāvihāra*s under the Pālas. His study revolves around the interpretation of two panels representing teaching scenes whose protagonists have been unanimously identified as 'Śaiva' at a structure located in the precincts of Nālandā *mahāvihāra*, in present-day Bihar. While concluding that the Nālandā panels may indeed depict Śaiva teachers, albeit not necessarily Śiva himself as a teacher, den Boer suggests interpreting the presence of these and other Brahmanical images not as signs of sectarian aggression but rather of peaceful coexistence, as also suggested by literary sources that were close to the Nālandā ecosystem. In view of a higher fluidity of boundaries between Buddhist and Hindu monasticism, depictions of non-Buddhist images and gods at a Buddhist site must therefore not necessarily be regarded as signs of a 'foreign' or 'hostile' presence.

The occurrence of Brahmanical iconography at other Buddhist *mahāvihāra*s in Eastern India is remarked upon both by Bautze-Picron and den Boer: Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Somapura all attest to the presence of non-Buddhist imagery that, in the past, raised the question of the 'religious identity' of these sites—a question often still rooted in old colonial imagination.[4] Regardless of the interpretation we give to this phenomenon in its different contexts, the process of inclusivism of Brahmanical gods into the Buddhist pantheon, not just as threatening or defeated 'enemies' but as a token of their irenic acceptance of Buddhism, is a known phenomenon in the history of early Buddhism, and is often evidenced in art history, too.

[4] On the case of Somapura *mahāvihāra* at Pāhārpur, in connection with a colonial and postcolonial discourse, see Copplestone 2024.

The contrary is also true, namely the acquisition of the Buddha or Buddhist figures in a non-Buddhist pantheon to symbolise their acceptance of the authority of Hindu gods. Out of the many possible examples, it is worth mentioning here the attempts to integrate the Buddha and the Jina into the Śaiva fold made by the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and examined by Bisschop in his study on religious inclusivism (2019). In two key passages, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* depicts a vast array of gods and divine beings—including divinised natural elements—as deriving their divine status from their worship of Śiva. One of these passages is in chapter three, following the narrative of the *liṅgodbhava*,[5] and the other one constitutes the bulk of chapter six, the *Śāntyadhyāya*, a long *mahāśāntimantra* celebrating the centrality of the Śaiva religion. In both cases, Bisschop noticed that some manuscripts inserted stanzas in which the Buddha and the Arhant are added to the list of those who worship Śiva and derive their status from this practice.[6] Both additions occur in a Kashmiri manuscript but have also made their way into the later Nepalese tradition of the text. They are therefore even more valuable as the product of living communities that tried to adjust a given text to their own context of fruition.

In spite of a clear agenda of including gods and divine figures of other religious traditions into their own as an indication of their endorsement of Śaivism, and despite the fact that Buddhism may have been part of the religious horizon of the authors of the Śivadharma, the philological work on Śivadharma literature has yet to discover major cases of ample reuses of Buddhist texts, or of their texts having been readapted into a Buddhist context. This process of inclusion and adaptation of sometimes extended textual materials from other religious traditions, which is the textual equivalent of the dancing Bodhisattvas modelled on dancing Śivas described by Bautze-Picron, is a hallmark of South Asian religious literature, and a popular composition technique in Purāṇas and Purāṇa-like texts. Cases of appropriation of portions of the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the *Śivadharmottara*, with minimal or major adaptations, and their reuse as re-semantised 'construction blocks' in later scriptures of initiatory

[5] On this narrative in the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, see Kafle 2013 and Bisschop 2020.

[6] See the discussion on this point in the edition of chapter 6 (Bisschop 2018, 34, fn. 76 and 153, fn. 33), as well as in Bisschop 2019, 513–523.

Śaivism, as well as in Vaiṣṇava and Saura literature, are in fact at the very core of our philological work on literature from the 'Śivadharma constellation,' and one of the main reasons that account for the importance of this literature.[7] Probably due to the genre of our texts, a crossroads of Dharmaśāstra and Purāṇas of a highly theistic nature and of non-Mantramārgic inspiration, such extensive literal parallels with Buddhist scriptures are, most likely, not to be expected.[8] This is certainly a strong boundary dividing the two traditions. At the same time, we know that such boundaries were amply crossed in the case of the relationships between the Śaiva scriptures of the Mantramārga and the Buddhist Mantranaya, thanks to Alexis Sanderson's demonstration of a direct, multifarious influence of Śaiva Tantras over Buddhist Tantras, which became increasingly prominent in the later corpus of the Buddhist Yoginī Tantras. Sanderson (2009) observes that the process that culminated in the Yoginī Tantras' full appropriation of the Śaiva tradition was already at play in texts of the *Guhyasamāja* tradition, such as the *Guhyasiddhi* by Padmavajra (probably eighth century), which implied that initiates in this Buddhist Tantra were converted from the Śaiva Mantramārga; or the *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga*, where he observes that, for the first time, a text of the Mantranaya completely abandons the stylistic structure of a Mahāyāna Sūtra to become more similar to the *anuṣṭubh*-based Śaiva scriptures. **Judit Törzsök**'s paper in this volume takes as its starting point Sanderson's considerations on the adaptation of Vidyāpīṭha Śaivism to Tantric Buddhism, in particular the case of the *Laghuśaṁvara* (*c.* eighth century), as about two-thirds of its text has parallels in Śākta scriptures such as the *Brahmayāmala*, the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, and the *Jayadrathayāmala*. Drawing on these premises, Törzsök's paper examines

[7] References on this point are abundant and ever-growing, given the in-progress nature of our work. Readers can refer to De Simini 2016 (especially chapters 1, 2, 4 and 6) and 2020, as well as Bisschop 2018 and 2020 for broader considerations and indicative examples of the main reuses of Śivadharma texts in works such as the *Devīpurāṇa*, the *Haracaritacintāmaṇi*, the *Kāmikāgama* and the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*. Very relevant are the new discoveries of textual reuses of *Śivadharmaśāstra* chapter ten presented in Bisschop, Kafle and Kiss 2025, accompanied by interpretive considerations in the introduction.

[8] On some shorter textual parallels between the *Śivadharmottara* and early Buddhist sources, in the broader context of shared stylistic and rhetorical strategies, see Piscopo *forth*. 2027.

more parallels between the *Laghuśaṁvara* and the Śākta scriptures, proving how their identification is crucial not just for the reconstruction and interpretation of the Buddhist text, but also for that of its Śaiva sources. Her rigorous examination of parallels between the *Laghuśaṁvara* and its Śākta models highlights both the process of adaptation from the Śaiva to the Buddhist ritual world, and the numerous cases in which an otherwise senseless corruption acquires meaning once the source is identified. Apart from the very close and evident parallels, for which the Śaiva text is demonstrably the source, she also identifies some emblematic cases of 'fossils,' in which expressions that were only explicable in a Śaiva context had survived in the Buddhist texts, often in a corrupt form.

2. *Language, Rhetorics and Debates*

The final set of articles in our volume brings the focus more strongly on language, rhetorics and rhetorical analysis. Collectively, they prove that, just as iconography, language likewise provides users with a shared set of resources that cross the boundaries of traditions. These boundaries can be retrieved only once we merge the study of language and style with that of history.

Annette Schmiedchen examines Buddhist and Śaiva interactions through the lens of Bhauma-Kara copperplates from Odisha, dating approximately to the eighth to the tenth century. Although the Bhauma-Karas shift their public affiliation from Buddhism to Śaivism starting with Śubhākara IV (earliest attestation in the Bhauma-Kara year 145 = *c.* 880 CE), royal grants in medieval Odisha were mostly addressed to Vedic Brahmins, and only five endowments of the Bhauma-Karas are known that were issued to support Buddhist or Śaiva religious institutions. Schmiedchen highlights the absence of a clear link between the king's personal religious affiliation and the institutions he patronises, a point further illustrated by the lack of significant differences between the donative formulas of Śaiva and Buddhist documents. Some of these formulas have been verifiably conceived in Buddhist environments before they became part of a 'stock' epigraphical language and were thus readapted to the Śaiva world, too. This is the case, for instance, of the typically Buddhist '*puṇya* formulas,' in which the donors state their intention of accruing *puṇya* through donation; or of the 'provisions for repair' formula, whose history

in the context of (blurred) religious boundaries we will dissect in greater detail in the *addendum* to this introduction.

Csaba Dezső's contribution in this volume presents a rhetorical study of literary works composed during the Pāla and Sena periods. Using Rājaśekhara's theory of poetic borrowing (*haraṇa*, lit. 'appropriation') as a theoretical compass, he examines cases of textual borrowings and imitation in three major Sanskrit works from medieval eastern India. These are two anthologies—the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, attributed to the twelfth-century Buddhist author Vidyākara, and the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, composed by Śrīdharadāsa in 1205 CE at the court of Lakṣmaṇasena (*c.* 1179–1206 CE)—and the *Lokeśaśataka*, a Buddhist stotra on Avalokiteśvara from ninth-century Bengal. When it comes to the study of language and the practice of poetic borrowing, boundaries between traditions disappear since, as Dezső proves, the pool of poetic devices was 'in the public domain, of which poets freely availed themselves, regardless of their religious convictions.' On the other hand, an assessment of the Buddhist and Śaiva materials available in the two anthologies reveals some divergence. The *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* is rather balanced, as it devotes separate sections to the Buddha, Lokeśvara, and Mañjughoṣa, but also to Śiva and his family. This inclusive approach seems to suitably reflect the religious landscape of medieval Bengal that, as pointed out by other contributions in this book, saw the coexistence of the two religious traditions both in popular devotion and in public sponsorship. A few decades later, Śrīdharadāsa will devote extensive sections of his anthology to Śiva and his attributes, as well as to his family and retinue, but only a few verses to the Buddha as one of Viṣṇu's *avatāra*s. I suggest that the selection made by the author may echo the markedly different religious policies of the Sena kings (*c.* 1095–1228 CE),[9] who were more visibly aligned with traditional Brahmanism and publicly distanced themselves from Buddhism and other unorthodox forms of Tantrism.[10]

[9] I refer here to the dates suggested by Majumdar 1929.

[10] For inscriptions of the early Senas, i.e. Vijayasena, Ballālasena and Lakṣmaṇasena, attesting to their public affiliation with Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, see Majumdar 1929, 42ff. On the Saura devotion of the Senas, including Lakṣmaṇasena, and the subsumption of the Saura cult into Śaivism, see Sanderson 2009, 54. As for the Senas' attitude towards more heterodox forms of Tantrism, the *locus classicus* on this topic is the introduction to the *Dānasāgara*, a digest on gifting attributed to the king Ballālasena (1095 *c.*–1158 CE).

How deep language reflects history is also the core question of the paper by **Dániel Balogh**, who takes us to the historical region of Āndhradeśa. The object of his study is the specific qualifications of kings and other donors in the inscriptions of the Veṅgī Cālukyas (seventh to eleventh centuries), the Viṣṇukuṇḍis (selected inscriptions from the fifth to sixth centuries) and Śrīmūla (selected inscriptions from the mid-sixth century). Balogh tries to read this growth of public Śaivism in the area through a rhetorical analysis of inscriptions, with the aim of challenging the views of Davidson (2002) and Lang (2008) by questioning the accuracy of their engagement with the primary sources. According to them, Śaivism could offer the medieval military elites, in the public discourse, a rhetoric of eroticism and aggression that Buddhism lacked, and this played a role in their choice of a public religious affiliation. These scholars thus explain the dominance of Śaivism in the region also on account of the stronger link that they establish between the imagery and rhetoric connected to the martial god Śiva and the 'culture of military opportunism' that became prevalent among local overlords in the early Middle Ages. Balogh tries to test this hypothesis by proceeding at an accurate qualitative and quantitative analysis of the inscriptions of the specified corpora, suggesting in conclusion to adopt a more nuanced approach. The level of variation is such that one could never deduce the sectarian orientation of a grant based on the prevalence of certain qualifications—just like, as shown by Dezső's study, we cannot distinguish a Śaiva from a Buddhist poem solely on the basis of style and rhetoric. Thus 'instead of a specific Buddhist/Śaiva dichotomy, a distinction into Buddhist and non-Buddhist or at most Buddhist and Theist may be more appropriate.'

A different type of rhetorical study is the one that closes our selection of articles. Here, **Renato Dávalos** investigates the continuity of the Buddhist presence in medieval Tamil Nadu through an examination of early Caiva Cittāntam polemics. Starting with the seventh century, the

Here the author rejects the use of some sources, such as the *Devīpurāṇa*, because of their engagement with impure rituals, and others such as the *Garuḍapurāṇa* because they deal with eminently Tantric topics such as *dīkṣā* and *pratiṣṭhā*. For a full discussion and translation of this passage, see De Simini 2014, 614ff; for its contextualisation within the broader framework of the relationships between Śaivism and Brahmanism, see Sanderson 2009, 250.

presence of Buddhism in Tamil Nadu had significantly waned. While none of the extant Pallava grants ever mention Buddhism and Buddhist institutions, Cōḷa copperplates still reveal sporadic traces of support to Buddhists (and Jains) in the centre of Nāgapaṭṭiṇam. However, Dávalos draws our attention to those Caiva authors who, at a time when the Caiva Cittāntam tradition was prospering, still mention Buddhists as their opponents. Their testimony thus provides an important insight into what was known of Buddhism and how Tamil Caiva intellectuals made sense of Buddhist doctrines. The bulk of the argumentation is built on Aruṇanti's *Civañāṉa Cittiyār*, which contains a refutation of fourteen systems of philosophy outside the Caiva path—four of them Buddhist—and on the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam* (*c.* fifteenth century), the earliest extant hagiography of the nālvar Māṇikkavācakar, which stages the saint's various debates with Buddhist opponents.

Florinda De Simini
December 2025

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Lucas den Boer & Florinda De Simini

The Pāla kings in the 'Śaiva Age': layered religious affiliations in early medieval Eastern India

Ryosuke Furui
Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo

1. *Introduction*

The Pāla kings, who ruled the northern and western parts of Bengal and the eastern part of Bihar from the second half of the eighth century to the middle of the twelfth century, were well-known patrons and followers of Buddhism. Buddhist *vihāra*s in Bihar and Bengal flourished under their rule, and *mahāvihāra*s like Somapura, Vikramaśīla and Jagaddhala were established by the Pāla kings (Furui 2020, 148–149). They consistently used the *dharmacakra*, the 'wheel of law,' flanked by deer on both sides, as a motif of their royal seal, and claimed themselves to be 'ardent followers of Sugata (i.e., the Buddha)' (*parama-saugata*) in their copperplate grants. All of these facts suggest that the Pāla kings were Buddhists in their religious affiliation.

However, the pattern of patronage of the Pāla kings, as it can be outlined on the basis of their inscriptions, shows a more nuanced picture. One notable feature is their patronage of Śaiva institutions. Various regions of South Asia, and of Southeast Asia to some extent, witnessed the ascendance of Śaiva traditions and their upholders in the early mediaeval period, which Alexis Sanderson aptly calls 'the Śaiva Age' (Sanderson 2009). One element characterising their dominance was the extensive royal patronage, to which the Pāla kings were no exception. Some of them not only patronised Śaiva institutions, but also had Śaiva ascetics as their royal preceptors (*rājaguru*), as attested by their inscriptions and other

sources.[1] Nevertheless, a closer look at these inscriptions, and also at their location within the historical context and the Pāla inscriptional corpus, complicates the picture, as it presents what can be called 'layered' religious affiliations. In this article, I first review and analyse the inscriptions related to the Pāla royal patronage to Śaivas within their historical contexts. Then I locate them in the Pāla inscriptional corpus and discuss the religious affiliation of the Pāla kings by configuring it as multiple layers of religious affiliations which exist simultaneously and could be conflated with each other.

The inscriptions which attest to the patronage of Śaiva religious institutions by the Pāla kings, known to date, are the following five:

1) Mirzapur copperplate inscription of Śūrapāla, year 3 (BC00107);[2]
2) Bhagalpur copperplate inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla, year 17 (BC00091);[3]
3) Bhaturiya stone slab inscription of Yaśodāsa, time of Rājyapāla (BC00061);[4]
4) Bangarh stone slab inscription of the time of Nayapāla (BC00113);[5]
5) Siyan stone slab inscription of Nayapāla (Sircar 1971).

Of them, the first two are royal grants of the Pāla kings which record their donations of villages to Śaiva institutions, while the third is an inscription by a subordinate ruler who established a Śaiva temple complex to which a Pāla king donated a village. The fourth is a eulogy (*praśasti*) of a Śaiva ascetic and his order which two Pāla kings patronised and associated themselves with. The last is a fragmentary inscription which seems to record the establishment of a Vaiṣṇava *maṭha*, but mentions diverse religious institutions, mostly Śaiva, in several locations patronised by Nayapāla.

[1] For an overview, see Sanderson 2009, 108–114.

[2] The alphanumeric sigla in brackets identify the inscriptions revised and published on the database of the DHARMA Project (https://dharmalekha.info/). BC here stands for INSBengalCharters. For the earlier edition of this inscription, see Sircar 1973.

[3] For an earlier edition, see Sircar 1983, 80–86.

[4] For an earlier edition, see Sircar 1959–1960.

[5] For an earlier edition, see Sircar 1980–1982.

2. *Beginning of Śaiva association and patronage embedded in power relations*

So far the earliest evidence of the patronage of a Pāla king to the Śaivas is the Mirzapur copperplate inscription of Śūrapāla, dated year 3 of his reign and assignable to the third quarter of the ninth century.[6] It records the royal donation of villages to a Śaiva temple at Vārāṇasī on request of *mahādevī* Māhaṭā, the queen mother. The first verse following the invocation simultaneously praises the Buddha and King Śūrapāla through a *śleṣa* (BC00107: v. 1, ll. 1–7). This is followed by the eulogy of the Pāla kings including Gopāla I, Dharmapāla, Devapāla and Śūrapāla, and also of Māhaṭā, the queen consort of Devapāla, in twenty-three verses (BC00107: vv. 2–24, ll. 7–45). The place of issue is the military camp at Mudgagiri, corresponding to present Monghyr/Munger (BC00107: ll. 45–48), and the issuer is King Śūrapāla, who was accepted by Devapāla, his father. Both of them are called 'ardent worshipper of Sugata (the Buddha)' (*parama-saugata*) and given the full royal titles of *parameśvara paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja* (BC00107: ll. 48–50). The document is addressed to the officials and residents related to the four villages belonging to the three districts (*viṣaya*) in Nagara *bhukti*, the province covering the area around present Patna: 1) Aṅgāragarttikāgrāma in Krauñcadhānaka *viṣaya*, 2) Vāsantīgrāma and 3) Kulaputragrāma of Devarāṣṭra *viṣaya*, and 4) Navallikāgrāma of Kalmaṣanāśapāra *viṣaya* (BC00107: ll. 50–57).

The announcement of the king, presented as his direct speech, first cites the request of *mahādevī* Māhāṭā *bhaṭṭārikā* conveyed through the mouth of the messenger:

> You, illustrious great king, should give the villages Aṅgāragarttikā and Vāsantikā to our illustrious Māhaṭeśvara of Vārāṇasī, and the villages Kulaputraka and Navallikā to the assembly of Śaiva *ācārya*s

[6] The Jagajjibanpur plate of Mahendrapāla, the predecessor of Śūrapāla, credits Devapāla, his father, with the construction of the dwelling house of Sugata (the Buddha) and goddess Gaurī (BC00073: v. 7, ll. 11–13). Mahendrapāla himself seems to have established goddess Carcā somewhere in his territory, as suggested in the Siyan stone inscription (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 40, ll. 22–23). Still, the Mirzapur plate is the earliest evidence directly attesting to the Pāla patronage of Śaivas to date. Unless stated otherwise, the text cited or mentioned in the present article is the revised edition published on the database of the DHARMA project.

> approved by us, for the increase of our merit and fame, for the purpose of worship, charitable feeding and so on, after making a royal grant. Also to their disciples and disciples of disciples.[7]

Complying with her request, the king donated those villages with the usual set of privileges including an extensive range of resources and some level of judicial power and immunity, following the rule of land reclamation (*bhūmi-cchidra-nyāya*),[8] for eternity (BC00107: ll. 60–63). He also requests future kings to protect the donation and residing cultivators to pay due tributes properly, obeying the orders of the donee (BC00107: ll. 63–64).

The royal proclamation is followed by the date, i.e. year 3, month Āśvina, on the day of the bright fortnight 2 (BC00107: ll. 64–65), six imprecatory and benedictory verses (BC00107: vv. 25–30, ll. 65–69), a verse mentioning the appointment of a messenger (BC00107: v. 31, l. 70), two characters *ni* for *nibaddha*, 'confirmed,' (BC00107: l. 71), and the name of two engravers (BC00107: l. 72).

As stated in the request of Māhaṭā, the main recipient of donations was the deity Māhaṭeśvara, i.e. Śiva, named after herself and presumably enshrined in a temple founded by her patronage at Vārāṇasī.[9] 'Our' (*asmad*) prefixed to the deity supports this presupposition. The assembly of Śaiva *ācārya*s, the other entity which received donations, could be officiant priests attached to the temple appointed on her approval, as worship (*pūjā*) is included within the purposes of the donation. The deity/temple and the assembly were given a set of two villages each, which constituted their respective economic bases. Accordingly, villages

[7] BC00107, ll. 58–60: *yathāsmad-vārāṇasīya-śrī-māhaṭeśvarasya | Aṅgāgarttikā-vāsantikā-grāmau | tathā Asmad-¿ā?<a>bhipr*[[o]]e**(59)***ta-śaivācārya-parṣadaḥ | kukaputraka-navallikā-grāmau ca Asmat-puṇya-yaśo <'>bhivṛddhaye pūjā-satrādy-arthaṁ śāsanī-kṛtya śrīmā*(*n*·) *mahārājo dadā***(60)***tv iti tac-chiṣya-praśiṣyebhyaś ca* |. For the transcriptions, I follow the editorial conventions established by the DHARMA project, as presented at https://dharmalekha.info/editorial-conventions.

[8] The rule of land reclamation (*bhūmi-cchidra-nyāya*) denotes the principle of tax-free enjoyment of land presumably based on the custom that allows a person, who first brings a plot of fallow or waste land under cultivation, to enjoy it without paying tax (Sircar 1966, 58).

[9] For the installation of Śiva in a form of a *liṅga* named after its patron, see Sanderson 2009, 274.

which would be held as inheritance of 'disciples and disciples of disciples' were limited to the two villages donated to the assembly of *ācārya*s, and the other two were attached to the deity/temple as its permanent assets. The revenue and other income from the latter set of villages may have been used for the maintenance of the temple and other purposes connected with activities related to its deity, including charitable feeding (*sattra*). However, the assembly of *ācārya*s may have kept actual control over the wealth of the deity and managed it by themselves or through administrative staff under them.

It should be noted that this fiscal arrangement, namely the assignment of income from villages in the districts of eastern Bihar to the deity/temple and the assembly of Śaiva *ācārya*s in Vārāṇasī, connected the former area under Pāla control with the remote religious centre. This connection was mediated by Māhaṭā, who established a Śaiva temple at Vārāṇasī. As stated by a verse in the Jagajjibanpur plate of Mahendrapāla, who was her son as well as the elder brother of Śūrapāla, she was the daughter of Durlabharāja, the Cāhamāna king of Śākambharī.[10] She seems to have brought Śaiva worship of her own or her family to the Pāla court. Thus the marriage network was one of the channels through which the association of the Pāla kings with Śaivas was established. It should be noted that Śūrapāla donated the villages as a devout worshipper of the Buddha, and the initial verse introducing the whole document is the one which praises the Buddha and the king himself.

The Bhagalpur copperplate inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla, dated year 17 of his reign and assignable to the last decade of the ninth century, records the royal donation of a village to a Śaiva temple established by the king himself. The first verse praises the Buddha, and Gopāla I in addition (BC00091: v. 1, ll. 1–5). The eulogy of the Pāla kings proceeds with a praise of his son Dharmapāla (BC00091: vv. 2–3, ll. 5–8), then turns to Vākpāla, the younger brother of the latter, and his descendants, including Jayapāla, Vigrahapāla I and Nārāyaṇapāla (BC00091: vv. 4–17, ll. 8–24). The place of issue is the military camp at Mudgagiri (BC00091: ll. 24–28), and the issuer is *parameśvara paramabhaṭṭāraka*

[10] BC00073, v. 11, ll. 17–18: *sa cāhamānānvaya-vāridhīndoḥ sādhvīṁ sutān durllabha-rāja-nāmnaḥ <|> śrī-māhaṭāṁ dharmma-parāṁ narendras tr̥ai?<a>***(18)** *yīm ivo<dvā>ha sr̥a?<u>lakṣaṇāṅgīṁ** ||.

mahārājādhirāja Nārāyaṇapāla, ardent worshipper of Sugata, who was accepted by *mahārājādhirāja* Vigrahapāla I, his father (BC00091: ll. 28–29). His order is addressed to officials and residents related to the village Makutikāgrāma of Kakṣa *viṣaya* in Tīra *bhukti*, the province covering the northern part of present-day Bihar (BC00091: ll. 29–38).

The announcement of the king states his donative act and mentions the following three entities as donees: 1) The 'Abode of the Thousand' (*sahasrāyatana*), constructed by the king himself at Kalaśapeta; 2) Venerable Lord Śiva installed there, and 3) the assembly (*pariṣad*) of Pāśupata *ācārya*s.[11] The purposes of the donation are listed as: 1) worship, offering, milk rice, charitable feeding and construction works and so on; 2) bedding, seating, preparation/equipment for medicine as requisite for the sick and so on, and 3) unobjectionable enjoyment of the others wished by the king in the share fixed by him.[12] The king donated Makutikāgrāma, with a usual set of privileges and conditions, for the increase of merit and fame of his parents and himself (BC00091: ll. 41–44), 'in the name of venerable Lord Śiva' (*bhagavantaṁ śiva-bhaṭṭārakam uddiśya*), making a royal grant (BC00091: l. 44). He then asks all the addressees to approve the donation, future kings to protect it, and residing cultivators to pay due tributes properly, obeying orders of the donee (BC00091: ll. 44–47).

The announcement of the king is followed by the date, year 17, month Vaiśākha, day 5 (BC00091: l. 47), five imprecatory and benedictory verses (BC00091: vv. 18–22, ll. 47–52), and two verses mentioning the messenger (BC00091: v. 23, ll. 52–53) and the engraver (BC00091: v. 24, ll. 53–54), respectively. The characters *ni* are engraved at both ends of the first line of the obverse (BC00091: l. 01).

In the present case, King Nārāyaṇapāla established a Śaiva temple and donated a village, both presumably within his own territory in northern Bihar, on his own initiative. Unlike the two sets of villages respectively donated to the deity and the assembly of Śaiva *ācārya*s in

[11] BC00091, ll. 38–39: *kalaśapete* | *mahārājādhirāja-śrī-nārāyaṇapāla-devena* | *svayaṁ kārita-sahasrā***(39)***yatanasya* | *tatra pratiṣṭhāpitasya* | *bhagavataḥ śiva-bhaṭṭā-rakasya* | *pāśupata*[[*ḥ*]] *Ācārya-pariṣadaś ca* |.

[12] BC00091, ll. 39–41: *yathārhaṁ pūjā-vali-caru-satra-navaka***(40)***rmmādy-arthaṁ* | *śayanāsana-glāna-pratyaya-bhaiṣajya-pariṣkārādy-arthaṁ* | *Anyeṣām api svābhimatānāṁ* | *sva-parikalpita-vibhāgena* | *Anavadya-bho***(41)***gārthaṁ ca* |.

the Mirzapur plate mentioned above, a single village was at once given to the temple, the deity and the assembly of Pāśupata *ācārya*s. The stated purposes of donation, clustered in three groups, suggest how resources accruing from the village are used in relation to these three entities of donees. Of the purposes, the first group (worship, offering, milk rice, charitable feeding and construction works) is meant for the temple, the deity and activities around them, while the second (bedding, seating and preparation/equipment for medicine) denotes provisions for Pāśupata *ācārya*s who reside in the temple and act as officiating priests. Remarkably, the terms indicating provisioned items are almost the same as those for Buddhist *bhikṣu-saṁgha* listed in the earlier Pāla grants, except robes (*cīvara*) and alms food (*piṇḍapāta*) missing in the present case.[13] On the other hand, the third group of purposes, of which almost the same phrase is found in both the Jagajjibanpur plate of Mahendrapāla (BC00073: ll. 43–44) and the Mohipur plate of Gopāla II (BC00109: ll. 50), is not related to the three entities of donees. It gives the founder of the institution, Nārāyaṇapāla in this case, the right to appoint others chosen by him to partake in the donation, namely to enjoy a part of the income from the donated property, and it alludes to his involvement in the management of property donated to that institution (Furui 2017, 347).

The Bhagalpur plate of Nārāyaṇapāla is the only Pāla copperplate inscription known to date which records a royal grant to a religious institution established by the king himself.[14] The early Pāla kings of Dharmapāla's line are also known to have issued copperplate grants for donating villages or land tracts to religious institutions. However, their donations were made on petitions of others who established institutions, like the Queen Mother Māhaṭā mentioned above. The most conspicuous

[13] For example: *cīvara-piṇḍapāta-śayanā¡ś!<s>ana-glāna-pratyaya-bhaiṣajya-pariṣkārādy-arthaṁ*, Jagajjibanpur plate of Mahendrapāla, year 7 (BC00073: l. 43). For the interpretation of the last item as 'cloth kept as a fund for medicine which is a requisite for the sick,' see Furui 2021–2022, 109, fn. 28.

[14] Except the Nalanda plate of Dharmapāla (BC00095), in which the relation between the donee and the king is unclear due to corrosion. In the case of the Indian Museum plate of the same king (BC00099), the donees include *bhikṣusaṁgha*s of *vihārikā* and *gandhakuṭī* established by a subordinate ruler and his wife at Somapuramahāvihāra. Though the *mahāvihāra* was established by Dharmapāla, royal grants were made for the *saṁgha*s attached to its facilities established by a subordinate ruler and his wife.

among petitioners were subordinate rulers who established religious institutions within their own territories and applied for royal grants to these institutions. As I discussed elsewhere, we can detect in these acts their attempt to negotiate their relation with the Pāla kings, their overlords, and to legitimately encroach upon the authority of the latter (Furui 2017, 346–348). By adopting the practice initiated by subordinate rulers, namely, the foundation of his own religious institution and the involvement with the management of its property, Nārāyaṇapāla tried to counter their attempt at encroachment (Furui 2017, 348).

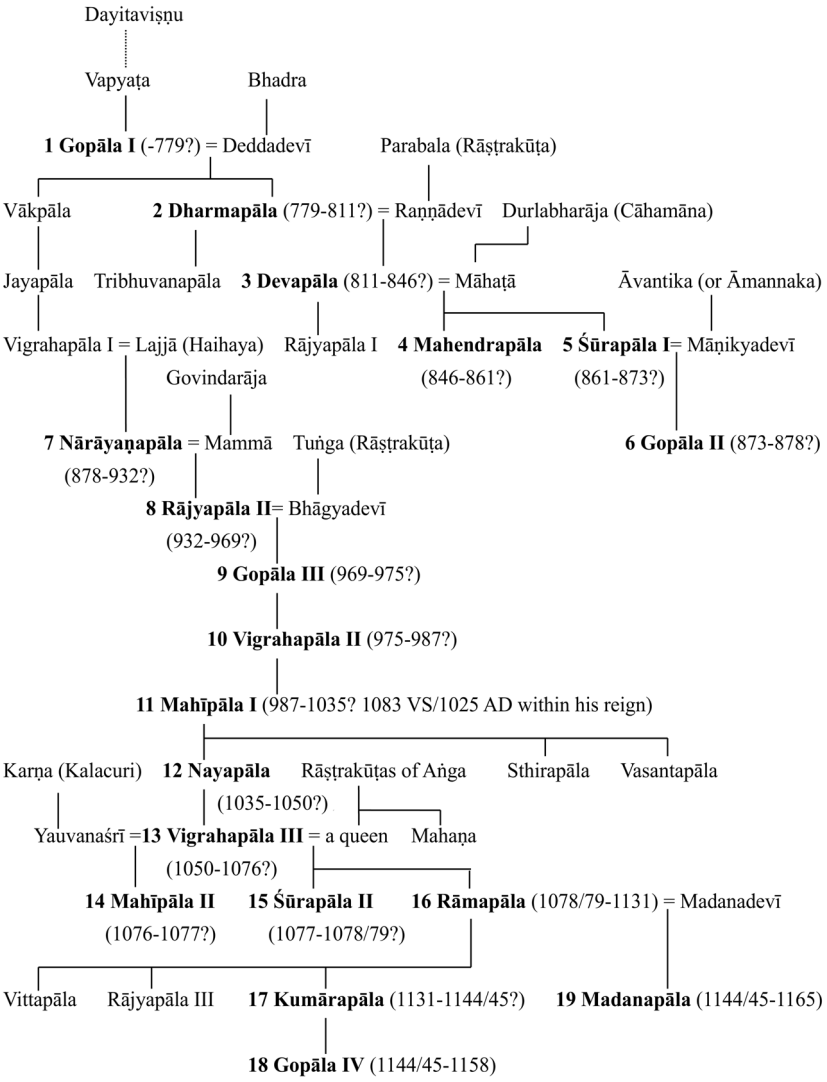
The Bhagalpur plate is also peculiar for the fact that the royal donation was made in the name of Śiva[15] and not the Buddha like all the other Pāla grants with a similar formula. The formula referring to the Buddha first appeared in the National Museum (New Delhi) plate of Gopāla II, dated year 5, which records a village grant to a *brāhmaṇa*,[16] and was repeated in almost all the Pāla grants from the reign of Rājyapāla onwards known to date.[17] It is remarkable that Nārāyaṇapāla chose a formula with Śiva while claiming himself to be an ardent worshipper of the Buddha and invoking the Buddha in the first verse of the inscription. On the one hand, his choice, together with the establishment of a Śaiva temple and village grant to it, could simply come from his personal devotion to the deity. On the other, it could be politically motivated, given his position as the first king from a collateral line who ascended the throne after the main line ended with Gopāla II.[18] He had to claim legitimacy of his accession by

[15] BC00091, l. 44: *bhagavantaṁ śiva-bhaṭṭārakam uddiśya*.

[16] *bhagavantaṁ vuddha-bhaṭṭārakam uddiśya*; see National Museum plate of Gopāla II, year 5: l. 50. This is an unpublished inscription of which I am preparing an edition.

[17] One exception is an incomplete copperplate inscription of Nayapāla, which contains only eulogy, place of issue, issuer and the name of *bhukti* (Bhattacharya 1996). Another exception is the unpublished National Museum plate of Rājyapāla, year 23, of which I could not confirm the formula in my short inspection conducted in January 2019.

[18] Guravamiśra, a minister who left the Badal stone pillar inscription, served Nārāyaṇapāla after serving Gopāla II, to whom verse 17 of the same inscription indirectly refers as suggested by S. C. Bhattacharya (Bhattacharya 2007–2008, 78). Accordingly, Nārāyaṇapāla ascended the throne after Gopāla II. It should be noted that Vigrahapāla I is not described as a king in the eulogy (BC00091: vv. 7–8, ll. 13–15). He is said to have chosen asceticism over kingship, which was for Nārāyaṇapāla, his son (BC00091: v. 17, l. 24). The title *mahārājādhirāja* prefixed to him in the prose section (BC00091: l. 28) may have been given posthumously to him by his son as a token, following the accession of the latter. For the genealogy of the Pāla kings, see Table 1.



*The number indicates the order of succession.
Reign periods with question marks are conjectural.

Table 1: The Pāla genealogy

distinguishing himself from the kings of the main line, especially Gopāla II, his immediate predecessor. Hence, he modified the formula introduced by Gopāla II to one exhibiting his Śaiva affiliation. He may also have chosen to patronise Pāśupatas, whose presence in the Magadha area in the early ninth century is confirmed by the Bodhgaya stone lintel inscription of the time of Dharmapāla, dated year 26, with a relief of Sūrya, Lakulīśa and Viṣṇu,[19] to distinguish himself from Śūrapāla, who also patronized Śaivas, presumably Saiddhāntikas, of Vārāṇasī.

The Bhaturiya stone slab inscription of Yaśodāsa, datable to the second or the third quarter of the tenth century, records the conditioned donation of a village by Rājyapāla. The donee was the Śiva established by Yaśodāsa, a royal subordinate, at a temple founded by him to which the inscribed stone slab must have been fixed. The inscription begins with an invocation to dancing Śiva (BC00061: v. 1, ll. 1–2). It then introduces the village Aṭṭamūla originating from Bṛhaddhaṭṭa as the birthplace of the Dāsa lineage (BC00061: ll. 2–3). The subsequent verses mention Malhadāsa, born to this lineage, his son Śūradāsa and the latter's son Saṅghadāsa (BC00061: v. 3, ll. 3–4), and then Sarasvatī, the wife of Saṅghadāsa (BC00061: v. 4, l. 5). Yaśodāsa was born to the last couple, and Rājyapāla made him a councillor (*mantrin*) (BC00061: v. 5, ll. 5–7). The following verses depict his contribution as a minister (*saciva*) to the universal lordship of Rājyapāla (BC00061: v. 6, ll. 7–8), his appointment to an office in charge of administration (*tantrādhikārin*) by the king (BC00061: v. 7, ll. 8–10), and submission of diverse ethnic groups or regions to the royal order due to his performance of administration (*tantrādhikāra*) (BC00061: v. 8, ll. 10–12).[20] He is credited with diverse

[19] The inscribed lintel is currently held by the Indian Museum (Kolkata), with Acc. No. BG82. For the inscription, recording the installation of a four-faced Śiva *liṅga* and the excavation of a pond, see Maitreya 1912, 29–32.

[20] The connotations of *tantrādhikārin* and *tantrādhikāra* are not entirely clear. Sircar interprets the former as an officer in charge of administration in reference to the present inscription (Sircar 1966, 336). It could be an official in charge of military administration, in view of the meaning of *tantra* as a troop. I provisionally follow the interpretation of Sircar.

meritorious deeds including the excavation of lakes, Vedic sacrifices,[21] knowledge and charitable feedings (*vidyāsattra*), and constructions of shrines (*devageha*) and monasteries (*maṭha*) in stone (BC00061: v. 9, ll. 12–13). His constructions of gardens (*ārāma*), embankments (*setu*), monasteries (*maṭha*), assembly halls (*maṇḍapa*), (places for) charitable feeding and donation, temples (*prāsāda*), passages (*saṅkrama*) and reservoirs (*jalāśaya*) are extolled repeatedly (BC00061: v. 10, ll. 13–14). The inscription further states that Yaśodāsa constructed a temple smeared with white plaster clay and surrounded by eight shrines, and established there Śiva in the form of a *liṅga*.[22] The king Rājyapāla donated the village Madhusrava to the deity, withholding as a tax (*nikara*) 100 *purāṇa*s (BC00061: v. 12, ll. 16–17).[23] The following verse extols the protection of pious deeds in reference to the legendary kings (BC00061: v. 13, ll. 17–18), seconded by another wishing for the eternal existence of the temple (BC00061: v. 14, ll. 18–19). The last verse mentions an artisan who engraved this inscription (BC00061: v. 15, l. 20).

What transpires from the present case is the establishment of a Śaiva temple complex, consisting of a main temple and eight subsidiary shrines, by a subordinate ruler. It shows the prevalence of the temple-based Śaiva faith among a section of elites not limited to the Pāla royal family. The subsequent royal village grant, which was made with a certain amount of tax withheld, could be termed *karaśāsana*, by which village or land is donated on condition of an annual payment of tax presumably in a reduced amount.[24] This condition makes the present case different from the otherwise similar cases found in copperplate inscriptions of the early Pāla kings, in which the establishment of religious institutions by

[21] His performance of Vedic sacrifices is expressed as fire houses with incessant flow of ghee and houses of sacrificers furnished with milk; […] *ājya-dhārā-vinidrair agny-āgārair upahita-sudhair yajvanām mandiraiś ca* | (BC00061: v. 9ab, l. 12).

[22] BC00061: v. 11, ll. 14–16: *Aṣṭābhiḥ sura-mandiraiḥ parivṛtaṁ* **(15)** *prāsādam abhraṁ-lihaṁ sampādyendu-marīci-jāla-dhavalair lliptaṁ sudhā-karddamaiḥ* | *tenāyaṁ naya-śālinā śuci-śilā-vinyasta-liṅgākṛtir bhaktyā* **(16)** *dharma-parāyaṇena bhagavān āropitaś śaṅkaraḥ* ||.

[23] *Purāṇa* is a theoretical unit of silver currency prevalent in early mediaeval Bengal (Furui 2020, 155–156).

[24] For the cases of *karaśāsana*, see Sircar 1974, 66–75.

a subordinate ruler was followed by the royal village or land grant with immunity from taxation and other interference. The present case, which did not result in the issue of a copperplate grant conferring immunity to a temple established by Yaśodāsa, indicates an effort by King Rājyapāla to block an attempt of his subordinate ruler at encroachment (Furui 2017, 348–349). Thus this case is embedded in the power relation and negotiation between the king and his subordinate rulers, like that of the Bhagalpur plate discussed above. It is notable that a Śaiva temple became a focus of power relations comparable to Buddhist and Vaiṣṇava institutions of the earlier period (Furui 2017, 342, 346–347).

The three inscriptions discussed above show, on the one hand, the spatial extension of royal patronage to Śaiva institutions. The village grant to a Śaiva temple in Vārāṇasī established by a queen mother from another royal lineage was followed by that to a royal temple in Bihar, and then by a conditioned village grant to a temple complex established by a subordinate ruler in northern Bengal. The last two cases, on the other hand, suggest that the royal patronage to Śaivas recorded in those inscriptions was embedded in power relations between the king and his subordinate rulers.

The balance of power gradually inclined to the Pāla kings, who tried to extend their control over rural areas by settling *brāhmaṇa*s and implementing the system of land measurement and production assessment (Furui 2017, 349–352). The royal patronage of Śaivas saw a new phase in this changed context of power relations.

3. *Advent of the Śaiva ascetic order and expansion of royal patronage*

The two inscriptions belonging to the reign of Nayapāla attest to the closer association of the Pāla kings with Śaivas. The Bangarh stone slab inscription of the time of Nayapāla, assignable to the second quarter of the eleventh century, contains the eulogy of Mūrtiśiva, a Śaiva ascetic, and his spiritual lineage. It begins with verses invoking the protection of the goddess Carcā/Carcikā (BC00113: vv. 1–2, ll. 1–2). Then follows a verse praising Nayapāla, the ruling king (BC00113: v. 3, ll. 2–3), and another asking Sarasvatī for her help in completing the eulogy of Mūrtiśiva (BC00113: v. 4, ll. 3–4). The genealogy of Śaiva ascetics

first introduces sage Durvāsas (BC00113: v. 5, ll. 4–5) and next the great monastery (*mahā-maṭha*) of Golagī, which is said to have been 'born' to his lineage (BC00113: v. 6, ll. 5–6). 'Born from' this monastery was Vidyāśiva (BC00113: v. 7, ll. 6–7), whose disciple Dharmaśiva established a lofty temple of Śiva at Vārāṇasī (BC00113: v. 8, ll. 7–8).

The association of this lineage with the Pāla kings began with Indraśiva, the disciple of Dharmaśiva, to whom Mahīpāla I donated a monastery (*maṭha*) with a lofty temple (*prāsāda*), 'here,' presumably at Shibbari, close to the site of Bangarh, where the inscription was discovered.[25] The eulogistic depiction of the monastery (BC00113: v. 10, ll. 9–10) is followed by a verse crediting Indraśiva with performing the sixteen 'great gifts' (*mahādāna*, BC00113: v. 11, ll. 10–11). His disciple Sarvaśiva was the preceptor (*guru*) of King Nayapāla,[26] and was praised for his generosity (BC00113: v. 13, ll. 12–13). He, wishing to dwell in the forest, made Mūrtiśiva, his brother and disciple, inherit the preceptorship of the king of Gauḍa, namely Nayapāla.[27] Mūrtiśiva is praised for his virtues and generous donations (BC00113: v. 15, ll. 14–15), and credited with the construction of lofty religious monuments (*kīrti*), excavation of oblong ponds (*dīrghikā*) to the cardinal and semi-cardinal directions, and the establishment of a hundred gardens (*ārāma*) (BC00113: vv. 16–18, ll. 15–18). Following the verses praising his abode (*āśaya*), namely the monastery (BC00113: vv. 19–20, ll. 18–20), Mūrtiśiva is acclaimed for his generosity (BC00113: v. 21, ll. 20–21) and for his fame arising from the defeat of theoreticians of other schools and the performance of the donation of gold against his own weight (BC00113: vv. 22–24, ll. 21–24). He constructed a *vaḍabhī* temple furnished with lions, a golden pot on top, manifold

[25] BC00113, v. 9, ll. 8–9: *śrīmān indraśivaḥ sphuṭaṁ hari-hara-prāyāṁ śivendrākṛtim vibhrad vaṁ***(9)***śa-vibhūṣaṇaṁ samabhavac chiṣyo <'>sya puṇyātmanaḥ | yasmai kāñcana-puñja-mañju-racita-prāsāda-meru-sphurat-kailāsābha-maṭhan dadāv iha mahīpālo nṛpas tattva-vit·||*. For the findspot of the inscription, see Sircar 1973–74, 135.

[26] BC00113, v. 12, ll. 11–12: *rājñaḥ śrī-nayapālasya gurus tattva-vi***(12)***dām varaḥ | śrīmān· sarvaśivas tasya śiṣyo <'>bhūd bhūṣaṇam bhuvaḥ ||*.

[27] BC00113, v. 14, ll. 13–14: *yenāvarjjita-gauḍa-rāja-gurutā-lakṣmīn nija-bhrātari śrīman-mūrttiśive niveśya vipināvāsaṁ sva***(14)***yam vaṅchatā | kṣīrodārṇṇava-manthanotthita-milal-lakṣmīṁ sva-śiṣye harāv āropyāharato viṣaṁ paśupater vvṛttāntam udghāṭitam· ||*.

banners and a cluster of lamps (BC00113: vv. 25–26, ll. 24–27), which was the temple of goddess Bhavānī, where one thousand courtesans (*rāmā*) were present (BC00113: v. 27, ll. 27–28).

The following verses introduce Rūpaśiva, a co-disciple and friend of Mūrtiśiva, acclaimed for rescuing the Śaiva doctrine in decline and defeating opponents in debates, with which he won the praise of King Bhoja (BC00113: vv. 28–30, ll. 28–31). He caused an image and eulogy of Mūrtiśiva to be made (BC00113: v. 31, l. 31). Lakṣmīdhara was appointed as an organiser (*āyojaka*) of a monument in the monastic compound by the order of Mūrtiśiva (BC00113: v. 32, ll. 31–32), and Śrīkaṇṭha composed the eulogy (BC00113: v. 33, ll. 32–33). A verse wishing for the permanence of the edifice of Mūrtiśambhu, i.e. Mūrtiśiva (BC00113: v. 34, ll. 33–34) is followed by another verse mentioning another Lakṣmīdhara as the engraver of the inscription (BC00113: v. 35, ll. 34–35).

The present inscription attests to the advent of an ascetic order of Saiddhāntikas, the orthodox branch of Mantramārga Śaivas, to Koṭīvarṣa, identifiable with Bangarh (Yokochi 2013, 315), or rather to northern Bengal. The order duly adapted itself to the prevalent worship of the local Goddess, as detectable in the first two verses invoking Carcikā (Yokochi 2013, 316), and also in the construction of the temple of Bhavānī by Mūrtiśiva. As their genealogy, beginning with Durvāsas and going down through Golagī *maṭha*, indicates, the ascetics mentioned in the inscription were the Mattamayūras, who originated from Gopakṣetra, the area around present Gwalior, and extended their presence to Central India under the patronage of the Kalacuri kings of Tripurī, establishing their *maṭha* at Golagī, identifiable with the present site of Gurgi in the Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh (Sears 2014, 28–34). It is remarkable that their expansion to northern Bengal via Vārāṇasī, which would be followed by further expansion to western Bengal and then to Andhra (Bhattacharyya 2004, 16–17), was facilitated by the patronage of Mahīpāla I, with which a new monastic complex was established. The royal association with this ascetic lineage deepened in the reign of Nayapāla, his son, who made Sarvaśiva and Mūrtiśiva his preceptors. Despite that, both kings invoke the Buddha

in the first verse and are called devout worshippers of the Buddha in their copperplate inscriptions.[28]

The Siyan stone slab inscription of Nayapāla is fragmentary, as the inscribed slab was cut into two and the middle portion containing around twenty syllables in each line was lost in the process (Sircar 1971, 39–41). It seems to have been engraved in the reign of Nayapāla, and is datable to the second quarter of the eleventh century. It seems to record the establishment of a *maṭha* where an image of Vaikuṇṭha, a form of Viṣṇu, was installed. The last fact, narrated towards the end of the inscription (Sircar 1971, 55, v. 61cd, l. 33), and the homage to Vāsudeva expressed at the beginning (Sircar 1971, 50, l. 1), points to the Vaiṣṇava character of the deed recorded in the inscription and the facility to which this inscribed slab was fixed.[29] Despite that, the inscription contains references to the establishment and patronage of Śaiva institutions, presumably by King Nayapāla, at diverse locations in Bengal and Bihar.

After the eulogy of kings including Dharmapāla, Devapāla, Vigrahapāla (I or II) and Nayapāla (Sircar 1971, 50–53, vv. 2–22, ll. 1–15), the inscription describes the following religious facilities:

1) a complex with a temple compared to the Himālaya, probably of Śiva, an abode of Purāri (Śiva) to its south, a two-storied monastery (*maṭha*) where the eleven Rudras were installed in stone houses, a stone *vaḍabhī* temple of mother goddess (*mātṛ*) furnished with a golden jar (*kumbha*), and a mountain-like temple where the nine Caṇḍikās (Durgās) were installed (Sircar 1971, 53, vv. 23–27, ll. 15–18);
2) a high stone temple of Hetukeśa Śambhu at Devīkoṭa (Sircar 1971, 53, v. 28, l. 18);
3) a stone abode of Kṣemeśvara furnished with a golden jar on top and a large lake (*mahāsaras*) (Sircar 1971, 53, v. 30, ll. 18–19);
4) a monastery, lakes and a high stone house (*dhāma*) of Śambhu named Varākṣeśvara (Sircar 1971, 53, v. 32, ll. 19–20);

[28] For example, see the Biyala plate of Mahīpāla I, year 35 (BC00026: v. 1, ll. 1–5, l. 25), and the incomplete plate of Nayapāla (Bhattacharya 1996, 320, v. 1, ll. 1–5, 322, l. 28).

[29] This is pointed out by P. R. Srinivasan, the editor of the issue of *Epigraphia Indica* concerned (Sircar 1971, 42, fn. 3; 49, fn. 4).

5) a facility, probably a temple, of Uccadeva (Kṛṣṇa), with a hospital (*ārogya-śālā*) and a residence of physicians (*vaidya-vāsa*) (Sircar 1971, 53–54, vv. 33–34, ll. 20–21);
6) Ghaṇṭīśa, a form of Śiva, and Bhairava surrounded by the sixty-four mothers (*mātṛ*) at the own city (*sva-nagara*) (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 35, l. 21);
7) a huge abode of Vaṭeśvara in stone at Campā (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 38, l. 22);
8) a stone *vaḍabhī* temple of goddess Carcā of Mahendrapāla on a hill with stairs (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 40, ll. 22–23);
9) a jar at Somatīrtha (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 41, l. 23);
10) a step-well of Mataṅga and a stone temple of Mataṅgeśvara at Dharmāraṇya (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 43, l. 24);
11) a golden trident (*triśūla*) at Sāgara (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 45, l. 25);
12) a temple, probably of the Sun (Sircar 1971, 54, v. 46, ll. 25–26);
13) a golden cover (*khola*) of Vaidyanātha, probably Śiva in *liṅga* form (Sircar 1971, 54–55, v. 48, ll. 26–27);
14) a golden jar at the temple of Aṭṭahāsa (Sircar 1971, 55, v. 50, l. 28);
15) an uncertain facility or act at Sāgarasaṅgama (Sircar 1971, 55, v. 52, ll. 28–29);
16) a silver image of Sadāśiva and golden images of Caṇḍikā and Vighnanāyaka (Gaṇeśa), also a golden pedestal of the last two (Sircar 1971, 55, v. 53, l. 29);
17) a bejewelled golden image of Śambhu (Sircar 1971, 55, v. 54, l. 30);
18) a monastery for the accommodation of ascetics and a lake at the capital of the king (Sircar 1971, 55, v. 59, ll. 31–32);
19) a monastery and (an image of) Vaikuṇṭha installed there (Sircar 1971: 55, v. 61, ll. 32–33);
20) a well (*araghaṭṭa*) and a *vaḍabhī* temple of goddess Piṅgalāryā (Sircar 1971, 55–56, v. 63, ll. 33–34).

The religious institutions, images and facilities listed above are mostly Śaiva (see points 1–4, 6–8, 10–11, 13–17 and 20), while others are Vaiṣṇava (points 5 and 19), Saura (point 12), or unspecified (points 9 and 18). The locations of some deities and their temples are identifiable. Devīkoṭa/Koṭīvarṣa was the city identified with the present site of Bangarh, and Kṣemeśvara is mentioned in the *Rāmacarita* of

Sandhyākaranandin as one of the deities in Varendrī, northern Bengal, side by side with Hetvīśvara, identifiable with Hetukeśvara (Sastri 1969, 3.2).[30] Campā is the city or an area around present Bhagalpur, and Dharmāraṇya could be located nearby Bodhgaya, both in Bihar (Sircar 1971, 48–49; Sanderson 2009, 113–114, fn. 242, 244). Sāgara and Sāgarasaṅgama denote Gaṅgāsāgara, the confluence of the Bhāgīrathī and the sea (Sircar 1971, 49; Sanderson 2009, 114, fn. 245) corresponding to present Sagar Island in West Bengal. Vaidyanātha could be the deity of present Deoghar in Jharkhand (formerly in Santal Parganas district of Bihar), while Aṭṭahāsa seems to be the deity and the sacred site at present Labhpur in Birbhum district of West Bengal (Sircar 1971, 49; Sanderson 2009, 114, fn. 246, 247). The locations of these institutions and deities show the patronage of Nayapāla extended to the wide area covering eastern Bihar and northern and western Bengal. Some of them were the deities and centres established earlier. Hetukeśa of Devīkoṭa had been known to the *Koṭīvarṣa-Māhātmya* of the *Skandapurāṇa*, datable to the sixth to seventh centuries (Yokochi 2013, 298–301). Carcā of Mahendrapāla could be the Goddess installed by the Pāla king of the same name (Sanderson 2009, 108) reigning around the middle of the ninth century. Thus Nayapāla patronised the established deity with an additional construction in these cases. On the other hand, the royal patronage also includes the establishment of new centres, as shown by the temples of Ghaṇṭīśa, the deity who could be identified with Bhairava of Virajā, present Jajpur in Odisha, and of Bhairava, and a monastery all constructed at the own city, which could denote the royal capital.

The extensive projects of Nayapāla for patronising Śaivas could be inspired by his association with Śaiva preceptors mentioned in the Bangarh inscription, who may have given him Śaiva initiation (Sanderson 2009, 108). But it should still be noted that his patronage was not limited to Śaivas, even though the overwhelming majority of deities and institutions listed in the Siyan inscription were Śaiva. Apart from the establishment of Vaiṣṇava and Saura institutions listed above, the inscription also mentions donations to *brāhmaṇa*s as a deed of the king (Sircar 1971, 55, v. 57, ll. 30–31). This diversity in recipients of royal patronage raises a question of

[30] I followed the suggestion of Alexis Sanderson (Sanderson 2009, 113, fn. 239).

what a religious affiliation means to a king. We may obtain an answer to this question by locating the cases discussed above within the corpus of Pāla inscriptions.

4. *Multiple layers of religious affiliations*

To date, we have twenty-four copperplate grants of Pāla kings edited and published, and seven more unpublished or just notified. The kings and their copperplate grants, with reference to types of donees, are given as follows:

– Dharmapāla (3): Buddhist 2, Vaiṣṇava 1
  1) Nalanda plate, date lost (BC00095): Buddhist;
  2) Indian Museum plate, year 26 (BC00099): Buddhist, on petition;
  3) Khalimpur plate, year 32 (BC00088): Vaiṣṇava, on petition;

– Devapāla (2): Buddhist 1, *brāhmaṇa* 1
  4) Monghyr plate, year 33 (BC00125): *brāhmaṇa*;
  5) Nalanda plate, year 35 (BC00104): Buddhist, on petition;

– Mahendrapāla (1): Buddhist 1
  6) Jagajjibanpur plate, year 7 (BC00073): Buddhist, on petition;

– Śūrapāla (1): Śaiva 1
  7) Mirzapur plate, year 3 (BC00107): Śaiva, on petition;

– Gopāla II (4): Buddhist 1, *brāhmaṇa* 3
  8) Mohipur plate, year 3 (BC00109): Buddhist, on petition;
  9) Suvarnakarikadanda plate, year 4, no. 1 (BC00111): *brāhmaṇa*;
  10) Suvarnakarikadana plate, year 4, no. 2 (BC00112): *brāhmaṇa*;
  11) National Museum plate, year 5 (unpublished, Acc. No. 75. 199): *brāhmaṇa*;

– Nārāyaṇapāla (2): *brāhmaṇa* 1, Śaiva 1
  12) Bhagalpur plate, year 17 (BC00091): Śaiva;
  13) Peyara plate, date lost (unpublished): *brāhmaṇa*;

– Rājyapāla (3): *brāhmaṇa* 3
  14) Bharat Kala Bhavan plate, year 2 (BC00108): *brāhmaṇa*;
  15) National Museum plate, year 23 (unpublished, Acc. No. 74. 556): *brāhmaṇa*;

16) Kolkata plate, date lost (Sanyal et al. 2023): *brāhmaṇa*;

– Gopāla III (1): *brāhmaṇa* 1

17) Jajilpara plate, year 6 (BC00074): *brāhmaṇa*;

– Mahīpāla I (4) *brāhmaṇa* 4

18) Belwa plate, year 2 (BC00085): *brāhmaṇa*;

19) Rangpur plate, year 5 (BC00110): *brāhmaṇa*;

20) Bangarh plate, year 9 (BC00102): *brāhmaṇa*;

21) Biyala plate, year 35 (BC00026): *brāhmaṇa*;

– Nayapāla (2): *brāhmaṇa* 1, none 1

22) Naodoba plate, year 5 (unpublished): *brāhmaṇa*;

23) Incomplete plate (Bhattacharya 1996): not mentioned;

– Vigrahapāla III (5): *brāhmaṇa* 4, uncertain 1

24) Belwa plate, year 11 (Sircar 1951–1952a, 9–13): *brāhmaṇa*;

25) Amgachi plate, year 12 (Banerji 1919–1920): *brāhmaṇa*;

26) Dhaka plate, year 13 (unpublished): *brāhmaṇa*;

27) Bangaon plate, year 17 (Sircar 1951–1952b): *brāhmaṇa*;

28) Dhaka plate, year unknown (unpublished): uncertain;[31]

– Gopāla IV and Madanapāla (1): *brāhmaṇa* 1

29) Rajibpur plate, year 2 (BC00071): *brāhmaṇa*;

– Madanapāla (2): *brāhmaṇa* 2

30) Manahali plate, year 8 (BC00075): *brāhmaṇa*;

31) Rajibpur plate, year 22 (BC00072): *brāhmaṇa*.

Of the thirty-one plates listed above, the majority, as many as twenty-one, record donations to *brāhmaṇa*s, while the others record donations to five Buddhist, two Śaiva and one Vaiṣṇava donees. It is notable that donations to *brāhmaṇa*s increased enormously from the reign of Gopāla II, and *brāhmaṇa*s became exclusive recipients of the Pāla grants from the reign of Rājyapāla onwards, in spite of the patronage of Mahīpāla I and Nayapāla to Śaiva institutions recorded in the Bangarh and Siyan

[31] This is the plate confiscated at Dhaka airport and kept under police custody, of which digital photographs were taken by Tauhidun Nabi, then the photographer of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh, as an emergency measure in July 2011. The quality of photographs is insufficient to decipher the relevant portion and confirm the type of donee.

stone slab inscriptions. In contrast, royal grants to Buddhist, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava institutions were confined to the reigns of the early kings from Dharmapāla to Nārāyaṇapāla, and most of them, six among eight, were made on petitions by others who established the institutions. The case recorded in the Bhaturiya stone slab inscription of the time of Rājyapāla can be added to them, though the establishment of a Śaiva temple complex and petition for a village grant did not result in the issue of a copperplate grant.

The chronological change in patterns of patronage could be explained as a result of the shifting balance of power between the king and subordinate rulers, which inclined to the former (Furui 2017), as well as of the growing presence of *brāhmaṇa*s in both royal court and rural society (Furui 2020, 151–152). The overall diversity of donees, on the other hand, raises a question on the religious affiliation of the Pāla kings, especially of those known for their patronage of Śaiva institutions. One way to address this question is to configure their religious affiliation as multiple layers of affiliations present simultaneously.

The basic religious affiliation of the Pāla kings was Buddhist. They are consistently described as ardent worshippers of the Buddha in their copperplate grants, which begin with a verse invoking the Buddha, no matter who the recipients of their donations are. In addition, most of the donations to *brāhmaṇa*s, at least seventeen among twenty-one, are made 'in the name of venerable Lord Buddha' (*bhagavantam buddha-bhaṭṭārakam uddiśya*).[32] This consistent affiliation with Buddhism may be called dynastic affiliation, of which the most prominent symbol is the *dharmacakra*, their royal emblem.

Besides the dynastic affiliation lay their affiliation with *brāhmaṇa*s, or rather with Brahmanical norms upheld by the latter. It indicates the subscription of the Pāla kings to the model of *dharmic* kingship, in which both the protection of *brāhmaṇa*s and the maintenance of the order propagated in *dharma* literature are the utmost duties of the king. The

[32] Exceptions are the Monghyr plate of Devapāla and two Suvarnakarikadanda plates of Gopāla II, which do not have the relevant formula, and the National Museum plate of Rājyapāla, of which I could not confirm the formula. As for the five other unpublished and just notified plates recording donations to *brāhmaṇa*s, the formula is detectable on their digital photographs.

Pāla kings also performed rituals of appeasement (*śānti*) and great gifts (*mahādāna*) with the service of *brāhmaṇa*s specialised in them (Furui 2013, 232, 236–237). This subscription to the Brahmanical norms may be called public affiliation.

The Śaiva affiliation of the Pāla kings stands side by side with both dynastic and public affiliations. Of the cases discussed above, those of Śūrapāla and Rājyapāla could rather be deemed a derivative of public affiliation, as the kings fulfilled their duties as righteous rulers by supporting the pious deeds of others. The cases of Nārāyaṇapāla, Mahīpāla I and Nayapāla, on the other hand, could be called personal affiliation, which was their own choice. They established their own temples, monasteries and other institutions, and even made Śaiva ascetics their preceptors, while retaining their dynastic affiliation as Buddhists and patronising *brāhmaṇa*s with public affiliation.

Those multiple layers of religious affiliations co-exist with possible conflations. Nārāyaṇapāla donated a village to his own Śaiva temple in the name of Śiva, partially infringing upon the dynastic Buddhist affiliation. His personal Śaiva affiliation could also have a political dimension, as deduced in the earlier discussion on the circumstance of his accession. The extensive projects of Nayapāla recorded in the Siyan inscription inevitably had a public character as a manifestation of royal power and wealth.

The multiple layers of religious affiliations also co-exist with changing balance in their importance and priority. The change in the pattern of patronage, namely the increasing patronage of *brāhmaṇa*s, could be understood as prioritisation of the public affiliation. The cause of such change in balance had its roots in particular political and social contexts, as discussed above.

I tried to understand the association of the Pāla kings with Śaiva faith in its historical context by configuring it as personal affiliation, one of multiple layers of religious affiliations held by the kings. The possible cases of conflations suggest fluidity of these layers which cannot be defined in a clear-cut manner. In spite of such a defect, this configuration of multiple layers may give us a perspective better than a simple assumption of religious tolerance, to understand the relation between kings and religions in early mediaeval South Asia.

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Śiva, the inspirational enemy

Claudine Bautze-Picron
Chargée de cours honoraire, Université Libre de Bruxelles
Chargée de recherche honoraire, Centre National
de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris

The presence of Hindu deities in Buddhist images has already been the subject of iconographic studies, some of which have highlighted their highly symbolic character, while others have looked at the similarities between Hindu models as sources of inspiration for Buddhist icons.[1] What follows cannot be considered a definitive study of the subject, but rather a preliminary set of various views on the religious image where the Buddhist and Śaiva worlds converged, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Bihar and Bengal. My tentative aim is to understand how these images were viewed by the faithful, and what message, if any, these images conveyed as an intermediary between the Buddhist community and the society in which they were situated.

From the outset, Buddhist art incorporated representations of Hindu divinities, reflecting an acceptance that was also present in literature. Throughout its history on Indian soil, Brahmā and Indra (Śakra, Sakka) accompanied the Buddha and were depicted at fundamental moments in his existence. No doubts remain that a hierarchy is established with these gods being at the service of the Buddha.[2] However, Hindu imagery is also used in a different context, not only to underline this hierarchy but to

[1] To date, Rob Linrothe's 'Ruthless Compassion,' published in 1999, is undoubtedly the most in-depth study on this subject.

[2] Both gods, together with Viṣṇu, belong to what Naomi Appleton defines as 'a shared narrative universe' (2017, 18–19, with a detailed study of the position of each of these three gods in her chapters 2 to 4, 25–106).

accentuate it. This is the case of major deities who came to symbolise the obstacles encountered on the path to Awakening, obstacles that must be overcome and annihilated. This theme of annihilation will contribute to the creation of Buddhist characters imbued with anger and strength, displaying extreme violence towards those who hinder spiritual evolution and trampling them underfoot.

The incorporation of a Hindu deity as a symbol of the obstacle has been observed since at least the fifth century, when Chinese Buddhist sources mention that Gaṇeśa/Gaṇapati, also named Vināyaka, becomes such an obstacle to the spiritual quest that he will be tamed by Aparājitā, the Invincible, in Eastern India at a later period.[3] In images from South Bengal, Gaṇeśa appears defeated, crawling to the lowest level of the stele under the lotus supporting Parṇaśabarī (and is then named Vighnagaṇa).[4] In an unusual form of Mārīcī, he is accompanied by an emaciated character, both probably personifying Upāya and Prajñā, which the Goddess crushes in another rare form.[5] Gaṇeśa is also depicted as being crushed by Acala or Vighnāntaka.[6]

This example illustrates how the image of a deity can be used to embody concepts that are a priori non-figurative. However, from the eighth century onwards, this figurative transcription probably also converged in Bihar and Bengal with the Buddhist community's perception of its own position in society and confrontation with the increased importance of the Hindu temple, whose rich pantheon must have been perceived as a major obstacle to the expansion of the Buddhist world of divinities.[7]

One response to this situation was to incorporate Hindu gods into the Buddhist pantheon by distributing them in the literary elaboration of *maṇḍala*s, in order to monitor and control them[8] at the same time as the

[3] Bautze-Picron 2022b, 7 (with further references); Bautze-Picron 2014, 80 (fn. 21) and 82 (fn. 29), with further references.

[4] Mallmann 1986, 301 fn. 1; Rezowana 2019, 125.

[5] Bautze-Picron 2001, 274–275 and fig. 21, after Mallmann 1986, 261.

[6] Linrothe 1999, 214, and pl. 1.

[7] Bautze-Picron 2016b, 182–183.

[8] Mallmann 1964b, 179–186, where she studies the integration of these divinities. See Iyanaga 1985, 662–663, for a description of this assimilation in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṅgraha* with the gods being positioned at the outer limit of the *maṇḍala*s.

monastery symbolically took power over the Hindu institution. A second response was to present the gods dominating the Hindu pantheon as a threat to the fulfilment of Dharma, which justifies their total submission. The images reflect the fact that not all the great gods of the Hindu pantheon were perceived in the same way; as we shall see later, Śiva in his form of Bhairava was seen as far more dangerous than Viṣṇu, Sūrya or Brahmā. Although we are mainly concerned here with manufactured images centred on a single character, represented in a position of strength and dominating certain Hindu gods, we should not forget that there is a large body of texts describing the process of meditation and visualisation of a deity. This literary iconography reveals the existence of often very negative feelings towards Hindu deities and the wish to destroy them.[9]

The images are often correlated with various texts. However, they are not necessarily contemporary, and literary sources may far precede material representations. For instance, the narration of Śiva's submission by Trailokyavijaya is described in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṅgraha*, a text probably originating in South India and popular in the eighth century,[10] but figurative representations of Trailokyavijaya are observed in Eastern India only after the ninth century. Similarly, there is no mention of the *Hevajratantra* before the tenth century (Isaacson and Sferra 2015, 315), but representations of Hevajra can be dated mainly to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. On the other hand, material images were able to nourish a spiritual vision that was then described in a text which, in turn, would be the source of inspiration for a new icon.[11]

[9] See, for instance, a *sādhana* describing Mārīcī where she destroys the gods of the Trimūrti (Mallmann 1986, 262).

[10] Kiyota 1978, 22–24; Acri 2016, 9, 13–14.

[11] For example, Śākyaśrībhadra (1125–1227 CE) had a vision of an eight-armed Amoghapāśa during his visit to the Bodhi Mandir, which was then detailed in a *sādhana*, itself at the origin of an iconography observed in East Java in the thirteenth century (Bautze-Picron 2021a, endnote 69). This form of Avalokiteśvara, depicted with six or twelve hands, has been worshipped in Bihar since the ninth century, whereas an eight-armed image had emerged in Southeast Asia (Sinclair 2022), and the four deities distributed around the Bodhisattva belong to the iconographic history of the Bodhisattva in Eastern India. Most interesting is a small twelfth-century carving, most probably from Bihar, which fully tallies Śākyaśrībhadra's *sādhana* and might have been made for a Tibetan devotee (von Schroeder 2001, vol. 1, pl. 121C).

The situation is therefore extremely complex, but we can broadly follow the development from images meditated upon and therefore experienced solely on the level of immaterial visualisation—a phase specific to the world of the *saṁgha*, unattainable for the ordinary lay faithful—to the material realisation of images, of small or large dimensions and therefore intended for different audiences. This final phase brought to light the tensions within the Buddhist community and its relationship with the society in which it was embedded, transforming the use of images for purely spiritual purposes to symbols of official opposition to the Hindu world. In this context, it was primarily Śiva who was perceived as the 'enemy,' perhaps because the Śaiva community played a very important role in North Bengal, and Śaiva iconography held a strong position throughout Bengal in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

1. *Sharing space*

Categorising images as 'Buddhist' or 'Hindu' (or 'Brahmanical') introduces some clarity into a cultural context in which the two pantheons were in constant contact. Sites like Nalanda, a region like Bodhgaya-Gaya, or areas around Lakhisarai or Vikrampur, are testimonies to the continuous presence of images from both pantheons, and the iconographic study reveals a very dynamic and changing development. Sites can be shared from an early pre-Pāla or late Gupta period, as seen for instance at Sultanganj, a chiefly Vaiṣṇava site dominated by the *avatāra*s distributed on various rocks, sharing their space with: images of Sūrya, frequent images of couple-Maheśvara, some rare ones of Gaṇeśa, *liṅga*s being carved in-between, and large figures of the Buddha occupying the flat surface of such a rock and announcing the presence of the *vihāra* on the main land.[12] A similar configuration is found at Kahalgaon, where Patharghata has been a major Vaiṣṇava site in the post-Gupta period, with traces of a Sun temple, and, some kilometres away, the monastery of Vikramashila. More examples could be added, possibly offering a closer relationship between the monastery and the temple, such as in Pāhārpur. Here, the lowest level of the monument, which is buried, includes a series of stone

[12] Bautze-Picron 2020, figs 17–18. A detailed study of the site is still lacking.

images depicting Brahmanical deities or moments of Kṛṣṇa's life, whatever the reasons for this insertion, or the origins of these panels. Another aspect of this co-existence is observed at Kurkihar, where some images of Umā-Maheśvara or Balarāma were offered to the monastery and were part of the group of cast images recovered from the site. Co-existence was thus a major part of the religious landscape from an early period, leading to intermingling in various forms, which is mainly observed on the Buddhist side.

2. *From gods to demons*

2.1 *Brahmā, Śakra* (*Indra*)*, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Śiva*

As recorded in Buddhist literature, Brahmā and Indra are attendants of the Buddha from a very early period, notably accompanying him when he came down from Mount Meru where he had spent three months teaching Dharma to his mother and the gods. They also appear on various other occasions, such as the birth of the Buddha, or episodes linked to the great departure (Appleton 2017, 32). They maintained this respectful attitude in the later period we are concerned with, although their affiliation with Māra's army (see *infra*) attacking Śākyamuni cast a very negative light on them. In addition to Brahmā and Indra, other deities from the Hindu pantheon also appear here. Hindu gods taking part in events in the Buddha's life are encountered in twelfth-century manuscripts,[13] and are depicted in sculptures as early as the second half of the tenth century.[14]

The presence of these gods is particularly evident in the large sculpture at Jagdishpur, near Nalanda, where they feature in the depiction of the descent from heaven of the 33 gods paying their respect to the Buddha.[15] Here, it is not only Indra and Brahmā who are present in the scene of the descent, but also Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Śiva, and while Śiva appears behind Indra and Viṣṇu on the right side of the Buddha, Brahmā and Sūrya stand to his left in the background. They are also integrated into the representation of the attack led by Māra and his troops. Here, Śiva

[13] Bautze-Picron 1996, 116–121 (*passim*), 124–125.
[14] Bautze-Picron 1996, 122–124, 125–129.
[15] Bautze-Picron 1996, 122–124; 2022b, 8.

occupies a prominent position, seated on the bull and leading the attack under Māra riding his elephant, and thereby taking the place of Indra, king of the gods, whose mount is precisely the elephant (Bautze-Picron 2008, 550). Other Śaiva deities and forms can be identified here, such as Vārāhī, Andhakāsuravadha- and Tripurāntakamūrti.[16] While Śiva belongs to the group attacking the Buddha from his right, Viṣṇu and Brahmā are standing, presenting the *añjalimudrā* in the group leaving the battlefield to the left of the Buddha's head. This iconographic motif was repeated in Bengal in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where it was transformed to include other divinities such as Durgā, along with certain planets and space guardians. Here, too, gods like Viṣṇu and Brahmā, who were still peaceful and disengaged from the battle at Jagdishpur, took an active role in the battle.[17]

2.2 *The four Māras*

Between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, Buddhist iconography went through an intensive phase of creativity which partly finds its origin in literature. For instance, before images of Hevajra were produced and worshipped in the Buddhist monasteries of Bengal, various highly elaborated forms of him were described at an earlier period in the *Hevajratantra*, as mentioned above. In this context, images of Hindu deities are used to express the presence of obstacles on the path to Awakening and their annihilation.

The four obstacles encountered by the spirit in its path to Awakening cannot be represented a priori, hence the need to symbolise them by using Māra, the great opponent of Śākyamuni whom the latter defeats and who, in this context, replicates his own forms. These four forms take the shape of the major gods of the Hindu pantheon. Despite the highly philosophical context of the theme of the four obstacles, we cannot help but suggest that the choice of these deities reflects an intra-religious conflict in which they also symbolise the Hindu temple and its growing importance.[18] Four major deities are assimilated to the four Māras, i.e. to death: in the ca. 10th-

[16] Bautze-Picron 2010, 116, and figs 20–21; Bautze-Picron 2022a, 127–128, and fig. 1.
[17] Bautze-Picron 1996, 128–129, 135.
[18] Wayman 1959; Linrothe 1990, and a shorter version published in 1997.

century *Hevajravyākhyāvivaraṇa*, these are Brahmā, Kubera, Yama and Indra,[19] while in the twelfth-century *Niṣpannayogāvalī* they are Brahmā, Yama, Viṣṇu/Hari and Maheśvara/Hara (Mallmann 1986, 258). In this text, Brahmanical gods and goddesses, such as the Mothers, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Devī, etc., are also incorporated in the outer field of variously described *maṇḍala*s, some of them appearing in Māra's army in painted or carved panels as mentioned above. In the form of Kapāladhara, 'skull-holder' (Fig. 1),[20] Hevajra stands in a position of victory (*pratyālīḍhāsana*) trampling over crushed deities (Figs 1b–2). The four gods depicted here are not all those named in the text, but are those made popular by the artistic tradition. Here, it is indeed the two great gods present from the outset in Buddhist iconography, namely Brahmā and Indra, who are seen, accompanied by Viṣṇu and Śiva, whose images dominated the artistic production, reflecting their fundamental position in the Hindu world at the time. The first three, whose deformed faces help to emphasise their demonic nature, lie on their backs, accepting their doom, as Brahmā salutes Hevajra by doing the *añjalimudrā*. On the other hand, Śiva, who appears here in his terrifying form as Bhairava, tries to escape his fate by crawling under Hevajra's left foot. This distribution of the four gods and their positions clearly shows that Śiva Bhairava was seen as the most intractable adversary.

[19] Mallmann 1986, 258 (after Snellgrove 1959, 80, fn. 2).

[20] Mallmann 1986, 185: this aspect does not appear in the *Sādhanamālā* but is described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and in the *Hevajratantra*, although the name is not given as such. Besides the outstanding large image (48 cm) from Murshidabad District (detail of the gods is here seen in Fig. 2; see: *Annual Report of the Dacca Museum for 1941–42*, 7; Majumdar 1971, 471–472 and pl. XXI.54; Lee 1975, pl. 615; Gandhi 2022, fig. 6; Mitra 1997–1998, 382–383, and fig. 1, has written a detailed study of this carving) two smaller broken examples were found at Pāhārpur (Mitra 1989, 182, and figs 1–2; Sengupta 1993, fig. 40; Linrothe 1999, 269–270 and fig. 192; Niyogi 2001, figs 39–40) and Jagaddala (Zakariah 1994; Miah 2003, 153, and pl. 11.6). Besides the carving (here Fig. 1), further small cast and carved images were published by Schroeder 2001, pls 102D–E, 103A; a very elaborated cast one was found in the Tripura District but has been rarely mentioned or published since Majumdar 1971 (1943) and Bhattasali 1929, 270–271, and pl. L(a), who provides the most accurate description. See also Linrothe 1999, fig. 194 and 270; further Linrothe 1999, fig. 195; *Liebeskunst* 2002, cat. 96.



Fig. 1: Kapāladhara Hevajra, Solomon Family Collection,
photo courtesy of Laurent Solomon

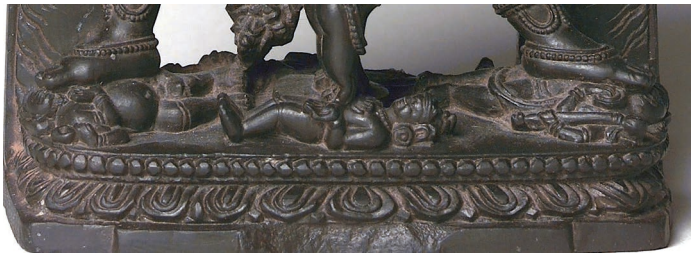


Fig. 1b: Gods lying at the feet of Kapāladhara, detail of Fig. 1



Fig. 2: Gods lying at the feet of Kapāladhara



Fig. 3: Trailokyavijaya, Bodhgaya, Mahant Compound,
photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze

2.3 *Maheśvara/Umā and Rudra/Kālarātrī*

The *Sarvatathāgatasaṁgraha* describes the submission of Maheśvara and Umā (*devī*) by Vajrapāṇi taking on the fearsome form of Trailokyavijaya and crushing Maheśvara before the latter resurrects, upon conversion.[21] Rare images of Trailokyavijaya forcing Śiva and his consort to convert were found in Bihar in the tenth century; the success of this conversion is illustrated by the presence of the *vajra* in one of their hands in an image of Nalanda, whereas in a Bodhgaya example they are gently supporting Trailokyavijaya (Fig. 3).[22]

Cakrasaṁvara, another form of Hevajra, mainly encountered in Bengal in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, stands in *ālīḍhāsana* on two scary forms, namely Rudra (Bhairava) and Kālarātrī (Figs 4–5b).[23]

[21] Iyanaga 1985, 660–662; Linrothe 1999, 177–213, who gives a very detailed study of this iconography.

[22] Linrothe 1999, figs 156, 158, 160–164, 167–169.

[23] Linrothe 1999, 276–305. Schroeder 2001, pls 123A–D, 124A, C–E; Linrothe 1999, figs 203, 205 (large stone images), 206–210, 212–214 (small carved and cast images); *Liebeskunst* 2002, cat. 95.



Fig. 4: Cakrasaṁvara (60 cm), private collection,
photo courtesy of the late René Russek

A comparison between the two images of Kapāladhara Hevajra and Cakrasaṁvara shows that the first has his hair standing on end, like Bhairava, while the second form wears the *jaṭāmukuṭa* of Śiva. This assimilation by Buddhist iconography of elements initially observed in a Śaiva context is in fact the continuation of a process begun in earlier times with the image of Avalokiteśvara, in which the two iconographies share common elements,[24] and converges here with the violent submission of the gods. From a similar perspective, the images of Hevajra and Nairātmyā (Fig. 6) can incorporate the representation of the eight cremation grounds, and such a dreadful landscape can be evoked in images of Cāmuṇḍā in Bengal (Fig. 7).[25] Cāmuṇḍā, Ghaṇṭākarṇa and Bhairava present the terrifying Hindu version of the divine nature embodied by several characters in the Buddhist pantheon, including Heruka and his various

[24] Mallman 1948, 111–115; Bhattacharya 2004, 96.

[25] Hevajra: Gupta 1909, pl. 10; Lee 2009, figs 66–67, Bautze-Picron 2023, 320–323, fig. 10.2(a). Nairātmyā: Bautze-Picron 2023, fig. 10.2(b). Cāmuṇḍā: Melzer 2008–2009, pls XXVI.3, XXVIII.1. In the sculpture reproduced here, see the wild animal feeding on corpse in the pedestal and the tree above the Goddess.



Fig. 5: Cakrasaṁvara, Solomon Family Collection,
photo courtesy of Laurent Solomon



Fig. 5b: Gods lying at the feet of Cakrasaṁvara, detail of Fig. 5

forms. Cāmuṇḍā emerges, her body skeletal, her features frightening, in a cremation ground, surrounded by mutilated bodies devoured by wild beasts, and by piles of severed heads.[26] While Heruka or Bhairava can dance on a lying human body or even a corpse, the Goddess is often depicted as dancing on a standing naked male figure showing various forms. The similarities between these images are therefore to be found in both the composition and the choice of motifs.

2.4 *Bhairava / Mahākāla*

Śiva appears in many guises, which we can broadly distinguish as peaceful or violent. The first form is the one used when he embraces his wife in the Umā-Maheśvara type; the second form includes several variants such as those of Andhakāsuravadha and Tripurāntakamūrti mentioned above and rarely represented in East India (Melzer 2008–2009, 135–136). But there is one, generally called Bhairava, which was very popular in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In this image, the god has a corpulent body, a round, grimacing face, bulging eyes, wearing the *jaṭāmukuṭa* or more rarely his hair standing on end, and having often more than two arms holding weapons (Fig. 8). He can stand with a slight wiggle or in the *ālīḍhāsana;* alternatively, he dances standing on one foot. Bhairava emerges thus as a terrifying and dynamic deity, whose images were at times confused with those of the Buddhist Mahākāla (Fig. 9).[27] While

[26] Note that these severed heads are introduced in several places in the image of the Goddess: their face is round with the hair gathered at the top of the skull to form a small bun or tied in a ring when the heads are hung from a garland adorning the Goddess or from the branches of the tree under which she is seated. The heads on a support beneath the Goddess sometimes resemble the face of the Buddha (Melzer 2015, figs 1–2, 4a; Verardi 2018, frontispiece, and 373–374). The Goddess holds another severed head in one of her left hands, replaced in one example by a standing figure in the shape of a Jina (Haque and Gail 2008, pl. 387).

[27] Mitra 1959, 43 fn. 2. See, for instance, the identification with Bhairava of an icon found in Tripura, while the *viśvavajra* in the head-dress identifies this with a Buddhist character, i.e. Mahākāla (*Indian Archaeology, A Review for the years 1996–1997*, 205 & pl. LVII; Lee 2009, fig. 73). In this particular case, it is more likely that it was Bhairava's image that influenced Mahākāla's: generally speaking, the composition of the Hindu image requires the sword and shield (or arrows and bow) to be shown in two hands on the right and left, whereas the Buddhist image tends to accumulate weapons, and the sword held by a right hand is matched by the *khaṭvāṅga* presented by a left hand. Therefore, the



Fig. 6: Nairātmyā, Paharpur Site Museum, photo courtesy of Mahabub ul Alam

the images of the latter can be found in the Lakhisarai region, Bhairava representations were mainly produced in North Bengal, in particular in the region of Bangarh, which was a stronghold of Śaivism. In this region, unusual, if not unique, Śiva forms were created.[28] Additionally, Sadāśiva is the protector of the Sena state: a seal with his depiction was affixed above the royal copperplates, and numerous stone carvings of him were produced at this time (Mitra 1933).

identification of two Lakhisarai stelae with Bhairava, which I have accepted in an earlier study (Bautze-Picron 2016b, 184, fn. 96), should be corrected.

[28] Ghosh 2006, 2008–2009, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2021; Yokochi 2013; Bautze-Picron and Majumder 2022 concerning an early image of the ten-armed Sadāśiva embracing his consort and a unique representation of the god as Bhairava standing on the moon; a further unique image shows Mṛtyuñjaya (Bautze-Picron and Majumder 2022, 17, with further references). Concerning Mahākāla, see Bautze-Picron 2016b, 184.



Fig. 7: Cāmuṇḍā, Mahasthan Site Museum, photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze



Fig. 8: Bhairava, Indian Museum, Kolkata, photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze



Fig. 9: Mahākāla, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin up to 1945; now at the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg



Fig. 10: Padmanartteśvara, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, inv. InE 1463
Photo © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

3. *Avalokiteśvara and Śiva*

3.1 *Avalokiteśvara dancing*

Undoubtedly, the most venerated Bodhisattva is Avalokiteśvara, traditionally depicted as holding his *padma* and presenting the *varadamudrā*, accompanied by the Tārā, Bhrikutī, Hayagrīva and the *preta,* or Sudhanakumāra. Among his other forms, some described in *sādhana*s, some rare carved or cast images were clearly inspired from Śiva's forms. Two *sādhana*s describe the Bodhisattva dancing in *ardhaparyaṅkāsana*[29] and, until recently, only some cast Nepalese images were known as showing the Bodhisattva in a dancing position. The concept, however, appeared in Bengal in two manuscripts produced around 1100 in South Bengal (Fig. 10),[30] a region where the image of dancing Śiva was central to the Śaiva cult.[31] In the *Sādhanamālā* this aspect of Avalokiteśvara is

[29] Bautze-Picron 2018, endnote 7 (with further references).
[30] Bautze-Picron 2018, 13–14, and pls I.1–2, I.4–6.
[31] Ślączka 2015; Bandyopadhyay 2017.

named Padmanartteśvara: he has eight or eighteen hands, possibly offering a lotus in each of his hands or various other attributes.[32] The same manuscripts have further depictions of the dancing Bodhisattva with a major difference, besides the fact that he is only two-armed: he is adorned by a crown of peacock feathers encircling his head, which reminds of Kṛṣṇa when dancing in the *Gītagovinda*.[33]

From South Bengal, the topic of the dancing Bodhisattva moved to Bihar: a unique sculpture found at Vikramashila and identified as 'Śiva Naṭarāja' (Fig. 11) shows the two-handed character holding a pair of wooden clappers or *kartal* (from Sanskrit *karatala*, 'palm of the hand') which mark the rhythm of his dance.[34] Taking into consideration an exquisitely carved lintel recently discovered at Lakhisarai, a major site in Bihar in the eleventh to twelfth centuries (Bautze-Picron 2019), where the eight-armed Avalokiteśvara presents the same instruments, the Vikramashila relief is most probably another attempt at showing the Bodhisattva as a dancer, as opposed to Śiva, who was the source of inspiration for this iconography.

3.2 *Hālāhala Lokeśvara*

Three forms of the Bodhisattva bear this name, a clear hint at the terrible blue poison spit by Vāsuki during the churning of the milk-ocean, which was swallowed by Śiva to save the divine world from the asphyxiation caused by breathing the effluvia of the poison. In these aspects, described three times in the *Sādhanamālā*,[35] the Bodhisattva presents attributes or shows features which are evidently borrowed from Śaiva iconography, such as the *triśūla* with a snake, the *kapāla* with flowers, the blue throat, the tiger skin, the moon and *kapāla*s inserted in the *jaṭāmukuṭa*; in one case, the embraced consort is mentioned. The model of these

[32] Bautze-Picron 2018, 14 (with further references); Mallmann 1948, 53; Bhattacharyya 1958, 133–6.

[33] Bautze-Picron 2018, 14–15, and pls I.4–6.

[34] Sinha 1979, 151, and fig. 2; Akhouri 1988, 174, and fig. 15; Verma 1998, pls 4 and 163 (where the author disagrees with the identification to Śiva); Verma 2011, 301, and pl. CXIX.

[35] Mallmann 1948, 52–53; Bhattacharyya 1958, 132–133; Mallmann 1986, 198, 109 & 111; Bautze-Picron 2018, 16 and endnotes 26–27 for further references.



Fig. 11: Avalokiteśvara dancing, Antichak site Museum (Vikramashila), photo courtesy of Vikas Vaibhav

descriptions was clearly Umā-Maheśvara. The *kapāla*, the *triśūla* and the snake belong to Śiva's paraphernalia. However, the snake around the *triśūla* is apparently a Buddhist innovation and is extremely rarely encountered in the image of Umā-Maheśvara. Both attributes, the *kapāla* and the *triśūla* with a snake wrapped around it, appear standing on either side of the sculpture from the Vikrampur area where the god has only two arms, a composition most probably inspired from a Buddhist model (Fig. 12).[36]

[36] Lee 2009, fig. 64; Haque and Gail et al. 2008, 140–141 and pl. 17 (with further references); Bautze-Picron 2018, pl. I.10 &16.



Fig. 12: Umā-Maheśvara, National Museum of Bangladesh, photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze



Fig. 13: Hālāhala Lokeśvara, Mahasthan site Museum, photo courtesy of Coline Lefrancq

The scarcity of images may indicate that the concept of this form was most likely confined to the monastic community and did not find favour in secular society. Some illustrations can be found in manuscripts and, what is more, the few known images were discovered in regions far apart from each other.[37] This form is also related to the image called Nīlakaṇṭha Lokeśvara who is depicted as meditating, two-handed, and venerated by two serpents.

The same *dhyānamudrā* is presented by a six-handed and three-faced Avalokiteśvara recently discovered in Bogra district (Fig. 13). As mentioned in the *Sādhanamālā*,[38] his *jaṭā* is adorned with the image of Amitābha and skulls (the moon mentioned in the text is not visible here); he shows the *varadamudrā* and holds the rosary in his other right hands, the skull and the *padma* in the other left hands. The *triśūla* with the snake and the *kapāla* are placed on either side. Two serpents support his throne, referring to the only animal mentioned in *sādhana* 28, while the cavern of jewels in which he meditates is evoked in *sādhanas* 28b, as well as 9, 27, and 29. The peaceful atmosphere conveyed by the balanced composition of this sculpture finds an echo in some rare depictions of Śiva Mṛtyuñjaya,[39] and in the more common peaceful and royal form of Sadāśiva who was also the tutelary deity of the Sena (Mitra 1933).

3.3 *Nīlakaṇṭha Lokeśvara*

In his meditating form, the Bodhisattva bears a name reminiscent of the dramatic episode depicting Śiva swallowing the poison Hālāhala. As described in the *Sādhanamālā*, the Bodhisattva wears the *jaṭā*, a tiger skin around his hips and thighs, a deerskin across the breast; he is flanked by two upraised dark-blue snakes.[40] All these features are reminiscent of Śiva. He is sitting in a meditative position, surrounded by two blue snakes that stand on either side of him, their mouths open as if spitting venom.

[37] Bautze-Picron 2018, pl. I.9, and endnotes 26–27.
[38] See above, fn. 35.
[39] See Bautze-Picron and Majumder 2023, 17, for further references.
[40] See Bautze-Picron 2018, pl. I.8, 16 and fn 25, for further references.

3.4 *Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara*

In contrast to the Hālāhala Lokeśvara concept, in the case of the Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara *sādhana*s and images fully tally with each other. However, like Hālāhala Lokeśvara, this aspect includes the *triśūla* with snake and the *kapāla* with white flowers, or the half-moon in his *jaṭā* mentioned in *sādhana* 17 (Fig. 14).[41] This form of the Bodhisattva is said to fight leprosy, which would explain the presence of a sword standing on the *padma* among his attributes. According to tradition, the *Siṁhanādadhāraṇī* was spoken by Sakya Pandita (1182–1251) in order to cure Godan Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan, from leprosy.[42] Furthermore, Tāranātha describes this *dhāraṇī* as being 'the Protectress from the Fear of Leprosy' and narrates how the nectar flowing from the hand of a Tārā image helped to cure the disease.[43] A rare and isolated testimony of this tradition is also found in Sri Lanka (Deegale 1999, 345–349).

4. *Divinities as healers*

A similar healing function was given to Śiva in one of his most terrific aspects illustrated by images mainly discovered in North Bengal, where characters marked by the blisters of small pox crawl under the god's feet (Fig. 15). As Ranjusri Ghosh recently noted,[44] this fierce image of the god is named Ghaṇṭākarṇa in the *Agnipurāṇa,* where he is said to 'remove a disease accrued from sins… a disease manifested in blisters.' In such images, the god kills one or two naked male characters whose bodies are covered in pustules crawling underneath him and symbolising the disease. Śītalā, the goddess of smallpox, can appear riding her donkey and being chased away from the scene.[45] Bells are the dominant element in the iconography of the god, who may wear them as necklaces, garlands, or

[41] Tiwari 2018; Sakuma 2002, 82.

[42] Das 1882, 66–67; Grünwedel 1900, 64, 134.

[43] Tāranātha 1995, 8, also mentioned by Shaw 2006, 312, 497.

[44] A very detailed study of this iconography, described exhaustively in the *Agnipurāṇa,* has been written by Ghosh 2016, 495–497; see also Mallmann 1963, 60–62.

[45] Ghosh 2016, Fig. 1.B and D.



Fig. 14: Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, private collection, after Sotheby's, New York, September 16 and 17, 1998, *Indian and Southeast Asian Art, Including Modern and Contemporary Indian Paintings*, cat. 27, p. 28



Fig. 15: Ghaṇṭākarṇa (60 cm), private collection,
photo courtesy of the late René Russek

earrings, or hold a bell as attribute (*ghaṇṭābharaṇabhūṣitaḥ*; see Ghosh 2016, 496).

Although this representation of the god is found mainly, if not exclusively, in Bengal, it is worth highlighting the presence of a unique example from Bargaon, now preserved in Nalanda. This rectangular ninth-century stele features a carved image of Umā-Maheśvara on the back, while the front surface shows a ventripotent figure in a niche set into an architectural structure (Fig. 16). This character appears here in the form of one of the *gaṇa*s who belong to the entourage protecting the god (Ghosh 2016, 496); in addition to the bell held as an attribute in his lower left hand, other bells hang from his ears, from his necklace and from the long garland that falls from his left shoulder.[46]

[46] He remains unrecognised to this day: Bhattacharya 1987, endnote 31, is extremely careful in his suggestion that it could be a form of Śiva; Tiwari 2021 names him Jambhala.

Fighting and healing smallpox also became a matter of concern in the Buddhist community, as exemplified by the creation of the image of Parṇaśabarī, a fierce female deity, mainly found in South Bengal, who is flanked by Śītalā, the goddess of smallpox running away on her donkey, and Śītalā's consort Jvarāsura, the horse-headed fever demon (Fig. 17).[47] One of the protective functions shared by the Pañcarakṣā is also that of protecting against diseases.[48]



Fig. 16: Ghaṇṭākarṇa, Nalanda Site Museum, photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze

[47] Auboyer & Mallmann 1950, p. 212; Giri & Tiwari 2004; Rezowana 2019, figs 1–3. Rezowana's fig. 4 shows in fact Sitātapatrā Aparājitā, for which see Bhattacharyya 1958, 215–216, who did not recognise that his fig. 140 represents this rare form of Aparājitā and thus 'probably' identified it with Parṇaśabarī. This identification was here taken up by Rezowana, as earlier by Mitra 2000, 277 and pls 14–15. Bhattacharya 1995, 75–76 rightly saw Aparājitā here; Mallmann 1986, 103. Rezowana's figs 6–9 are rather images of the four-handed Kurukullā (same remark concerning Giri & Tiwari 2004, 101–102; Mallmann 1986, 226).

[48] Mallmann 1986, 289; Mevissen 1991–1992, 358.



Fig. 17: Parṇaśabarī, private collection,
photo courtesy of Sanjay Kapoor

The healing function of Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, Parṇaśabarī, the abovementioned Tārā, or of some of the Pañcarakṣā, must be seen as part of a wider context dominated by Bhaiṣajyaguru, the healing Buddha (Birnbaum 1989). It should be noted that these deities, whose essential function is to heal or protect against certain illnesses, are found in very different contexts. Images of Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, often large, are found in Bihar, while those of Parṇaśabarī were mainly discovered in Vikrampur and those of Ghaṇṭākarṇa in North Bengal. The image of Parṇaśabarī shows how, while she is part of the Akṣobhya or of the Amoghasiddhi families and has the corpulence and grimacing face that characterise the furious deities of the Buddhist pantheon, she reflects the attention paid by the Buddhist community to the secular society into which this community is inserting itself, or which it is trying to convince to join.

The production of images of divinities whose function was to protect against certain illnesses provides information about the presence of these illnesses in the region and at the time when the images were produced. At the same time, it also bears witness to the role of healer that the various religious communities ascribed to themselves. These images, much more than those of the 'great' Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara (in most of his iconography) or Mañjuśrī, are directly addressed to the secular society, suggesting that veneration of the relevant images leads to healing. This was, in other words, a subtle way of attracting and retaining the devotee, directly addressing an existential situation experienced by the faithful that absolutely needed to be resolved, namely illness.

5. *The human being*

The interest shown in curing serious illnesses affecting secular society, and therefore the concern shown for human beings, is much more evident in the attention that was to be paid to the members of the religious community. This is evident in the inclusion of such members in religious images, where they were at times represented on a par with deities. The same pattern was used in both the Śaiva and the Buddhist iconographic systems: a naked male character, with his eyes open, at times bearing a beard and having long hair spread around the head, lies stiff below the two-armed dancing image of Hevajra (Fig. 18) and is similarly seen below Maheśvara on a unique image of the god standing on the crescent moon (Fig. 19). Here the character is most likely a Śaivācarya such as those depicted in single portrait-like carvings (Fig. 20). The importance and the respect paid to Śaivācaryas found its way in their sculpted images[49] which echo rare depictions of Buddhist monks like Candragomin, or the *mahāsiddha* Śavaripa (Fig. 21).[50] Such independent portraits have

[49] Bhattacharya 1994 and 2002; Chattopadhyaya, Ray and Majumdar 2013; Ghosh 2021.

[50] Bautze-Picron 1991–1992, 260 (with further references), fig. 34; Pal 1990, 73–75, fig. 13, who identifies the monk with Candragomin; Linrothe 2006, 188–189, cat 4. Pal 1990 also reproduces a terracotta panel from Antichak (Vikramashila) possibly showing Luyipa (fig. 16 and 76). The Siddha in the panel of our fig. 21 was previously identified by Bautze-Picron 2007, pl. 10.9, 85 (with further references); compare also to Linrothe 2006, cat. 5e; it is now preserved in the Crocker Art Museum inv. 2007, 126.



Fig. 18: Spiritual master lying below Heruka, Nalanda Site Museum, photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze

also been mentioned by Tibetans as being painted on the walls of the Vikramashila monastery (see *infra*). This tradition evolved out of the representation of a spiritual master being carved in the pedestal of most Buddhist images from South Bengal, and in some reliefs from Bodhgaya (Bautze-Picron 1995, 2021b), and paved the way for painted representations of spiritual masters on cloth, a tradition that would flourish in Tibet. The masters, sometimes wearing a pointed hat, sit holding a *vajra* and a *ghaṇṭā* in their hands, which represent a ritual offering to the depicted Bodhisattva. This is venerated by the donors, who are also depicted on the pedestal. Thus, in both religious faiths, priests, monks, Siddhas, and spiritual teachers held a position significant enough to be depicted in portraits. This evolution likely reflects a shift in power from the monastery to the lay society, as shown by Jinah Kim in her study of Buddhist manuscripts in Bengal, where laypersons increasingly become responsible for rituals (Kim 2013, 213–270).

Images were produced according to strict iconographic rules in ateliers by craftsmen who were part of the lay society. They were produced mostly through the generosity of lay people who would leave their imprint upon them either with an inscription or with portraits of themselves or of their family. The depiction of the *vajrācarya* at the same low level of the image is



Fig. 19: Spiritual master lying below Śiva Bhairava standing on the moon, private collection, photo courtesy of Tommy Guo



Fig. 20: Śaivācarya, State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata, photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze



Fig. 21: Openwork window, Crocker Art Museum, after Sotheby's New York, 26 March 1998, *Indian and Southeast Asian Art*, lot 44

part of the same 'human scenery' always seen at the bottom of the carving, supporting the divine image, and echoing the position of the human world below the divine universe. This is a movement which originated in a much earlier period and mainly in a Buddhist context showing the 'real human' world drawn into the religious image. However, in Eastern India, the peak of this development is not reached in the Buddhist context, but rather in the Śaiva milieu, where the depiction of Śaivācaryas occupies the position otherwise held by the deity. Only some rare independent carved depictions of Buddhist spiritual masters are known, whereas they are commonly seen in the pedestal of images. However, we may here quote the testimony of a twelfth-century Chinese pilgrim in Nalanda, observing that 'there are made many paintings of Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Arhats, painted on Indian cloth';[51] and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* also mentions that the *sādhaka* is to be painted in the lower part of the painting (Lalou 1930,

[51] Huntington and Huntington 1990, 100, and endnotes 116–120 (with further references).

65). But for our concern, most interesting is a mention made in the 'Life of Atiśa' as recorded by Sarat Chandra Das: 'In the front wall of the monastery [of Vikramashila] on the right of the principal entrance there was painted the likeness of Nágárjuna, and on the left the portrait of Atiśa himself. So, both these eminent personages occupied an equal position in the esteem of the people. Again, on one face of the wall of the vihara, there were drawn the images of the past Pandits who had been eminent for their learning and the appearances of the saints (Siddhas).'[52] Another text states that Atiśa 'saw [there] the image of Kambala, a great teacher at the Nalanda monastery' (Mochizuki 2016, 65). As these few examples show, it was probably painting rather than statuary that served as the medium here, inaugurating a tradition that was to flourish in Tibet. In this respect, Buddhist images of historical characters differ from those of Śaivācaryas sculpted in Bengal, which are more directly appealing to the fervour of the lay faithful, as opposed to wall paintings or painted scrolls intended for monks. Similarly, the production of large Buddhist images of a terrifying nature is relatively rare, compared with that of small images, sculpted or cast, which can be easily transported and belong to private rather than public veneration.[53]

6. *The pseudo-Amitābha, the Buddhist image as source of inspiration*

Before concluding, I would like to introduce an aspect of Buddhist or Hindu iconography that has always been a source of great confusion, and introduce some remarks concerning the pseudo-Amitābha seen above the divinity, an image whose identification has been the subject of debate.

Anyone who has looked at East Indian Buddhist art will certainly have come across expressions such as 'Śiva Lokeśvara' and 'Viṣṇu Lokeśvara' (or 'Lokeśvara Viṣṇu') applied to representations of Śiva and Viṣṇu dominated by a tiny image of a god seated in the lotus position and showing the gesture of meditation. Until recently, these names, which are merely neologisms, have been repeated without being questioned and without a detailed study of the iconography of the sculptures concerned.

[52] Sarat Chandra Das 1893, 11, also quoted by Niyogi 1980, 105, and Mochizuki 2016, 65.

[53] See above, fns 20 and 23.

As a consequence, the deity is simply regarded as a part of the Buddhist pantheon. In fact, very few authors, such as Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann, or Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta, questioned these names and these identifications.

The 'Viṣṇu Lokeśvara' has been the subject of several detailed studies;[54] it is a highly complex image of the god Viṣṇu created in a purely Hindu context mainly in North and West Bengal. This image is related to the universal form or Viśvarūpa of the god and cannot be an aspect of Avalokiteśvara. The same cannot be said of the 'Śiva Lokeśvara' who is depicted in a unique cast image found in the Barisal district, South Bengal, and kept in the Ashutosh Museum (Fig. 22).[55] However, the seated, meditating god above the main image does not have the hairstyle of the Buddha, but a *jaṭāmukuṭa*, and he is wearing heavy earrings like those of the standing Śiva, as well as a necklace and apparently a short *upavīta* like those worn by the god's assistants. This image is one of the earliest examples of a deity seated and meditating at the apex of the composition. From the same period and same region, this element is also featured in a representation of Viṣṇu reclining on Ananta.[56]

These two cast images of Śiva and Viṣṇu, dating back to the eighth century, introduced a perception of divinity that had its full expression in the statuary of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the Vikrampur region. In-depth research into the specific iconography of such images in this region shows that a divine form seated in *padmāsana* and meditating tops the composition of other iconographic forms, such as those of Sūrya, the classical four-handed Viṣṇu, the Devī or the dancing Śiva.[57] In most cases, it is the main divinity who appears in this position, with four arms,

[54] Mallmann 1948, 203–205 and 1964a, 78–80; Bautze-Picron 1994; Chattopadhyaya, Acharya and Mevissen 2017.

[55] Biswas 2004, 88–89, following all references quoted by Bautze-Picron 1994, fn. 4. Mallmann 1948, 203–205, and 1964, expressed doubts concerning this identification; for Mallmann, who identifies the small figure as Amitābha, these images should be seen as part of the Tathāgata's *kula* and not as the Bodhisattva's assimilation of Śiva. Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta (1985) was also reluctant to accept this naming, basing his argument on the fact that no *sādhana* describes such a form of Avalokiteśvara but he nevertheless concluded that the image in question must represent an unknown form of the Bodhisattva.

[56] Bautze-Picron 1994, 148, and fig. 10.

[57] Bautze-Picron 1994, 135, and figs 13–14, concerning images of Viṣṇu and Sūrya.



Fig. 22: Śiva, detail, Ashutosh Museum. Kolkata, Photo: John C. Huntington, courtesy of Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Asian Art

and it is very rare to find an image of a god with two arms.[58] By placing the god or goddess under the aegis of an aspect of the same deity of a higher divine nature, the image reflects the cosmic dimension of divinity. Often, five deities crown the stele, establishing divine power in all directions of space, a structure that clearly echoes the *maṇḍala* created by the five Tathāgatas found around the same period in the iconography of the Tārā or Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara or Mañjuśrī, for example. In the images of Avalokiteśvara, it is Amitābha showing the gesture of meditation who occupies the central position in the group and is therefore seen at the top of the stele. This Tathāgata also appears leaning against the *jaṭāmukuṭa* of the Bodhisattva, and a stele once seen in Lakshmanakati, South Bengal, shows the miniaturised effigy of Viṣṇu directly affixed to the tiara of the central image, a unique example clearly inspired by the image of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 23).[59] This type of image, showing the effigy of the deity at the top of the stele and possibly placing it at the centre of a

[58] The two-armed form of Śiva is observed above a dancing image of the god, where it is flanked by Brahmā and Viṣṇu (Ślączka 2015, fig. 26), but most examples show him four-handed when in this position (Ślączka 2015, figs 5 and 14).

[59] Bhattasali 1929, 86–87, pl. XXXII.



Fig. 23: Viṣṇu, detail, Lakshmankati, Barisol District,
after N. K. Bhattasali 1929, pl. XXXII

group of five deities (Fig. 24), as well as the unique example of this effigy resting against the god's tiara, most certainly found their source in the Buddhist art of southern Bengal. This composition clearly illustrates that the main deity to be depicted is part of a much wider divine space. It also underlines the cosmic but imperceptible dimension of Buddhist images (the Tathāgatas do not belong to our mundane plane), whereas Hindu images are strengthened by the presence of the great gods of the Hindu pantheon. We cannot ignore the power of images over the faithful or the fact that they subtly reflect the community's perception of its presence within society. There was a general trend in the iconography of South Bengal in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, according to which the deity, whoever he or she was, reigned over the whole universe by multiplying his or her forms, which was a way of inscribing his or her power in society. It is difficult to estimate the reasons for this development, which was radically different from that seen in North Bengal: was it a reaction to Buddhist icons, where the multiplication of miniaturised images around the central



Fig. 24: Śiva dancing, detail, National Museum of Bangladesh, photo courtesy of Joachim K. Bautze

image was commonplace in certain iconographies (eight great fears in the images of Avalokiteśvara or the Green Tārā, the life of the Buddha, *yoginī*s around Hevajra, etc.)? Or was it rather a perception of the divine space specific to this region of Bengal?

Conclusions

Texts and images may not have been necessarily seen by the same people: texts and *sādhana*s describe purely intangible images, which were not accessible to all laypeople; the same remark applies to tiny cast or carved images that were carried by monks, but large carved or cast images had another impact on the society with which the *saṁgha* had a close relationship. Such images were 'talking' a very specific language, carrying very particular values to the members of this society. Thus, introducing Brahmanical deities in a very specific position was like offering to this society a mirror of its religious background. Such images are in a transition position between two worlds: the *vihāra* and the outer space. A survey of the images shows how intricate this position was. The very ancient pattern of having two of them (Brahmā and Indra) peacefully accompanying the Buddha is preserved. At the same time, Brahmanical gods and goddesses can be perceived as threats that need to be subdued. By assimilating some of their forms, the space on which they reign is effectively conquered. Regardless of the specific interpretation of the presence of Hindu deities in the iconographic forms of Trailokyavijaya and Hevajra discussed here, these images clearly illustrate submission through force.

Particularly in North Bengal, Śaivism becomes a strong religious movement from the tenth century onwards. In the tradition established in Bihar and throughout Eastern India, the main aspect of Śiva shows him accompanied by Pārvatī in the so-called Umā-Maheśvara image. Unique images are created in the tenth century, paving the way to the great diversity of the god's forms which will become a permanent feature in the following centuries. Sadāśiva will be mainly observed in North Bengal and, as previously observed, his cult is closely related to the Sena dynasty, his image adorning the seal fastened to the top of the royal copper plates. In contrast, Śiva is mainly worshipped in South Bengal in his form as a dancer, a position also often taken up by Cāmuṇḍā. Dreadful aspects such as Andhakāsuravadha or Bhairava remain rare when compared to the number of representations of the couple; but they were obviously a source of inspiration in the elaboration of images of Trailokyavijaya or Mahākāla. However, while these Buddhist images follow strict iconographic rules, probably as the result of having been artificially created, the frightening images of Śiva and of Cāmuṇḍā reflect a deeper sense of creativity: images of one single aspect do not follow only one template, but reveal differences of composition.

The parallel study of Buddhist and Śaiva artistic production proves complicated; the images show that the two communities were fully aware of each other, but that the perception of this awareness was profoundly different. While the Buddhist community could not but accept the existence of the Hindu divine world, it approached it with a certain hostility, while at the same time incorporating it into its iconographic vocabulary. On the other hand, it seems that Hindu imagery in general, and Śaiva in particular, chose to ignore the Buddhist world. However, there is also a trend that embraces both Śaiva and Buddhist artistic production, namely the place given to the simple human being in the divine image, to the point of depicting wise men according to the model of the divine image.

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Śaiva–Buddhist encounters in the living rock: evidence from the Western Deccan

Pia Brancaccio
Università di Napoli L'Orientale

1. *Śaivism and Buddhism in Sopara: An early encounter*

The early encounters between Buddhism and Śaivism in the Western Deccan are an engaging chapter in the region's religious and cultural history. The present contribution aims to shed light on the early interactions between Śaivism and Buddhism in Maharashtra by re-examining the archaeological remains from the area, in conjunction with relevant epigraphic and textual sources. From this, a complex religious landscape emerges, where the interactions between these two major religious movements were marked by periods of coexistence, competition, and mutual exchange.

The artistic and religious interplay between Buddhism and Śaivism is best exemplified in the sculptural and architectural evidence of the sixth century CE from Aurangabad and Ellora, discussed later in this article. However, the presence of both religious traditions in the region well predates this period, with evidence of initial encounters dating back to the early historic period. A fragment of the Ashokan Rock Edict no. IX uncovered in the ancient port of Sopara in Konkan (modern Nala Sopara, Palghar district, Maharashtra) implies that the area was already an important religious hub for non-Buddhist communities in the Maurya period (Falk 2006, 136–138). The text of the edict, of which only a few words are preserved in the Sopara fragment, encourages the practice of *Dhamma* over a variety of non-Buddhist religious ceremonies performed for birth, marriages, funerals, women's rites, etc., clearly an

indication of the deep roots of the Brahmanical traditions in the area. The Pali Theravaṁsa tradition from the fourth to the fifth century links the introduction of Buddhism in the Western Deccan to the zeal of King Aśoka.[1] According to this textual tradition, at the time of the Maurya ruler, the missionary Yonaka Dhammarakkhita, likely a monk of North-Western origin given his Yavana ('Westerner') appellative, was sent to spread Buddhism to the region of Aparanta, which included the coast of southern Gujarat and Konkan, while the monk Mahādhammarakkhita was sent to Mahāraṭṭha or Maharashtra, an area encompassing the West of the Sahyadri range, or the Western Deccan plateau region.

The text of the *Pūrṇāvadāna* from the *Divyāvadāna* circulating around the second century CE offers a vivid picture of the spread of Buddhism in coastal Konkan and its first encounter with the Śaiva tradition. The story recounts the deeds of Pūrṇa, a merchant from the harbour town of Sopara (Surpāraka) in Konkan involved in remunerative sandalwood trade and shipping enterprises across the Indian Ocean, who converted to Buddhism. In this story that became widely popular throughout the Buddhist world[2] Pūrṇa was the main engine behind a legendary visit of the Buddha to Sopara, which firmly established Buddhism in the region by converting huge numbers of followers. This alleged trip of the Buddha also led to the enshrinement of his hair and nail relics in a stupa. An ancient brick stupa of monumental proportions still stands today in the modern town of Nala Sopara; in its dome was uncovered a remarkably rich relic deposit at the end of the nineteenth century (Indraji 1882, 274–282).

The religious landscape of the area before the advent of Buddhism remains unclear. The Sanskrit version of the text recounts a story in which the merchant Bhavila, with his fellow merchants, ventured to the Yellow Sandalwood Forest to procure fine wood for trade:

[1] See the *Mahāvaṁsa* and *Dīpavaṁsa*, as per Brancaccio and Ollett forth.

[2] Tatelman 2001 is the most thorough study conducted on the *Pūrṇāvadāna* and its various versions. The story of Pūrṇa and some of its segments are found in a variety of sources. The most elaborate version of Pūrṇa's story is in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, T 1448, k. 3, 14b23–17a21. In Pāli it is found in the *Puṇṇasutta* of the *Saṁyuttanikāya* and *Majjhimanikāya*, while sections of it were included in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* and in the *Paramatthadipānī*, the Theragāthā commentary.

> At that time, the Yellow Sandalwood Forest was under the protection of the Ogre (*yakṣa*) Maheśvara, but he was away attending the Ogre (*yakṣa*) Assembly. Then, five hundred axes began cutting down [the trees] in the Yellow Sandalwood Forest. An ogre (*yakṣa*) named Apriya ('Inimical'), seeing these five hundred axes cutting down [the trees] in the Yellow Sandalwood Forest, betook himself to the ogre (*yakṣa*) Maheśvara. Approaching the Ogre (*yakṣa*) Maheśvara, he said this to him: 'The General should know that five hundred axes are cutting down the trees in the Yellow Sandalwood Forest. Do what you need to do. Do what you need to do, Sir; do what must be done.' Enraged, the Ogre (*yakṣa*) Maheśvara dissolved the Ogre (*yakṣa*) Assembly, produced an enormous and fearsome hurricane, and set out for the Yellow Sandalwood Forest. (Tatelman 2001, 65)

The narrative unfolds with the revelation that, during the storm caused by the Yakṣa Maheśvara, all the merchants accompanying Bhavila invoked various gods for protection. However, Pūrṇa played the role of the *deus ex machina* and, being informed by a goddess about the dangerous situation confronting Bhavila and his fellow merchants, he promptly intervened:

> Then the Venerable Pūrṇa entered into a meditation such that, as soon as his mind was fully concentrated, he vanished from Śroṇāparāntaka and appeared in the great ocean, seated cross-legged in meditation, on the gunwale of his brother's ship. Then that hurricane turned back just as if repelled by Mount Sumeru. At that, the ogre (*yakṣa*) Maheśvara reflected, 'In the past, any ship touched by that hurricane capsized and broke apart like so many cotton-tufts! Now, through what yoga has the hurricane turned back as if repelled by Mount Sumeru?' (Tatelman 2001, 66)

Subsequently, in the text, a confrontation unfolds between Pūrṇa and Maheśvara, who asserts himself as the guardian of the sandalwood forest designated for the use of a universal king or *cakravartin*. The exchange between the two ends with Pūrṇa declaring to Maheśvara that someone surpassing a universal king has appeared in the world, and that is the Tathāgata (Tatelman 2001, 67).

This passage highlights a remarkable early encounter between Buddhism and Śaivism taking place in the wilderness, an area inhabited by tribal communities who worshipped local deities and were engaged in rituals possibly linked to early Śaiva tradition. The hinterland beyond

the coastal belt and the Western Ghats was also a densely forested area rich in natural resources that were crucial for commercial ventures, including the prized sandalwood highlighted as a trading commodity in the *Pūrṇāvadāna*. It is likely that such an encounter between Buddhist and Śaiva traditions also took place in the area where Pūrṇa's story was set, a region where mercantile and urban communities aligned with Buddhism to assert control over the forest, the domain of the god Maheśvara and his adherents. The forest also served as a meeting ground for ascetics following various religious paths.

There is evidence that, in the Konkan jungle, after the beginning of the Common Era, Buddhists established their retreats in locations occupied by Śaiva ascetics. The site of Padaṇa Hill, identified in the late nineteenth century by Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji circa six miles away from the Buddhist caves of Kanheri, may have been one such location (Indraji 1882, 45). This hill housed a natural cave along with eleven inscriptions and emblems carved into the living rock, providing evidence of a multi-religious use of the site. Tsukamoto identifies the locality of Padaṇa as a hill site overlooking the paddy fields close to the Goregaon station in the Mumbai suburban area, in the vicinity of the abandoned village of Kuri, where there was a shrine known as Padal (Tsukamoto 1996, 510).

The eleven markings scattered atop the hill, now no longer in existence but meticulously documented by Indraji, include bovine hoofmarks, a *cakra*, *pada*s of varying sizes, a conch shell, and a trident (Indraji 1882, 45–56). Notably, one set of oversized *pada*s, designated as 7a and 7b by Indraji, is described as if representing a stride or a leap towards the edge of the cliff. Among the eleven inscriptions catalogued at the site (labelled from A to K by Indraji), only a couple are associated with figurative symbols. These concise inscriptions refer to the location as a retreat for ascetics and the abode of *siddha*s. Notably, inscriptions A and B, dated to the first century CE, refer to the 'Western *ārāma* on the Vāsāka mountain,' likely the ancient name of the hill, and the 'Eastern *ārāma* of Kausikeya.' The remaining epigraphs commemorate ascetics who must have practiced there. Three distinct inscriptions refer to an ascetic named Musala (Indraji 1882, 51–52, inscriptions nos. E, F, and I; Tsukamoto 1996, 511, inscriptions nos. 5, 6, and 9), clearly memorialising a prominent practitioner at the site. Inscription E, reading 'Siddha Musala,' was dated to the first century CE on palaeographic grounds.

It was placed in front of the back foot of the striding set of footprints identified by Indraji. Inscription I, reading 'Musala,' is positioned just below the symbol of the trident and is dated by Indraji to the second to third century CE, along with the third inscription labelled as F, which reads 'Musaladatta' and likely commemorates the same figure (Indraji 1882, 52).

The names referred to in the Padaṇa Hill inscriptions suggest that the scenario narrated in the *Pūrṇāvadāna* may have captured the historical reality of a Śaiva-Buddhist encounter that took place in the region in the centuries following the beginning of the common era. Remarkably, Kauśikeya and Musala are both names found in the Pāśupata lineage where they are recorded as pupils of Lakulīśa, and, according to Bisschop, they may have been the founders of two different early lines of transmission within Pāśupata lineages.[3] The existence of a natural cave in the proximity of the inscriptions would support the identification of Padaṇa Hill as a Pāśupata locale, as the *guhā* is singled out as an ideal location for *sādhaka*s in the 'third stage' of the Pāśupata practice (Hara 2002, 129 and 205). The cow emblems carved in proximity to ascetics' names could also be interpreted as a reference to the bull vow undertaken by Pāśupatas. In the text of the *Gaṇakārikā,* linked to the Pāśupata tradition, it is clearly stated that one of the 'powers' to be achieved by the practitioners is the inclusion in the category of cattle—or being cattle.[4] The bull is central to this ascetic practice, as also shown by a passage of the Pāśupata vow in the *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 40 (Griffith and Bisschop 2003, 328).

The epigraphs on Padaṇa Hill have been dated to the early centuries of the current era, suggesting that the Western Deccan region played a key role in the development of early Śaivism. It is noteworthy that in the vicinity of Padaṇa Hill, merely 7 miles away at Kanheri, Buddhist monks established an impressive rock-cut monastery when Padaṇa Hill was still a major ascetic retreat, as attested by inscriptions dating to

[3] Bisschop 2006, 45–47. Pāśupata sources tell that the god Śiva incarnated as Lakulīśa in Karvan, a town in the modern Baroda district of Gujarat, and went to Ujjain where he initiated his first disciple Kuśika; see Bisschop and Griffiths 2003, 326. These areas of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh were historically Pāśupata strongholds. Bisschop 2006, 47 also refers to a lineage of the Pāśupatas called Mausula who supposedly followed a disciple of Lakulīśa called Musula or Musulendra.

[4] Hara 2002, 173; on the *govrata*, see Acharya 2013, 112–119.

the beginning of the Common Era documented at both sites. The Kanhasela/Kṛṣṇagiri Buddhist *vihāra*, noted for its enduring ascetic features, became one of the foremost Buddhist monastic centres in the Western Deccan (Brancaccio 2022). Buddhist practitioners were also engaging in activities on Padaṇa Hill, as shown by the incision of early multivalent symbols that had meaning in a Buddhist context, such as the *cakra*, and by the *pratītyasamutpāda* formula. This situates the dynamic interplay between Buddhist and Śaiva practices precisely in the religious landscape of early Konkan.

It should be noted that the name of the ascetic Musala, recorded three times in inscriptions on Padaṇa Hill, is also mentioned in the *Pūrṇāvadāna*. A passage in this story recounts how, before entering the city of Sopara, the Buddha visited Musalaka Hill, named after the ascetic Musala. At that time, the hermit Vakkalin (bark-wearer) resided there and, upon seeing the Buddha, he purportedly jumped off the cliff of the hill. The Buddha intervened, saving him, and imparted to him the teachings of the Dharma. According to the *avadāna*, Vakkalin then became a monk and joined the Buddha in his visit to Sopara (Bisschop 2006, 45–47). Indraji noted the homonymy between the *siddha* in the Padaṇa inscription and the location mentioned in the *Pūrṇāvadāna*. He proposed that the Musalaka hill of the Pūrṇa story was none other than Padaṇa Hill. He also suggested that the striding footmarks engraved in the rock of the hill identified as 7a and 7b, possibly memorialised the sage Musala who leapt over the cliff in an act of extreme asceticism, as Vakkali did in the *Pūrṇāvadāna* (Indraji 1882, 54). Remarkably, a reference to this type of extreme ascetic action occurs in the *Skandapurāṇa*, where the *bhṛguprapatana*, possibly alluding to the jump off a cliff, is described as a practice undertaken at the Hariścandra mountain, near the ascetic grove (*tapovana*) of Puriscandra dedicated to Maheśvara, where Pāśupata Śaivas engaged in ascetic exercises. Peter Bisschop suggests the identification of Hariścandra with a homonym mountain of the Sahyadri situated near Shivneri in Junnar, Maharashtra, a location in the Western Deccan where many Buddhist caves were excavated in the first century BCE (Bisschop 2006, 203, fn. 107a).

Upon analysing such fragmentary evidence from early textual and epigraphic sources, it seems reasonable to propose that there existed an early Śaiva presence in the Konkan and in the Sahyadri mountains of the

Western Deccan before the advent of Buddhism. In the *Skandapurāṇa*, the 'Sahya' mountains marked the southern limit of the Śaiva Pāśupata tradition (Cecil 2020, 161–162). The Śaiva presence in this region appears to have been deeply rooted in forest cults and ascetic practices. At the beginning of the common era, when Buddhism gained prominence, it overshadowed the local religious substratum. The rise of Buddhism, embraced by mercantile elites, urban communities, and settlers, marked an attempt to assert control over forested land in the region, exploit natural resources, and eventually foster rural development.

2. *Śaivism in the Western Deccan in the sixth century*

The early religious milieu associated with Śaivism experienced a resurgence in visibility during the sixth century, a period when only a few Buddhist establishments continued to expand their physical footprints. This century was a time of significant political transformation in the Konkan and the Western Deccan, witnessing the emergence of new power structures aligning with the feudal society of the early medieval period. Mirashi (1955) and Spink (1968) argue that, in the sixth century, the early Kalacuri ruler Kṛṣṇarāja I assumed control of the coastal region of Konkan from the Traikūṭakas, who were previously in the area. Mirashi maintains that the predecessor of Kṛṣṇarāja I played a key role in expanding the early Kalacuri influence from Malwa to the Konkan coast, significantly enlarging the dynasty's power base. The first three early Kalacuri rulers are all described in copperplate grants as devout of Maheśvara (*parama-māheśvara*). The Abhona plates, where an envoy appears with the appellation of Pāśupata, affirm the Kalacuri ruler Śaṅkaragaṇa's adherence to the Śaiva faith as well as the Pāśupata devotion practiced by his father Kṛṣṇarāja I (Mirashi 1955, 42–43). In the later Vadner plates, Buddharāja's consort is also identified as a Pāśupata. The ubiquitous image of a bull on early Kalacuri coins issued by Kṛṣṇarāja and Śaṅkaragaṇa seems to corroborate the Pāśupata affiliation of the rulers, as the bull is a key emblem in the Śaiva doctrine. Early icons of the founder of the Pāśupata practice, Lakulīśa, can also be found in caves excavated in the region in the sixth century. They can be seen at Elephanta and Jogeshwari, in the coastal region of Konkan near the ancient port of Sopara, and at the Ellora caves situated

on the upper plateau in the Aurangabad district.[5] Establishing a precise chronological horizon for the introduction of the cult of Lakulīśa as the founder of the Pāśupata sect and incarnation of Śiva, both in this region and beyond, remains a challenging task. Nonetheless, Bisschop asserts that the earliest mentions of Lakulīśa as an incarnation of Śiva can be found in the *Skandapurāṇa*, dating roughly to this period (Bisschop 2006, 46).

The extent of the early Kalacuri sphere of influence, whether attempted or achieved, is reflected in the geographical distribution of the copper plate grants associated with this dynastic lineage. The Abhona plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa and the Vadner plates of Buddharāja were discovered in the Nasik district, the Sankheda plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa were found in Sanked in the Baroda district, the Sarsavni plates of Buddharāja were also from the Baroda district, and the Nagardhan plates were uncovered near Ramtek in the Nagpur district. This suggests that the early Kalacuris held influence from the Western Ghats to Southern Gujarat and parts of Vidarbha, the former homeland of the Vākāṭaka, an area marked by substantial patronage of Śaiva religious establishments (Mirashi 1955, 38–56, and xlvii). The Sarsavni plates, issued by King Buddharāja and his Vadner plates, both dated by Mirashi to 610, mention land gifts near Bharuch and Nasik. This suggests that the Kalacuris firmly controlled these key areas: Bharuch, which was a major port at the mouth of the Narmada, and Nasik, a major pass on the Western Ghats. Numismatic evidence associated with the early Kalacuris also affirms their expansive reach. Silver coins issued by Kṛṣṇarāja have been discovered in Gujarat, in the Nasik district and the Mumbai area, and most notably on the island of Elephanta. These findings imply that, akin to their predecessors, the early Kalacuris sought control over coastal harbour areas, the ghats, as well as inland production zones to fully plug themselves into the flourishing Indian Ocean trade of that era (Mirashi 1955, xliii).

The borders of the early Kalacuri domain appear to seamlessly correlate with geological maps tracing locations of outcrops of native copper and other copper minerals in the Deccan Traps (Alexander and Thomas 2011). The unprecedented quantity of copper coins issued by the early

[5] On Elephanta and Ellora, see Spink 1967, 1968 and 1982; on Elephanta, see Collins 1988 and Michell 2017; on Ellora, see Malandra 1993 and Dhavalikar 2003.

Kalacuris can possibly be explained by a newfound access to copper ores situated in the Western Deccan and the Narmada area. Kosmas Indicopleustes, whose work touches on Indian Ocean trade around 550 CE, identifies southern Gujarat and the port of Kalyan in Kalyan, near which some of the most significant sixth-century Śaiva caves are situated, as pivotal commercial centres. He notes that copper was at that time a major export from Kalyan, marking a significant departure from earlier Indian Ocean trading records like the Periplus of the Erytheran Sea, dating to the first century CE, which mentioned the import of metal into India rather than vice versa.[6]

The pursuit of wealth, power, and political affirmation by a royal household often finds expression in monumental art. The great caves at Elephanta, Jogeshwari, and Ellora 29, respectively, stand as some of the most impressive rock-cut structures ever attempted from the coastal region of Konkan to the westernmost edge of the Sahyadri. They are all dedicated to Śiva and bear images of Lakulīśa as a statement of their possible Pāśupata affiliation.[7] While there are no inscriptions that directly connect the Kalacuri kings to the patronage of these excavations, the unprecedented scale of these rock-cut temples, which implies the use of tremendous financial resources and access to manpower and functions as a powerful statement of authority, is surely an indication that their patrons were allied with the Śaiva ruling elites. The Śaiva sculptures at Elephanta and Ellora 29, with their distinctive fluid lines and mannered forms, also usher in a new artistic style that marks a departure from earlier idioms attested at Buddhist sites nearby like Kanheri or Ajanta. In particular, the distinct sculptural style of the Elephanta caves appears to exhibit close connections with the Śaiva sculptures from the area of Mandsor in Madhya Pradesh, and particularly Khilchipura. The Mandsor region was a major centre for Śaiva Pāśupata practice, and the Śaiva images from Khilchipura have been linked to the patronage of the local Aulikara rulers who came to be involved in direct conflict with the Kalacuris under Śaṅkaragaṇa, at the end of the sixth century (Balogh 2019, 32, and Fig. 4). The early Kalacuris, whose presence is attested in all of the areas mentioned above, may have had a role in recruiting

[6] McCrindle 1907, 366, and Casson 1989, 67, fn. 28.
[7] Spink 1968 and Collins 1988.

sculptors and transferring highly accomplished talents from the Mandsor area to the Konkan and Aurangabad region to work on new powerful monuments, creating an artistic connection between these two areas. In antiquity, artists and craftsmen often moved following favourable patronage,[8] and the early Kalacuris seem to have acted as catalysts for the artistic renaissance seen in the Konkan and the Western Deccan caves in the sixth century. They may have enabled the spread of both a new artistic style and the Śaiva ideology it embodied.

The proximity of the monumental Śaiva caves to active Buddhist sites in the sixth century was a factor that contributed to the dynamic interplay between the Buddhist and Śaiva communities. Whether this interaction was driven by competition, reciprocal adaptation, or fertile exchange is hard to determine. For example, the island of Elephanta, where the Śaivas commissioned the excavations of the Great Cave and related units, was already the location of a large Buddhist brick stupa.[9] The Śaiva cave at Mandapeshwar was carved into a low hill situated only about 5 km away from the major Buddhist rock-cut monastery at Kanheri, while the Jogeshwari cave was only 4 km away from the Buddhist caves at Kondivte. On the upper plateau, in the Aurangabad region, when the Ellora Śaiva caves 21 and 29 were established, the Buddhist caves at Aurangabad, situated about 30 km away, were also active and in expansion.

3. *The caves of Ellora 21 and Aurangabad 2: A case study of shared Śaiva–Buddhist visual idioms*

Ellora cave 21, known as Rameśvara, is considered one of the early Śaiva units at Ellora dating to the sixth century. This chronology is supported by the discovery of an early Kalacuri coin issued by Kṛṣṇarāja I in the cave's courtyard (Sen Gupta 1960). The cave interior has a square plan

[8] There are epigraphic references in antiquity to artisans moving across different regions. In the well-known late fifth-century inscription from the guild of silk-weavers in Mandsor, it is said that these artisans moved from the region of Lāta (Southern Gujarat and north Konkan) to ancient Daśapura or Mandsor (Balogh 2019, 87–110).

[9] The brick stupa, currently under excavation, was situated on the highest point on the island closer to the ancient landing point at Morbandar, where archaeological surveys have also uncovered many fragments of amphorae and torpedo jars; see Tomber et al. 2008, 128 and 166.

identical to the east wing of the Great Cave at Elephanta, featuring a circumambulatory path around a square *liṅga* shrine guarded by two



Fig. 1: Ellora cave 21, interior

imposing *dvārapāla*s (Fig. 1). Within the main hall and the two side chapels of the cave, large sculptural panels depicting Siva are prominently carved. The pillars in the cave appear to be elaborate versions of the type found at Elephanta and Ellora 29 (Spink 1968), while the Nandi on a pedestal in the courtyard of the cave portrays Śiva's bull just like the Kalacuri coins issued by Kṛṣṇarāja I (Fig. 2).

In the numismatic issues by this ruler, Śiva's bull is represented on a pedestal as in Ellora 21, and in one instance numismatists have interpreted the designs appearing below the effigy of the bull as symbolic depictions of the Śaiva caves.[10] In Ellora cave 21 the Nandi pedestal showcases on its front a female image depicted with squatting legs which has been identified as an icon of the goddess Lajjā Gaurī (Fig. 3), an image that also appears several times in the votive panels carved on the walls of Aurangabad cave 2, where the squatting goddess is situated within a

[10] See: https://coinindia.com/galleries-kalachuri-mahismati.html.



Fig. 2: Ellora cave 21, courtyard with Nandi sculpture

Buddhist visual framework (Fig. 4).[11] Ellora cave 21 is among the earliest cluster of caves around the waterfall area and was probably a Pāśupata cave: a small image of Lakulīśa is carved at the centre of the porch lintel (Fig. 5).[12] The image depicts the haloed Pāśupata master with an ascetic hairdo, seated in meditation holding a staff in his right hand with his left resting on the hip. He is flanked by two kneeling disciples and from behind him two dwarfish figures with raised hands seem to emerge. Further, the Kalacuri king Kṛṣṇarāja, whose coin was found at the cave, was himself a Pāśupata, as epigraphic evidence attests (Mirashi 1955, 42–43).

[11] On the iconography of Lajjā Gaurī in the Western Deccan see Bolon 1992. The image from Ellora 21 echoes the squatting goddess represented on the reverse on a copper coin issued by Kṛṣṇarāja and bearing the effigy of the bull in https://coinindia.com/MAC5093.5-345.45.jpg.

[12] It should be noted, however, that this small image of Lakulīśa may be added to the original visual program of the porch, as the panel seems to be recut out of an ornamental floral pattern originally placed in that position. Considering the stylistic alignment of the images in the Lakulīśa panel with the rest of the figures carved on the lintel, it must have been added soon after the completion of the cave façade.



Fig. 3: Ellora cave 21, courtyard, Lajjā Gaurī on Nandi pedestal

The Pāśupatas, who incorporated paradoxical practices in their spiritual exercises, preferably practiced asceticism 'at a sanctuary of Mahādeva, in the vicinity of water, in cave temples' as related in *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 40 and in the foundational texts for the Pāśupata observance (Bisschop and Griffith 2003, 326).

In a Śaiva-dominated context, the rock-cut site of Aurangabad was the only Buddhist cave establishment that underwent significant expansion in the sixth century. Situated on the hills overlooking the modern city near the Bibi-qa-Maqbara, the Aurangabad caves nos. 2, 5, 6, and 7 were created around the same time as Ellora 29, 21, and the Great Cave at Elephanta, displaying major artistic and architectural connections with these Śaiva monuments (Brancaccio 2011). While it's possible that some artists worked at both sites, commonalities between these monuments extend beyond artistic styles and reveal shared conceptions of sacred spaces, iconographies, and fruition of the divine.

3.1 *The central shrine*

A comparative analysis of Ellora cave 21 plan (Fig. 6) and caves nos. 2, 5, 6, and 7 at Aurangabad (Figs 7a and 7b) shows how Śaiva architectural solutions were adapted to suit Buddhist contexts, and vice versa. The sixth-century Buddhist caves at Aurangabad depart from traditional models of *vihāra*s and chaitya halls, prevalent at earlier rock-cut monasteries in



Fig. 4: Aurangabad cave 2, interior, votive panel with Lajjā Gaurī

the region, and instead develop a new plan with a central *gandhakuṭī* surrounded by a corridor for circumambulation almost as if it were a *liṅga*

shrine. Aurangabad cave 2 was probably the first unit at Aurangabad—and elsewhere in the Western Deccan, for that matter—to adopt such a design in a Buddhist context. Nestled within the limited rock space on the cliff between the earlier caves 1 and 3, Aurangabad 2 is a compact and modest structure. Featuring a straightforward square layout, it includes a central sanctum positioned along the cave's 'axis of access' guarded by two imposing Bodhisattvas and surrounded by a circumambulatory path.[13] The walls of the *pradakṣiṇapatha* at Aurangabad 2 appear to have been intentionally left bare to serve as a 'canvas' for the sculpted images of Buddhist triads gifted by individual donors (Fig. 8).[14] It is tempting to read this new and ground-breaking Buddhist architectural



Fig. 5: Ellora cave 21, image of Lakulīśa on lintel

plan featuring a square cave with central sanctum as a regional borrowing from the Śaiva caves affiliated with the Pāśupatas. In these caves, the design emphasis placed on the central *liṅga* shrine may have highlighted the relevance of circumambulation as a central religious practice aligned with the fourth vow in the Pāśupata *vidhi* (Choubey 1997, 107). The presence

[13] On the 'axis of access' in Hindu temples see Meister 2006.

[14] In cave 2, the walls of the *maṇḍapa* and *pradakṣiṇa* today host a total of 84 carved panels, each varying in size and likely added through time by several small donors. These panels showcase a central Buddha in *bhadrāsana* or *dhyānāsana*, in the teaching gesture or *dhyānamudrā*, seated between two Bodhisattvas. In most cases, *nāga*s are portrayed holding the stem of the lotus flower upon which the Buddha sits or rests his feet. Sometimes devotees appear below the lotus flower, representing perhaps the panel donors.

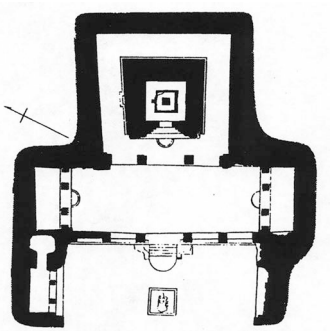
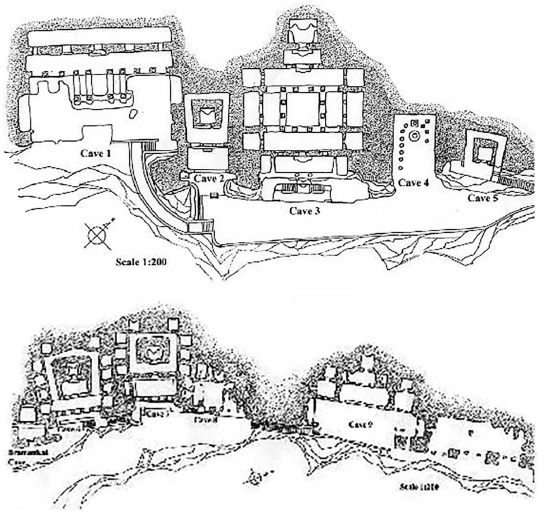


Fig. 6: Ellora cave 21, plan

of monumental *dvārapāla*s by the door is also a feature shared by sixth-century Śaiva and Buddhist shrines alike. The two imposing Bodhisattvas carved at the entrance of the Aurangabad cave 2 shrine (Fig. 9) serve as the visual and functional equivalent to the monumental *dvārapāla*s guarding the Śiva *liṅga* shrine in Ellora cave 21 and 29. However, in this specific instance, we may be confronted with evidence of formal Śaiva borrowing from the Buddhist context. At the nearby Ajanta caves, already at the end of the fifth century, imposing Bodhisattva figures were painted on the walls guarding the access to the cave 1 shrine. In Aurangabad cave 2, both Bodhisattvas-*dvārapāla*s hold a lotus standard with a seated Buddha on it, a feature that may recall the standards carried by the belligerent elites of the time; the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara on the left side of the doorway as one enters, holds a rope tightly in his right hand.

This icon is perhaps the first ever depiction of Avalokiteśvara holding a rope or *pāśa*, an attribute often associated with restraint and captivity that may allude to the salvation offered by Avalokiteśvara, the liberator from spiritual captivity and the saviour from the 'eight great dangers' as represented in the porch of the nearby cave 7 at Aurangabad. The rope as an attribute of Avalokiteśvara became standardised in later tantric iconography associated with a form of the Bodhisattva known as Lokeśvara-Amoghapāśa.[15] It would be tempting, however, to read the unprecedented

[15] Bhattacharya 1987, 428; De Mallman 1948, 168; Donaldson 2001, 200–206; Pal 1966 and 1967.



Figs 7a and 7b: Aurangabad caves, plans

introduction of Avalokiteśvara's *pāśa* at Aurangabad cave 2 as another feature of the shared Śaiva/Buddhist milieu of the region. *Paśu* (lit. 'cattle'; here 'the bound soul') is a term associated with Rudra/Śiva as Paśupati ('master of the bounded soul'), who delivered the Pāśupata observance; in the third chapter of the *Skandapurāṇa*, the god Śiva is identified as the one seeking 'the welfare of all embodied beings entangled by the noose of worldly existence.'[16] The early cult of Avalokiteśvara seems to exhibit patterns consistent with the characteristics of Śiva; for example, Studholme, who investigated the connections between Avalokiteśvara's six-syllable mantra *Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṁ* and the *Oṁ Namaḥ Śivāya* mantra, argues that the Bodhisattva has the characteristics of a Buddhist *īśvara*.[17] Passages in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* dedicated to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara

[16] Studholme 2002, 65. Some of the earliest images of Śiva on coins of the Kuṣāna rulers Huviṣka and Vāsudeva show the god with one head and two arms carrying a *pāśa* in his right hand and a trident in his left, as in Smith 1906, I, 74 and 84. In some cases Śiva with a *pāśa* is also shown as having flaming shoulders, as in Errington and Curtis 2007, 66–69.

[17] Studholme 2002, chapters 2 and 3. On the relationships between Avalokiteśvara's six-syllable mantra and the *Oṁ Namaḥ Śivāya* mantra, see also De Simini 2021, 58–59.



Fig. 8: Auranagabad cave 2, interior, votive panels



Fig. 9: Aurangabad cave 2, Bodhisattva-*dvārapāla* with a rope

appear to have been developed from Śaiva traditions[18] roughly around the time when the Aurangabad caves iconography was formulated. As shown by Peter Bisschop, a doctrinal verse about the worship of the *liṅga* quoted in *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* has its origins precisely in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* (Bisschop 2018, 401).

3.2 *Lakulīśa and the Buddha on the lotus*

Finally, perhaps the most remarkable case of regional Buddhist/Śaiva 'osmosis' may be found in the iconography of Lakulīśa, the founder of the Pāśupata sect. Aside from the small relief depicting Lakulīśa on the lintel of Ellora 21 (Fig. 5),[19] the very first large-scale Lakulīśa image in the region appears in Ellora cave 29 (Fig. 10), another early Kalacuri cave. In Ellora 29 the Pāśupata teacher is depicted with an ascetic hairdo, reminiscent of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. However, he wears jewellery and a Brahmanical cord across the chest. He holds a *mālā* in his right hand and his distinctive attribute, the staff, in his left hand. He sits with his erect phallus in *dhyānāsana* on a lotus flower held by *nāga*s and flanked by devotees. This iconography mirrors in a literal way the one recurring in votive panels seen at Aurangabad 2, among other sites, which showcase a central Buddha between two Bodhisattvas. The Buddha in the carvings is consistently depicted in a seated position, either in *bhadrāsana* or *dhyānamudrā*, and in the teaching gesture or *dhyānamudrā*. Additionally, *nāga*s are portrayed holding the stem of the lotus flower upon which the Buddha sits or rests his feet. Sometimes devotees appear below the lotus flower, representing perhaps the panel donors. It is probable that the specific iconography of Lakulīśa in *dhyānāsana* on a lotus flower, an iconographic model that later became canonical in different regions of India, may have taken shape

[18] The connections between the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* and early Śaiva contexts have been explored in early scholarship and discussed by Eltschinger (2014, 81–85).

[19] Cecil 2020, 218; On the possible identification of earlier images from Mathurā as representing Lakulīśa, see Bisschop 2006, 46. Perhaps the Lakulīśa image added on cave 21 was the result of a subsequent Pāśupata consecration of the cave that was not intended in the original commission.



Fig. 10: Ellora cave 29, image of Lakulīśa

precisely at this time in the Western Deccan, modelled after the Buddhist votive panels.

4. *Conclusion*

To conclude, the case studies discussed above suggest that the Western Deccan and the coastal region of Konkan were important centres for Śaivism since the beginning of the common era, when Buddhism became widespread in the region. At the turn of the sixth century, following the collapse of the Vākāṭaka power and its regional feudatories, the early Kalacuri rulers sought legitimacy and power by aligning themselves with Śaiva religious groups such as the Pāśupatas, which acquired new visibility in the region. This alignment led to the patronage of several Śaiva cave temples and instigated a shift in the trajectory of Buddhist art, evident in the incorporation of Śaiva elements at the sixth century Buddhist caves at Aurangabad and vice versa. At this time, the Aurangabad region emerged as a fertile ground for religious and artistic cross-pollination, with cave architecture serving as a tangible documentation of this dynamic exchange.

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Śaiva teachers in Buddhist territory: identifying two figures at Nālandā, Temple 2

Lucas den Boer*
Department of Languages and Cultures, Ghent University/FWO

1. *Introduction*

Nālandā *mahāvihāra* was perhaps the most important centre of Buddhist learning in early medieval South Asia, flourishing from the fifth century through the twelfth (Asher 2015, 43). The current archaeological site is located 70 km southeast of Patna and 15 km north of Rajgir. The first surveys were conducted in the nineteenth century by Francis Buchanan Hamilton and Alexander Cunningham, amongst others. Proper excavation by the ASI took place between 1915 and 1937, and a second round between 1974 and 1982.[1] The excavated site measures approximately 400 by 600 metres, but remote imaging reveals that the monastery was once significantly larger.[2] To date, eleven large monasteries and five temples have been excavated (see Map 1).

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[1] The ASI not only excavated the site but also added about 100,000 bricks for conservation work (Asher 2015, 43). The conservation work blends in with the original remains of the buildings, which makes it hard to differentiate the older and newer layers.

[2] Asher 2015, 11. Frederick Asher's monograph on Nālandā provides a basic overview of the site's history, including discussions of the archaeological finds. Additional archaeological information about the excavated site and the wider area can be found in Tiwari and Saxena 2013, Biswas and Majumder 2014, Nayan and Ranjan 2015, Rajani 2016, and Kulshreshtha 2018, among others.

As is well known, in the past Nālandā attracted students and teachers in their thousands, including visitors from all over Asia. The remaining ruins of the monasteries and temples are silent witnesses of a once vibrant atmosphere in which students recited Buddhist scriptures, studied different sciences, and learned the rules of scholarly debate (Dutt 1962, 332–333).

The travelogues by Chinese visitors such as Xuanzang and Yijing, who studied at Nālandā for many years, provide us with a rare insight into the historical practices and culture at Nālandā and Buddhist institutes of learning in general. However, we still lack answers to many of the basic questions about the day-to-day functioning of this institute. For example, we do not know whether the site was open to laypeople and whether the different temples were accessible to a general audience.[3] Further, it is unclear whether Nālandā was an exclusively Buddhist site. A significant part of the sculptures found at Nālandā represent Brahmanical deities, and even a *liṅga* has been found. The implications of these finds are still largely unexplored.

The fact that some of the material sources from Nālandā do not seem to be Buddhist may seem somewhat surprising. However, looking at the religious interactions in the wider area, this is not as strange as it seems. As discussed by Alexis Sanderson, the Pālas—who played an important role in the establishment of the great monasteries in North-East India—not only sponsored Buddhist institutions but also engaged with Śaivism (Sanderson 2009, 87–115).[4] A witness of the close encounters between Śaivism and Buddhism in Bihar can be found at the Ajgaibinath temple in Sultanganj,[5] where both Śaiva and Buddhist images are carved in the rocks on which the temple is built. The Pāla inscriptions and material finds from

[3] In his monograph on the archaeology of religion in early medieval East India, Birendra Nath Prasad argues that lay devotees had access to parts of Nālandā. His argument rests on the observation that site 3 at Nālandā, which appears to be a central temple, has no enclosure or monastic cells around it (Prasad 2021, 510). However, since only a small part of Nālandā has been excavated, we must be cautious in drawing conclusions about its use based on the layout of the current archaeological site.

[4] See also Furui 2025.

[5] The location of this temple is about 150 km east of Nālandā and 25 km west of Bhagalpur.

North-East India clearly indicate that we shouldn't consider this region an exclusively Buddhist area.

Apart from the Brahmanical sculptures that were found at Nālandā, there are also the remains of a curious building at the border of the excavated site, which has raised many questions about the religious identity of Nālandā and its inhabitants. Only the lower part of this building, known as 'Temple 2,' has survived (Fig. 1). The building is square in shape, with stairs in the middle of the east side. The plinth of the building contains about 220 stone reliefs, which depict various topics, including deities and heavenly beings, humans, animals and floral patterns.



Fig. 1: Remains of Temple 2 at Nālandā

Other than the plinth and the stairs and some stone fragments that lay around the building, little remains of Temple 2, and scholars have come up with different ideas about the original use of this building. Since several panels depict Śiva, Pārvatī and Skanda, while it is not clear whether any of the panels contain Buddhist elements, some scholars have suggested that the building used to be a Śaiva temple. This goes against the accounts in

the travelogues of pilgrims such as Xuanzang, who describe Nālandā as an exclusively Buddhist centre, a perspective that is still maintained in many contemporary scholarly accounts.[6] If Temple 2 had been dedicated to Śiva, there are important questions to be answered about how this building related to the other buildings at Nālandā, and how the users of this building were connected to the community that once lived at Nālandā.[7] Although art historians and archaeologists have examined various aspects of Temple 2, including its position in the overall layout of the excavated site[8] and the iconography of particular reliefs, there is still no consensus regarding its historical function.

During my visit to Nālandā in 2019, I was struck by two reliefs (see images 3 and 4) at Temple 2 that have received little scholarly attention. The two panels seem to depict teaching scenes, with what appears to be a teacher and a student portrayed next to each other. In the first article that provides an overview of the different reliefs, Krishna Deva and V. S. Agrawala (1950) hastily identify one of these panels as Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti. However, as I will show below, the image differs from standard representations of this icon. Deva and Agrawala do not explain why they believe the relief should be interpreted as a Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti image, and other scholars have not addressed this topic. The other panel shows two figures with a plantain tree in between. The principal figure holds a stylus in one hand and a manuscript in the other. B. N. Miśra (2017) has suggested that this is another depiction of Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti.

[6] For example, Asher's monograph on Nālandā describes the site as 'a complex of Buddhist monastic dwellings' (Asher 2015, 14). As Hans Bakker points out, the account of Xuanzang needs to be read with caution. At some points, his travelogue is very specific, which suggests an accurate description of the sites and events he discusses. However, some parts of his work are more likely to be 'Buddhist fables' (Bakker 2014: 107, 116).

[7] Prasad argues that the presence of Brahmanical deities in early medieval Buddhist monastic centres in Bihar and Bengal reflects the Buddhist *saṅgha*'s attempt to integrate these deities in a subordinate role within Buddhism. However, this effort ultimately failed, as the Brahmanical figures influenced core Buddhist deities and blurred sectarian boundaries. Over time, this did not lead to a Buddhist absorption of Brahmanism, but rather to the Brahmanical appropriation of Buddhism (Prasad 2019). Even though Prasad's analysis is not entirely incompatible with my position in this article, I will offer a different solution to the question of why there are Śaiva elements at Nālandā. For other scholarly views on the function of Temple 2, see below.

[8] See the analysis of Verardi's view below for a discussion of the position of Temple 2.

Given the questions about the identity of Temple 2, it is pertinent to know whether we are dealing with representations of Śiva as a teacher or not. However, no one has offered a study of these images to date.

In this article, I will analyse and contextualise these two teaching scenes. In the first part, I will discuss the various scholarly views about the identity of Temple 2 and its relation to the other buildings at Nālandā. In the second part, I will analyse the two panels at Temple 2, with reference to other depictions of teachers in the Buddhist and Śaiva traditions. I will pay particular attention to the relationship between the panels and depictions of Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Lakulīśa. In the third part, I will discuss some references to Śiva as a teacher in different Buddhist literary accounts and the possible implications for the teaching scenes at Nālandā. I will show that the teachers depicted on the plinth of Temple 2 are most likely Śaiva figures and that their presence at Nālandā is further evidence that Śaivism played a role at Nālandā.

2. *Scholarly views on Nālandā's Temple 2*

Grappling with scarce evidence, scholars have debated the religious identity and function of Temple 2. Even though most scholars suggest that the building was not a Buddhist structure, but rather a Śaiva structure, there is no consensus on whether the temple belonged to Nālandā or was built by the Śaiva community adjacent to Nālandā. In the following sections, I will argue that the building belonged to Nālandā, and that some of its features suggest that Nālandā was not an exclusively Buddhist site.

In their study of Temple 2, Deva and Agrawala mention that the building 'was probably dedicated to Śiva' (Deva and Agrawala 1950, 198). However, they do not discuss why there would be a Śaiva temple at Nālandā, and they fail to note that it is somewhat remarkable to say that a Śaiva building exists at a complex that is usually seen as Buddhist. Moreover, the fact that Śaiva elements are only depicted in a relatively small portion of the over two hundred panels at the plinth of Temple 2 does not seem to offer sufficient evidence for their strong view about the identity of the building.

The main part of Deva and Agrawala's article consists of brief descriptions of the different reliefs. Based on the style of the images, they suggest that the reliefs belong to the seventh century CE. There are some brief

pilgrim records engraved on the north side of the stairs of Temple 2, and Deva and Agrawala mention that two of them date back to the same period as the reliefs. However, they assume that a newer structure was built on top of the old base, which contains the reliefs, and tentatively date the newer structure to the ninth century CE. The authors characterise the panels as an example of the 'eclectic religious phase of Brahmanical Hinduism in the early medieval period' (Deva and Agrawala 1950, 199).

In their analysis of the different panels, they write that three panels depict Śiva in various forms. The clearest representation of Śiva is situated on the left corner of the east side of the building (Fig. 2). According to Deva and Agrawala, the image depicts a two-armed figure squatting on a seat, who holds a *triśūla* in the left hand and a 'fruit-like object' in the right hand. A *nāga* is placed to the proper left of the head, which features a crescent moon and a skull (Deva and Agrawala 1950, 202). By itself, this representation of Śiva cannot tell us much about the affiliation of the building since both Buddhist and Brahmanical temples often feature key deities such as Śiva on the corners of the building.

In addition to this image of Śiva, one panel depicts Pārvatī, another panel depicts Śiva and Pārvatī together, and there is an image of Kārttikeya. The fact that Deva and Agrawala identify six panels as depictions of Śaiva deities is probably the reason why they assume that Temple 2 was once a Śaiva temple.

Apart from these Śaiva deities, Deva and Agrawala identify some other gods as well, including Hārītī, Gaja-Lakṣmī, Balarāma, Agni, and Sūrya. They speculate that one panel might depict Brahmā, and they interpret three other images as Kubera. In addition to these deities, Deva and Agrawala interpret numerous other panels as depictions of harpies (*suparṇa*s), *vidyādhara*s, and other semi-divine beings. Further, they identify several reliefs as scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa, and they interpret two panels with animals as depictions of *jātaka* stories. In their view, the first panel depicts the story of the loquacious tortoise and the second panel the story of the ungrateful lion rescued by a kind-hearted rat.

If these stories are only found in the *jātaka* collections, it would be somewhat strange to have them depicted on the plinth of a Śaiva temple. There is, however, another possible explanation. Ramprasad Majumdar thinks that the panel with the lion actually depicts the story of the lion and the jackals in the first book of the *Pañcatantra* (Majumdar 1970, 156).



Fig. 2: Depiction of Śiva on the east side of Temple 2 at Nālandā

Since the story of the loquacious tortoise also appears in the *Pañcatantra* and other collections of stories, we do not need to assume that these panels refer to Buddhist sources. However, a recent article by Nicolas Morrissey argues that another panel, which shows three human figures and two geese, depicts the *haṁsajātaka* (Morrissey 2020). If this is indeed the case, then we have to accept that the reliefs contain at least one and maybe more references to exclusively Buddhist stories. But even then, it is still relevant that a building at a Buddhist complex is decorated with over 200 reliefs, of which only three panels possibly deal with Buddhist topics, while numerous panels depict Brahmanical deities. Moreover, even if the *jātaka*-collections are the only textual source for the story in the *haṁsajātaka*, we cannot assume that the story was not generally known outside the Buddhist realm. Perhaps we are simply dealing with several depictions of stories that were known to people across religious boundaries.

In his study of the end of Indian Buddhism, Giovanni Verardi proposes a more radical interpretation of the historical function of Temple 2. Just as Deva and Agrawala, he assumes that the building was

a Brahmanical, 'probably Śivaite,' temple (Verardi 2018, 471). He notes that the building is 'out of place with the general layout of the monastic town' and that the building is made of dressed stone, unlike the other buildings, which are all made of baked brick (Verardi 2018, 471). In addition, the building faces east, while the buildings behind it are all facing west. Based on these observations, Verardi assumes that the builders of Temple 2 intentionally attempted to separate the building from the Buddhist structures.

Verardi agrees with the dating of the building as proposed by Deva and Agrawala, i.e., that the oldest layer of the building dates back to the seventh century CE, with the structure being rebuilt in the ninth century. He believes that the reliefs belong to the earlier phase and were reinstalled during the later phase. Based on the idea that several buildings at Nālandā went through phases of 'destruction, abandonment and reoccupation' and the fact that several seals have been found that depict Brahmanical symbols, Verardi proposes that Nālandā was at several points in its history occupied by non-Buddhist inhabitants (Verardi 2018, 471–473).[9] Without specifying his evidence, he writes that the Pāśupatas occupied the site after the death of Harṣavardhana (seventh century CE), and that the Buddhists reclaimed the place during the rise of the Pālas in the mid-eighth century. Verardi further suggests that the second half of the ninth century was again a difficult time for the Buddhists, and it is in this period that the Śaivas rebuilt Temple 2. In short, Verardi claims that the Śaivas built Temple 2 as a statement against the Buddhists and that Nālandā was alternately occupied by Buddhist and non-Buddhist inhabitants.

However, looking more closely at the seals mentioned by Verardi, and other epigraphical evidence, it is hard to see why these seals support the view that Nālandā went through Buddhist and non-Buddhist phases. Nālandā has received royal patronage from several dynasties. So far, about 26 Gupta seals have been found at the site, the earliest of which date back to the last quarter of the fifth century CE. The epithet *parama-bhāgavata*

[9] An overview of the seals that Verardi refers to can be found in Hiranand Shastri's study of the epigraphic materials of Nālandā. Shastri does not provide a stratigraphy for these seals. He remarks that the large majority of seals from Nālandā are Buddhist and that very few seals are Brahmanical or 'non-sectarian' (Shastri 1942, 28).

appears frequently on these seals, indicating that these Gupta rulers saw themselves as Vaiṣṇavas (Asher 2015, 24). However, this does not imply that the site was not Buddhist under the Guptas.

Apart from the Gupta seals, seals by Harṣavardhana, who ruled in the first half of the seventh century CE, have been found at Nālandā. As in the case of the Guptas, this doesn't tell us much about the religious affiliation of the inhabitants of Nālandā. In Bakker's view, even though the Vardhanas 'had turned to Śaivism,' Harṣavardhana's 'Buddhist leanings and scholarly interests made him naturally a patron of the Nālandā University' (Bakker 2014, 102).

The support of the Pālas is similarly ambiguous. Even though the Pāla kings were Buddhists, none of the numerous stone and bronze sculptures at Nālandā were donated by a Pāla king. However, one copperplate from Nālandā, which mentions the gift of a village, was issued by Dharmapāla (c. 781–821).[10] As we know from a charter of Dharmapāla's son Mahendrapāla, Dharmapāla did not only sponsor Buddhism. Mahendrapāla mentions that his father built a temple for the Buddha and another one for the consort of Śiva. Likewise, other Pāla rulers also supported both Buddhism and Śaivism (Sanderson 2009, 108ff; Furui 2025). The fact that the different dynasties that patronised Nālandā also patronised non-Buddhist movements casts doubts on Verardi's ideas about Nālandā and Temple 2, in which he sees an extreme opposition between Buddhism and Brahmanism.

Other seals suggest that some non-Buddhist villages donated goods to Nālandā,[11] but we cannot take them as hard evidence for the position that Nālandā was occupied by non-Buddhist inhabitants during some phases of its history.

Even though many Brahmanical sculptures have been found at Nālandā, including several Śaiva images, these sculptures do not unambiguously confirm Verardi's hypothesis. To begin with, it is unclear what the function of the Brahmanical images was. Perhaps they were

[10] See P. N. Bhattacharyya 1935–1936. Apart from Dharmapāla's grant, there are no records of direct patronage of Nālandā by any of the other Pāla kings. However, one inscription by Devapāla suggests that he acted as an agent for a grant of five villages by the king of Suvarṇadvīpa, which is usually identified as Sumatra (Asher 2015, 26).

[11] See also below.

simply donated by laypeople, with the different deities being seen as figures in the general pantheon. Likewise, it is difficult to derive any definitive facts from the seals that contain Brahmanical symbols.

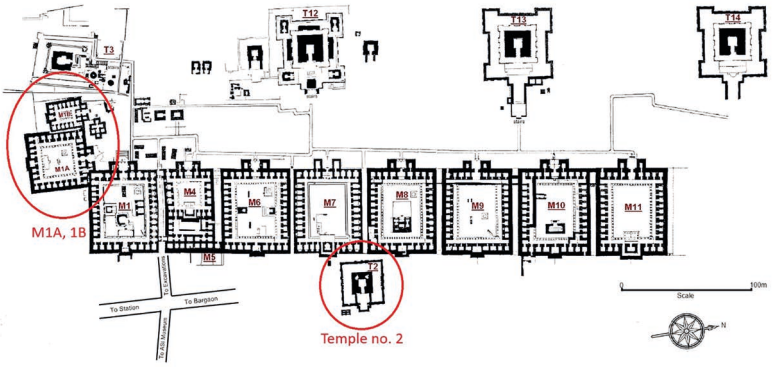
Furthermore, depictions of Brahmanical gods and symbols have also been found at other *mahāvihāra*s. Even the central shrine at Pāhārpur (another *mahāvihāra*, located in present-day Bangladesh) contains reliefs that depict non-Buddhist elements, including a *liṅga*.[12] The fact that such depictions are part of the central shrine shows that the finds of non-Buddhist images and seals at the large monasteries are not enough evidence to conclude that these sites were occupied by non-Buddhist groups.

Likewise, Verardi's argument about the position and orientation of the building, which deviates from the buildings behind it, is also not convincing. We know that only a small part of Nālandā has been excavated, and the original borders of the monastery are far away from Temple 2. Since large parts of the original site remain unexcavated, we do not know how the position of Temple 2 relates to the overall layout of Nālandā. Furthermore, Temple 2 seems to be in line with the position of two other buildings at Nālandā known as Monasteries 1A and 1B (see Map 1).[13] These monasteries are supposed to belong to the oldest layers of the monastic complex, and the fact that Temple 2 is in line with these two buildings could actually indicate that the building was already a part of the layout of Nālandā in an early phase.

To sum up, despite weak evidence, for Deva, Agrawala and Verardi, Temple 2 is a Brahmanical, probably Śaiva, temple. However, this idea is not shared by all scholars. In an article on the main temple at Pāhārpur, Gail draws a comparison between the Pāhārpur temple and Temple 2. He points out that both buildings feature a series of non-Buddhist images on their plinths and attempts to explain the meaning of such images in what he perceives as Buddhist structures,[15]disagreeing with those scholars

[12] A. J. Gail argues that the stone sculptures that embellish the plinth of the building have a strong emphasis on Kṛṣṇa, who was popular during the erection of Pāhārpur in the eighth century CE (Gail 1999, 139).

[13] M. B. Rajani and Virak Kumar (2019) argue that the positions of the different temples are based on astronomical calculations. According to their analysis, the skew of Temple 2 is consistent with the proposed stellar alignment hypothesis.



Map 1: The excavated ruins of Nālandā[14]

who have proposed that the reliefs at Temple 2 originally belonged to a non-Buddhist building. It seems indeed unlikely that over 200 panels of the same type were taken from another building to decorate a Buddhist building. To explain the presence of non-Buddhist images, Gail proposes that the reliefs may represent the outer circle of a Buddhist *maṇḍala*, which was 'inhabited by Hindu gods,' suggesting that the inner, 'genuine Buddhist' circles of the *maṇḍala* are lost (Gail 1999, 133). However, this explanation of the presence of Brahmanical deities at Temple 2 is also rather unconvincing. The building has a simple square layout, and there is nothing to suggest that we are dealing with a *maṇḍala* in stone. Moreover, there is a large gap between the date of the reliefs, which are thought to belong to the seventh century CE, and the date of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, an eleventh-century work which Gail sources for his argument about the *maṇḍalaic* character of Temple 2.

[14] Nalanda, excavated remains [map, circles added]. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nalanda,_excavated_remains.jpg.

[15] Gail is not the only scholar who sees a connection between Temple 2 and the Pāhārpur temple. Asher suggests that Temple 2 might have served as a prototype for the main temples at Vikramaśīla (Antichak) and Pāhārpur (Asher 2015, 57). Since only the bottom part of Temple 2 is still intact, it is difficult to compare this structure with the temples at these other *mahāvihāra*s. The fact that the floor plan of Temple 2 has a square shape and the other temples are cross-shaped weakens Asher's hypothesis.

In his study of the epigraphical sources from Nālandā, Shastri finds a middle way and suggests that Nālandā was not exclusively inhabited by Buddhists. His argument rests on observations that the stone inscription of Ādityasena (c. 655–680 CE) (Shastri 1942, 83) has an image of Sūrya in the background and that several seals found at Nālandā refer to an *agrahāra* (a land grant that was usually donated to Brahmins) instead of a *vihāra* (idem, 83). If different religious groups indeed inhabited Nālandā, it would be easier to understand why a building decorated with reliefs portraying mainly Brahmanical elements had its place at Nālandā.

3. *The two teachers*

Deva and Agrawala's study of the panels on the plinth of Temple 2 does not provide any arguments to support their interpretation of these reliefs, and the identification of many scenes remains a matter of debate. In this section, I will focus on the two images of teaching scenes mentioned above. The first relief is installed on the south side of the building (Fig. 3) and depicts two male figures. The largest figure is portrayed on the right side of the relief, with a smaller figure on the left side. The large figure is almost twice the size of the smaller figure. He is sitting with his legs crossed, with the proper left foot over the other. He holds a manuscript in his lap with his proper left hand. His right hand is raised, holding a stylus. His hair seems to be matted and bound at the top of his head. The ears are elongated. The body of this figure faces the viewer, but its head is slightly turned towards the smaller figure.

The figures are positioned on either side of a tree resembling a plantain. The smaller figure is sitting with its legs bent and feet almost touching each other. Its head and body are halfway turned towards the larger figure. He holds both hands up with his elbows resting on his knees. Due to erosion, it is hard to see what he is holding in both hands, but his proper left hand seems to be holding a manuscript. The hair is long and appears to be matted.

Deva and Agrawala describe the scene as follows: 'A group of two figures separated by a plantain tree. The one on [the] right is holding a cup in [the] left hand and the one on [the] left, which is the principal one, is holding a pen in [the] right hand to write on a parchment held in [the] left [hand]' (Deva and Agrawala 1950, 211). Unfortunately, Deva and



Fig. 3: Panel of a teacher on the south side of Temple 2 at Nālandā

Agrawala do not provide an interpretation of the identity of the figures. I am also not convinced that the figure on the left is holding a cup since the surface of the item in his hand seems to be flat and rectangular.

In his three-volume work on Nālandā, B. N. Miśra briefly mentions the panel with the two figures in a paragraph on Śaiva images from Nālandā. He interprets the larger figure as 'Vyākhyānadakṣiṇāmūrti Śiva.' Unlike Deva and Agrawala, who think that the figure holds a pen in his right hand, Miśra proposes that the hand is in *vitarkamudrā*, i.e., a gesture of intellectual discourse.

He provides no hypothesis of what the smaller figure is holding in his hands, but remarks that it 'exhibits the same features' as the principal figure (Miśra 2017, 3:141). I don't think that Miśra's idea that the principal figure is holding his hand in *vitarkamudrā* is correct, as it seems that the hand is holding an object. This object is pointed towards the manuscript in his lap, which makes it more likely that he is holding a stylus. I assume that Miśra's idea about the right hand is based on his interpretation of the scene as a depiction of Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti, which

typically shows (one of) the right hand(s) in a gesture of intellectual transmission.

However, it is relevant that Miśra interprets the principal figure as Śiva in his role as a teacher. If this identification is correct, and the image is indeed Śaiva, we would have an additional reason to accept the hypothesis that Temple 2 was a Śaiva building, as suggested by Deva and Agrawala.

A somewhat similar scene is depicted on another relief on the north side of Temple 2 (Fig. 4). In this relief, the central figure is situated on the left side. He is sitting on a platform. His proper left leg is hanging down from the platform, and his foot is placed on the ground in front of the platform. His right leg is bent and rests on the platform, with the right foot touching the other leg.[16] The left hand seems to be holding a manuscript. The right hand is held in front of the chest and seems to be in *vyākhyānamudrā*, representing the teaching aspect of the deity. The head is half-turned towards the other figure. The hair seems to be matted and bound in a topknot, and the ears are elongated. On the proper left side of the central figure is a second person, approximately two-thirds the size of the main figure. He sits on the ground next to the platform. His legs are in the same position as the legs of the other figure. His proper left hand is placed in his lap and seems to be holding a manuscript. The right hand is held in front of the chest and might be holding a stylus. The head is turned towards the main figure, and the hair is matted and hanging down on both sides of his head.

Deva and Agrawala describe the scene as follows: 'Two-armed ascetic with *jaṭājūṭa* and skin scarf seated on a rock with right hand in the attitude of exposition (*saṁdaṁśa-mudrā*) and left hand holding a book, probably Dakshiṇāmūrti Śiva. In front of him is a seated male figure holding a stylus in [the] right and parchment leaves in [the] left hand. From the mood of the figures it appears that the former is expounding something which the latter is noting down' (Deva and Agrawala 1950, 206).

Both reliefs provide sufficient clues to conclude that they depict teaching scenes. The larger figures seem to be the teachers and the smaller

[16] It is worth mentioning that the foot is not resting on the left leg. This distinguishes the posture from typical Dakṣiṇāmūrti images (Goodall 2009, 357, n. 10).



Fig. 4: Panel of a teacher on the north side of Temple 2 at Nālandā

figures the students. In both pictures, at least one manuscript is involved, and at least one of the two scenes shows the hand of the teacher in *vyākhyānamudrā*. The fact that all of the figures have matted hair suggests that we are dealing with non-Buddhist, and possibly Śaiva, teachers and students. This raises important questions. If both panels depict Śiva as a teacher, as suggested by Deva and Agrawala, we would have further evidence that Temple 2 might have been a Śaiva building. However, as I will discuss in the next paragraph, the identification of both panels as depictions of Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti, as suggested by them, is not without problems.

4. *Contextualising the two teachers*

Even though scholars have suggested that the teaching images from Nālandā can be identified as examples of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, there are several reasons to question this identification. Apart from the fact that the images iconographically deviate from the typical examples of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, there

is also the problem of their geography. Dakṣiṇāmūrti images are typically found in the south of India (Gillet 2010, 98–99) and are not attested yet in Bihar. It would, therefore, be an anomaly to have two Dakṣiṇāmūrti images at Nālandā. However, we cannot rule out that these images are exceptions *prima facie*. In the following paragraph, I will discuss the iconography of Dakṣiṇāmūrti images and the overlap and differences with those from Nālandā. In addition, I will discuss how the images relate to the iconography of Lakulīśa, another representation of the teaching aspect of Śiva, which can be found in the north and west of India (Gillet 2010, 98–99). I will argue that, despite the images from Nālandā sharing several aspects of Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Lakulīśa images, such as the presence of manuscripts, seated disciples, and matted hair, there is not enough evidence to identify them specifically as one of these two figures. However, I will suggest that the iconographic overlap is significant enough to conclude that we are dealing with two Śaiva teachers at Nālandā.

In his overview of Hindu iconography, T. A. Rao describes the different types of Dakṣiṇāmūrti images, which portray Śiva as a teacher of *yoga*, *vīṇā*, *jñāna*, and other *śāstra*s. As a teacher of *jñāna* and *śāstra*s, Dakṣiṇāmūrti is also known as Vyākhyānamūrti, which is the type that is most frequently found in temples (Rao 1993, 2:273). According to Rao, who based his analysis on South Indian texts,[17] Vyākhyānamūrti 'should be represented as seated on a secluded spot on the Himālayas, under a banyan tree, on a seat covered with a tiger's skin [or], on a white lotus' (Rao 1993, 2:274). The right leg 'should be hanging below the seat' while the left leg should be 'rested on the right thigh.' Vyākhyānamūrti should have three eyes and four arms. Explaining the etymology of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Rao mentions that 'because Śiva was seated facing south when he taught the *ṛshi*s *yōga* and *jñāna* he came to be known as Dakshiṇāmūrti' (Rao 1993, 2:273). Rao provides several examples of Vyākhyānamūrti, but all his examples come from South India, except for one image from Deogarh. Rao does not give the dates of the images, but most of them seem to be much later than the reliefs on Temple 2.

The various accounts that describe Vyākhyānamūrti offer different descriptions of the hand poses and the attributes held. However, according

[17] See also Bakker's observation discussed below.

to the literature the front right hand should always be in *jñānamudrā* or *saṁdarśanamudrā* (*saṁdaṁśa*). In some cases, Vyākhyānamūrti is holding a book in one of his left hands. The head can be adorned with different ornaments, but the hair should be embellished with flowers and wild plants. The left side should have a serpent, and the right side should have bells, a skull, and a crescent moon (Rao 1993, 2:275). Vyākhyānamūrti is surrounded by different *ṛṣi*s with matted hair in the shape of a crown (*jaṭāmukuṭa*). The height of the *ṛṣi*s should not exceed the height of the chest of Dakṣiṇāmūrti.

Jñāna-Dakṣiṇāmūrti is largely similar to Vyākhyānamūrti. However, the former is holding an *akṣamālā* in his back right hand and an *utpala* flower in the back left hand. Rao adds that '[t]he front right hand should be held in the *jñānamudrā* pose, whereas the front left hand may be kept in the *abhaya* or the *daṇḍa* pose' (Rao 1993, 2:284).

Yoga-Dakṣiṇāmūrti comes in three different forms. The legs of the first type are crossed in *svastikāsana*. 'The front right hand should be held near the chest in the *yogamudrā* pose, and the front left hand should rest upon the lap in the characteristic *yogic* posture' (Rao 1993, 2:284). The second type has the right leg hanging down and the left leg bound in a *yogapaṭṭa*. The third type has the legs crossed in a 'more or less vertical position' (Rao 1993, 2:285). Vīṇādhara-Dakṣiṇāmūrti resembles Vyākhyānamūrti but holds a *vīṇā* in the two front hands (Rao 1993, 2:289).

The images of the two teachers at Nālandā share some aspects with the descriptions of the different types of Dakṣiṇāmūrti in Rao's work. The teacher on the south wall is sitting with his legs crossed in a vertical position, just as the third type of Yoga-Dakṣiṇāmūrti. However, the hands are holding a book and perhaps a stylus, which does not match the description of Yoga-Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Vyākhyānamūrti, however, can have a book in the left hand, just like the teacher on the south wall. The teacher is sitting under a tree, just like Vyākhyānamūrti, but the tree looks like a plantain tree instead of a banyan tree.

The teacher on the north wall is also holding a manuscript in his left hand. His right hand is held against his chest in *jñānamudrā*. So, both hands match the description of the front hands of Vyākhyānamurtī. However, the image lacks the other elements that characterise Vyākhyānamurtī, such as the head ornaments. Moreover, the teaching

figures at Nālandā have only two arms, a deviation from the descriptions and examples of all forms of Dakṣiṇāmūrti as given by Rao. In addition, only one of the two images faces south.

Although the two reliefs at Nālandā share several characteristics with Vyākhyānamūrti images as described by Rao, it is also clear that they do not conform to the standard descriptions. Yet, the fact that the figures have matted hair and a manuscript in their left hand shows that there is at least some overlap with the descriptions of Vyākhyānamūrti. This raises the question of how the images at Nālandā relate to Dakṣiṇāmūrti images and whether we are dealing with depictions of Śiva as a teacher at all.

In his discussion of Rao's account of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Bakker points out that Rao's analysis is based on late South Indian texts (Bakker 2019, 519). He suggests that Rao was 'following an Indian iconographic convention' when he wrote that Dakṣiṇāmūrti should face the south (Bakker 2019, 520). Tracing back the history of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Bakker shows that the term *dakṣiṇāmūrti* was used to refer to the right side of the manifestation of Mahādeva in the Pāśupata initiation ritual. In this context, the word *mūrti* refers to the spot where the novice was supposed to sit, and it does not refer to an image (Bakker 2019, 514). As Bakker writes, '[t]o turn one's right side upon someone is an auspicious act; in the case of God it is an act of grace in which He reveals Himself and His doctrine' (Bakker 2019, 517). He speculates 'that the concept of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* originated from this ritual in which Śiva as supreme teacher reveals himself' (Bakker 2019, 519). It was only in a later phase that Dakṣiṇāmūrti referred to the 'physical object of veneration,' i.e., the actual image of Śiva (Bakker 2019, 515). Based on an exploration of different Vedic sources, Bakker argues that the orientation of the teacher in the earlier phase used to be towards the east.

Bakker suggests that the transformation of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* as a 'cult concept' into an iconographic one had two moments:

> 1 An anthropomorphic (iconic) representation of Śiva who through attributes, a book for instance, a *mudrā* (*vitarka-*, *vyākhyāna-mudrā*), or some other gesture, or because he sits alongside a pupil, is identifiable as the supreme teacher. This image, or at least Śiva as its main character, faces the east.

> 2 An anthropomorphic representation of Śiva, two- or four-armed, with one or more of the attributes of (1), but whose main characteristic is that he is directed towards the south without showing the terrifying aspect. (Bakker 2019, 521)

This transformation, according to Bakker, was completed in South India by the tenth century, although it had begun much earlier. During this process, Dakṣiṇāmūrti was strongly influenced by Buddhist iconography (Bakker 2019, 521).

It is clear that the two images at Nālandā do not represent the first stage mentioned by Bakker, as neither image faces east. The panel on the north side of the building also does not match the second stage, as Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the second stage is facing south. Moreover, the teacher is turned towards his student, which, to my knowledge, doesn't correspond with proper Dakṣiṇāmūrti images. In these images, Śiva is always looking in the direction of the viewer. Therefore, Deva and Agrawala's suggestion that this icon might be an example of a Dakṣiṇāmūrti image seems to be problematic. However, the other teacher is facing south and is holding a manuscript. Even though this image does not match the late descriptions of Dakṣiṇāmūrti as given by Rao, it corresponds to the second stage of Dakṣiṇāmūrti's development as described by Bakker. Bakker's description of the second stage doesn't contradict Miśra's identification of the panel as a proper representation of Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Yet, we should still treat Miśra's identification with caution since it remains odd that the image is located in Bihar, while Dakṣiṇāmūrti is usually associated with the south of India.

The fact that the panel on the north side does not match the descriptions of Dakṣiṇāmūrti outlined by Rao or Bakker raises the question of what the image represents. The fact that both figures in the panel have matted hair strongly suggests that we are dealing with Śaiva figures, and it is also very clear that the main image is teaching. Just like Dakṣiṇāmūrti images, he holds a manuscript in one hand and appears to be in a teaching *mudrā* with the other. Hence, even though the image perhaps does not match the examples of Dakṣiṇāmūrti image discussed in the literature, it is still likely that we are dealing with Śiva as a teacher, or perhaps simply a Śaiva teacher.

Remarkably, scholars have only discussed the links with Dakṣiṇāmūrti images, but it is the image of Lakulīśa that most often represents the teaching aspect of Śiva in early Śaiva temples in North India (Donaldson

1999, 129). Lakulīśa is recognised as a historical figure credited with structuring and systematising the Pāśupata tradition. Some Purāṇic texts portray him as the twenty-eighth incarnation of Śiva (Bisschop 2006, 41–44; Bakker 2019, 559 n. 20). He is said to have had four principal disciples: Kauśika, Mitra, Gārgya, and an anonymous '*brahmacārin* from the country of the Kurus' (Bisschop 2006, 44).[18] He is often depicted seated in a meditative posture, holding a staff (*lakuṭa*) and a citron. In some depictions, he appears with attendant ascetics, celestial figures, and tantric imagery. Unlike the more cosmic or destructive aspects of Śiva, typical Lakulīśa images represent the guru or teacher form of Śiva. The earliest representation of this club-bearing divine teacher has been found in Mathurā, and dates back to the fifth century CE (Bakker 2019, 555).[19]

Lakulīśa's iconography shows influences from Buddhist artistic traditions (Brancaccio 2011; 2025). For example, at Ellora Cave 29, Lakulīśa's hair is similar to that of the Bodhisattva, and just as in the Buddhist votive panels at Cave 2, he sits in *dhyānāsana* on a lotus flower (Brancaccio 2011, 155). Brancaccio suggests that early images of Lakulīśa, such as the one in Ellora, may have developed in an effort to compete for patronage with the Buddhist tradition.

Of course, there is no reason to assume that the teachers depicted on Temple 2 are representations of Lakulīśa, since they lack the characteristic markers, such as Lakulīśa's club and his erect *liṅga*. But there are some features of the two teaching scenes at Nālandā that overlap with typical Lakulīśa images.[20] Two examples of such images can be found at the Odisha State Museum.

The first image (Fig. 5), found in Bhubaneswar and dating to the eighth–ninth century, depicts Lakulīśa in *padmāsana*. His pedestal is carved with lotus petal motifs. His hair is styled in matted locks, and there seems to be a damaged hood of a snake behind his head. His ears are elongated. His upper left hand is holding a club, and his upper right hand

[18] The fourth student is sometimes referred to as Kauruṣya. See e.g. Gillet 2010, 99.

[19] Another image from Mathurā, usually dated to the third century CE, depicts an ascetic with a club (Bakker 2019, 554). This sculpture doesn't bear the marks of a teaching deity but suggests that later images of Lakulīśa evolved from an older tradition.

[20] It took a little while before the images of Lakulīśa were standardised. For a description of the development of early Lakulīśa images, see Cecil 2020, 221–225.

is placed in front of his chest, perhaps in a gesture of knowledge. His lower left hand holds a manuscript, and his lower right hand a citron. He wears a sacred thread and minimal clothing, with his erect *liṅga* prominently visible. Lakulīśa is flanked by two pupils with crossed legs. They are seated on lotuses, their hair is styled in matted locks, and they both wear a sacred thread. The student on the left side of the teacher holds a manuscript. It is unclear what the other student is holding, but it might also be a manuscript. Two celestial beings hang above both students.



Fig. 5: Lakulīśa. Odisha State Museum

The image shares several characteristics with a second image of Lakulīśa at the Odisha State Museum, also found in Bhubaneswar and dating to the seventh century (Fig. 6). In this sculpture, Lakulīśa is seated on a lotus throne. Unlike the first image, he has only two hands. His left hand is holding a club, and his right hand seems to be in a teaching gesture. The image is damaged at the place where one would expect his *liṅga*. His ears are elongated, and he is flanked by two students (Fig. 7). Both students are sitting on lotuses, wearing sacred threads, and holding manuscripts. Their other hand seems to be in *abhayamudrā*. Under the lotus throne of Lakulīśa are two smaller figures. They are both holding a staff.

It is clear that the images of Lakulīśa differ significantly from the teaching scenes at Nālandā. Lakulīśa looks straight at the viewer and doesn't face the students. He sits on a lotus throne, holds a club, and has an erect *liṅga*. However, some aspects are remarkably similar. The Nālandā images and the Lakulīśa sculptures are both scenes with teachers and students. The students are all holding manuscripts, and both Lakulīśa, as seen in Fig. 5, and the Nālandā teacher, as seen in Fig. 3, are also holding



Fig. 6: Lakulīśa. Odisha State Museum

manuscripts. The sacred thread is also clearly visible in Figs 4 and 5. The teachers in all four images have elongated ears.



Fig. 7: Student with manuscript flanking Lakulīśa. Odisha State Museum

Even though the two teaching scenes at Nālandā do not conform to the standard descriptions and examples of Dakṣiṇāmūrti or Lakulīśa, there is sufficient reason to assume that we are dealing with representations of Śaiva teachers, especially given that the images are surrounded by other reliefs that depict Śaiva deities. Since the teaching figures do not exhibit any characteristics that are unique to the depiction of deities, it remains a question of whether we are dealing with divine or ordinary teachers. But how can we explain the presence of two depictions of Śiva as a teacher

or two Śaiva teachers in a Buddhist monastic context?[21] If we accepted Verardi's hypothesis that the building was a proper Śaiva temple that was not a part of the Buddhist monastery, it would not be a problem at all to have some depictions of Śaiva teachers in the series of reliefs at Temple 2. However, there is little evidence to support Verardi's hypothesis, and I believe that we need an alternative explanatory framework to interpret the meaning of the Śaiva images.

It is important to keep in mind that the Śaiva images on the plinth of Temple 2 are not the only Śaiva images at Nālandā. During the excavation of Nālandā, several Śaiva images have been found, which can be dated between the ninth and twelfth centuries CE. Most of them are currently housed at the Nālandā site museum. They include a ninth or tenth-century *liṅga*, worshipped by eight *nāga*s (see Fig. 8). A stone slab with an image from the same period seems to depict Pārvatī. The museum also has a seal that belongs to the same era, which depicts a *liṅga*, a trident, and possibly a bull. Another large image from the eleventh or twelfth century CE depicts Śiva and Pārvatī.[22] These finds suggest that Śaivism played a role at Nālandā since at least the ninth century.[23] The reliefs on Temple 2, which probably predate the freestanding images by two centuries, may indicate that the presence of Śaivism started much earlier. The idea that Śaivism had its presence in a Buddhist place might seem somewhat strange. However, as I will show in the next section, several literary sources can help us gain a better understanding of how Śaiva elements fit into a Buddhist context.

[21] Abhishek Amar (2012) argues that Buddhism in eastern India incorporated Śiva as a subordinate protector deity, and that the fact that Buddhist monasteries housed images of Viṣṇu and Śiva suggests a hierarchical inclusion of Brahmanical gods within Buddhist frameworks. The article doesn't deal with Nālandā or Temple 2, and I doubt whether Amar's framework can sufficiently explain the find of a freestanding *liṅga* at Nālandā (see below).

[22] Miśra discusses several of these images in his study of the art of Nālandā (Miśra 2017, 136–142).

[23] This is in line with Shastri's view, based on the epigraphical sources, discussed above (Shastri 1942, 83) and Furui's idea that Śaivism enters the picture in the Pāla kingdom at this time (Furui 2025).



Fig. 8: *liṅga* worshipped by *nāga*s. Nalanda Museum

5. *Śiva as a teacher in Buddhist sources*

Śiva does not only appear as a deity in Brahmanical sources, but he occasionally figures in Buddhist sources as well. One example is Xuanzang's seventh-century travel record, which frequently mentions the deity Maheśvara. He associates this deity with ash-smearing ascetics, and the contexts in which the references to Maheśvara appear clearly indicate that Xuanzang uses the term Maheśvara to refer to Śiva. The passages in which Xuanzang mentions Maheśvara seem to be written in a fairly neutral way, and there are no negative comments about Maheśvara and his followers.

At some point in his travelogue, Xuanzang mentions the grammarian Pāṇini. He mentions that Pāṇini met Maheśvara, and describes their meeting as follows:

> At the time when the human life span was a hundred years, the *ṛṣi* Pāṇini was born with innate knowledge of wide scope. Feeling pity at the shallowness of learning in his time, and wishing to expunge

> what was superficial and false and delete what was superfluous, he traveled about to make inquiries into the way of learning. He met with Maheśvara and told the deity of his intention. Maheśvara said, 'How grand it is! I shall render you assistance.' The *ṛṣi* withdrew after hearing these words and concentrated his mind to ponder the matter. He collected all words and composed a text of one thousand stanzas, each stanza consisting of thirty-two syllables (Li 1996, 68).

In this passage, Maheśvara appears as a deity who supports the intellectual activities of Pāṇini. Xuanzang does not specify how Maheśvara assisted Pāṇini, but it is clear that Maheśvara plays the role of a teacher in this story. This story indicates that Xuanzang, a Buddhist pilgrim who spent years at Buddhist monasteries in India, had a positive attitude towards Śiva as a teacher.[24]

Xuanzang's text is not the only Buddhist source in which Śiva appears as a teacher. Another example can be found in Abhayadatta's *Lives of the 84 Siddhas*,[25] which was probably composed in the eleventh or early twelfth century (Robinson 1979, 2). In this work, the Buddhist author describes the lives of 84 tantric masters and the way in which they attained *siddhi*. The biographies of many of these *siddha*s are connected to Bihar (Dowman 1985), and the text frequently mentions Nālandā. This suggests that Abhayadatta was familiar with Nālandā and the wider region, and the religious dynamics in that area. Although the majority of the *siddha*s are Buddhists, a small group of non-Buddhist tantric masters are included in Abhayadatta's overview. The stories of the masters in Abhayadatta's work can be situated between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE (Dowman 1985, 25). The fact that both Buddhist and non-Buddhist *siddha*s appear in his work suggests that the boundaries between the different groups of tantric ascetics were not always clear-cut at that time.

[24] This does not imply that Xuanzang wasn't aware of the rivalry between Buddhists and Brahmins. At some point in his text, Xuanzang describes how 'brahmins and other heretics' were furious because the main deity in a procession was the Buddha (Bakker 2015, 127).

[25] The text has survived in Tibetan only, as a translation of the Sanskrit *Caturaśīti-siddhapravṛtti.*

One of the *siddha*s mentioned in Abhayadatta's work is Mīnapa,[26] who appears in the legends as a fisherman from eastern India (Robinson 1979, 47).[27] His guru was Mahādeva, i.e., Śiva. Abhayadatta mentions at the beginning of the story that Mīnapa attained 'worldly *siddhi*,' unlike most of the other *siddha*s in his work who attain proper *siddhi*. This might indicate that Abhayadatta struggled with the religious identity of Mīnapa, who was a Śaiva ascetic, and felt that proper *siddhis* could only be attained by Buddhists. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the story of Mīnapa in Abhayadatta's work shows the closeness of the Buddhist and Śaiva tantric masters, which was still a reality for Abhayadatta.

The story about Mīnapa tells that a giant fish swallowed him while he was fishing. At the same time, Umā asked Mahādeva to teach her about Dharma. Mahādeva replied to Umā that his Dharma is not for everyone, and he insisted on instructing her in a secret location. They then went to a house under the ocean, where Mahādeva preached the Dharma. While Mahādeva was preaching, the fish that had swallowed Mīnapa passed under the house, and Mīnapa overheard Mahādeva's Dharma. Because of his 'superior sight,' Mahādeva realised that Mīnapa had heard the Dharma, and he gave him initiation. After practising for twelve years in the belly of the fish, Mīnapa was freed by another fisherman and became famous as the yogin Mīnapa. Later in his life, his foot hit a stone, in which he sank as if it were mud. He stayed in this position and sang for five hundred years 'for the welfare of all living beings.' Only after this long period did he go 'into the realm of the Ḍākas.'[28]

The second part of Mīnapa's life seems to have no connection with the first part, in which he practices inside the belly of the fish, and we may be dealing with two stories about different people that were merged at some point. This could explain why, in the first part of the story, Mīnapa reaches worldly *siddhi*s only but is admitted to the realm of the Ḍākas by

[26] Mīnapa appears in other sources as Mīna, Macchendra, or Matsyendra (Dowman 1985, 78).

[27] Csaba Kiss mentions that Matsyendra (Mīnapa), has not been exclusively connected with Bengal. Some legends situate him in other parts of India, as well as in Tibet and Nepal. He mentions that Matsyendra probably lived between the fifth and the thirteenth century CE (Kiss 2021, 65).

[28] My summary of the story is based on James Robinson's translation.

the end of the second part. This might have been Abhayadatta's strategy, or the strategy of the sources that Abhayadatta used, to mediate the Śaiva identity of Mīnapa.

In an effort to situate Mīnapa in history, Keith Dowman has suggested that he probably lived in the tenth century (Dowman 1985, 80). This date is primarily based on the date of his student Gorakṣa. Dowman mentions that Mīnapa is found in the lineages of the Buddhists, Śaivas, and Śāktas.[29] He assumes that those groups were so close at the time of Mīnapa that 'a siddha could accept initiation and practice the instruction of Buddhist, *śaiva* and *śākta* Gurus concurrently and consecutively' (Dowman 1985, 78). However, the fact that the instruction of Śiva or venerating a manifestation of Śiva is never enough to reach *siddhi* in Abhayadatta's work suggests that the sectarian boundaries had hardened by the time of Abhayadatta. Nevertheless, it is evident that Abhayadatta still accepts the role of Śiva as a teacher and that his teachings can give students mundane powers.

The dates of Mīnapa and Abhayadatta are, of course, far later than the date of the two reliefs discussed above. However, the way in which Śiva appears as a teacher in Abhayadatta's work aligns with how Xuanzang portrays Maheśvara, and both sources suggest that Buddhists in East India accepted Śiva as a teaching deity in their pantheon. This has some important implications for the interpretation of the two teachers at the plinth of Temple 2 and the identity of this building, which I will discuss in the conclusion.

6. *Conclusion*

As discussed above, the two reliefs at the plinth of Temple 2 do not match the descriptions of Dakṣiṇāmūrti given by Rao or any of the stages of the development of this image as distinguished by Bakker. This does not come as a surprise, since most examples of Dakṣiṇāmūrti described

[29] Tāranātha gives a variant story and explains that Mīnapa had a son named Macchendrapa. Mīnapa became the guru of the Buddhists Halipa, Malipa and Tibolipa. Macchendrapa became the guru of Gorakṣa, the founder of the Nāth movement, and Cauraṅga. Perhaps Tāranātha tried to explain how Mīnapa appeared in the Buddhist and Śaiva lineages (Dowman 1985, 79).

in the literature were found in southern India. However, this doesn't rule out the possibility that there might be examples of Dakṣiṇāmūrti in other regions that haven't been studied yet. In any case, there is enough overlap with depictions of Śiva in teaching contexts, such as Lakulīśvara or Dakṣiṇāmūrti, to suggest that both images depict Śiva as a teacher, or perhaps simply two Śaiva teachers with their students. Now, what are these depictions doing at Nālandā?

I think that the two literary accounts discussed above offer some useful clues about a possible explanation for the presence of the two reliefs. It is evident that Xuanzang's and Abhayadatta's texts cannot tell us much about Temple 2 specifically. Yet, I believe that these accounts are relevant to how we can think about the religious identity of this building. Xuanzang spent several years at Nālandā in the seventh century CE, and most scholars suggest that the oldest layers of Temple 2 date back to the seventh century. We can, therefore, assume that Xuanzang was familiar with the religious climate in which Temple 2 was built. Abhayadatta wrote at a much later moment in time, but his stories about the *siddha*s reflect a religious environment that predates Abhayadatta by a couple of centuries. His stories about the Buddhist and Śaiva *siddha*s frequently mention Nālandā and throw some light on the sectarian boundaries between the different religious groups in early medieval East India.

Xuanzang, in his work, has no problem in portraying Śiva as a teacher. In the same way, Abhayadatta's text includes references to Śiva as a teacher. Moreover, the lineages of the *siddha*s about whom Abhayadatta wrote clearly intersect. It is obvious that the Śaiva and Buddhist ascetics were very close in the period in which the *siddha*s lived. It is relevant to keep in mind that, according to Abhayadatta, several of these *siddha*s studied at Nālandā.

If we accept that Śiva was accepted as a teaching figure in the Buddhist pantheon from the seventh to the eleventh century, then there is nothing problematic about depictions of Śiva as a teacher at the plinth of a building at Nālandā that was perhaps primarily Buddhist. Alternatively, if we accept that the boundaries between the Buddhist and Śaiva ascetics were fluid, as illustrated by the stories about the *siddha*s, we might also interpret the teaching figures as two generic Śaiva teachers with their students. In the end, there is nothing in the images that specifically points to the divine character of one of the teachers, even though the postures of the figures resemble standard representations of divine teachers such

as the Buddha, Lakulīśvara as a teacher, and Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti. This conclusion might be somewhat surprising if we continue to think of the large monasteries as exclusively Buddhist institutes. However, the finds of Śaiva images at Nālandā, including a *liṅga*, indicate that the practices at Nālandā were more varied. We cannot exclude the possibility that Nālandā was open to different religious strands, including Śaiva ascetics, and that the panels at Temple 2 perhaps depict the ordinary practice of teaching at Nālandā. The non-Buddhist art found at Nālandā and other large monastic sites and the way in which some early medieval Buddhist authors talk about Śiva and Śaiva ascetics both suggest that the boundaries between Buddhist and Hindu monasticism were more fluid than scholars tend to assume. Therefore, if we want to better understand the history of the large monastic centres in early medieval India, we have to be willing to rethink the categories with which we have approached these sites so far.

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Burnt clay, skull-topped vases and other curiosities: some points of contact between Śaiva and Buddhist Tantras, with special reference to the Laghuśaṁvara

Judit Törzsök*
École Pratique des Hautes Études-Paris Sciences et Lettres, GREI

1. *Introduction*

In his groundbreaking studies, Alexis Sanderson showed the multiple ways in which Śaiva—or, more commonly, Śākta—Tantras had a direct and demonstrable influence on Buddhist Tantras. Although there are certain shared elements, such as the ritual around the *maṇḍala*, that are pan-Śaiva, most ritual and almost all textual parallels concern Śākta Śaiva Tantras, i.e. Śaiva Tantras that teach goddess worship.

Sanderson (2009) demonstrates that from the earliest tantric Buddhist scriptures onwards, this influence covers various aspects of the religion: iconography, various rituals (such as *maṇḍala* initiation, rites to obtain superpowers, the use of certain impure substances), rules of conduct, yoga, funeral rites, sacred geography with pilgrimage sites, consecration ceremonies in the public domain, etc. He also stresses that it is in the

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last phase of the Buddhist tantric corpus, in the *yoginī* or *yoganiruttara* Tantras, that textual borrowings become both more conspicuous and more voluminous. Within this corpus, he points out that the bulk of the *LaghuśaṁvaraLaghuśaṁvara* draws heavily upon Śaiva Śākta textual sources. Unsurprisingly, the textual parallels result in a particularly high degree of overlap in various areas of these cults.

Building on these findings, I present here some further parallels, both textual and ritual ones, between the *Laghuśaṁvara* and some Śaiva Śākta sources belonging to the early phase of the Śākta cults. The parallels concern smaller textual and ritual details, such as what kind of coloured powders the practitioner must use when drawing a *maṇḍala*, or how to set up the vases for consecration. While some of these details may be considered shared features of these Tantras, most of them further confirm the direction of borrowing from the Śaiva Śākta to the Buddhist sources. At the same time, I also try to show that these parallels often help us to reconstruct the texts and the rituals they describe in a mutual way. Although the direction of the borrowing is clearly from the Śaiva to the Buddhist, and the Śaiva source therefore often helps us to understand the Buddhist one at least at its origin, it also happens that the Buddhist parallel retains something that helps us reconstruct and better understand the Śaiva text. At the end of this paper, I also briefly touch upon the very different nature of another major Buddhist *yoginītantra*, the *Hevajra*, and some features it shares with certain Śākta sources.

2. *Some remarks on the intertextuality of the Laghuśaṁvara*

The *Laghuśaṁvara* is one of the major texts of the highest class of Buddhist Tantras, teaching the cult of the deity called Cakrasaṁvara.[1] The exegetical literature understands this name to mean, in Sanderson's translation (2009, 166ff), 'he who restrains [the minds of beings from the wrong path] by means of the wheel [of Dharma],' and his alternative name Śaṁvara to denote 'he who has/is the highest bliss' or 'he who protects bliss.' Scholarly consensus identifies its place of composition in East India, but the dating is more controversial: possibly the late eighth or the early ninth century.

[1] For a general survey, see Sugiki 2015.

This text has a special status in relation to Śaiva Tantras, for it has a particularly large number of parallels with Śaiva scriptures.[2] As Sanderson points out (2023), about two-thirds of the *Laghuśaṁvara* can be shown to have been taken over from Śaiva sources. Three crucial features of these parallels may be worth pointing out:

1 The Śākta texts that are the sources of the *Laghuśaṁvara* mostly seem to belong to the earliest stratum of the corpus. The *Brahmayāmala* and the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* are the two earliest Śākta scriptures we know of, belonging to the seventh or first half of the eighth century.[3] Although the *Tantrasadbhāva* is certainly a later, composite text, much of its sixteenth chapter (the one from which the *Laghuśaṁvara* borrows) has parallels in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*; this chapter may well date from an earlier phase of its composition. Moreover, the topic of the *saptajanmasādhya*, the victim reborn seven times (figuring in another borrowing, from chapter 7 of the *Tantrasadbhāva*), is also known in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* (in a fragmentary passage, in 27.50). The *Jayadrathayāmala* is also a late, composite text that was put together from numerous earlier Śākta sources, but its *Yoginīsaṁcāra* section (*prakaraṇa*), from which the borrowings in the *Laghuśaṁvara* come, most probably reproduces

[2] Sanderson 2001 already names the following Śaiva sources: *Brahmayāmala* chapter 88 (on the *samaya*s or pledges; this parallel extends in fact to chapter 87, as Hatley 2007 and 2018 show); *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* chapter 29 (on the characteristics of *yoginī*s, *yoginīlakṣaṇa*, for the analysis of which see also Törzsök 1999 Supplement to App. 3); *Tantrasadbhāva* chapter 16 (again on *yoginīlakṣaṇa* and on sacred places or *pīṭha*s), and chapter 7 (on a type of victim who has been reborn seven times, *saptajanmasādhya*); *Yoginīsaṁcāra* of the *Jayadrathayāmala* (3.32 again related to the pledges and rules of conduct *samayācāraceṣṭā*) and *Niśisaṁcāra* chapter 6 (on gestures or *mudrā*s). Sanderson 2009 further identifies the source for the worship of Kulikā and the description of supernatural powers in the *Brahmayāmala* (various passages from chapters 5, 26, 29, 30, 41, 49), and an important source on the ritual of initiation in the *Yoginīsaṁcāra* of the *Jayadrathayāmala* (3.31).

[3] See Hatley 2018, 137ff, placing the *Brahmayāmala*'s core between 675 and 725, and Törzsök 1999, ivff, proposing the hypothetical date of the seventh century CE for the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*.

one of the earliest scriptures of the *yoginī* cult.[4] Finally, while the *Niśisaṁcāra* itself certainly does not belong to the earliest stratum (being a Kaula/Krama scripture), its teaching on *mudrā*s may again be based on an earlier Tantra.

2 The *Brahmayāmala*'s presence is particularly remarkable, since the borrowings identified by Sanderson (2001 and 2009) are scattered around in various places of this Tantra, in eight different chapters. By contrast, only one or two chapters seem to have been used from other Śākta sources by the *Laghuśaṁvara*'s redactor. This privileged position of the *Brahmayāmala* may be explicable by its East Indian origin—it was perhaps readily available and even well-known to the East Indian redactor of the *Laghuśaṁvara*.

3 As Shaman Hatley (2018, 105–106) has shown, in addition to the longer parallels, some idiomatic expressions are also shared by the *Brahmayāmala* and the *Laghuśaṁvara*, which may also demonstrate their closeness. One such expression is 'nothing better is known to exist in the three worlds' (*nātaḥ parataraṁ kiñcit triṣu lokeṣu vidyate*); while the other compares a person doing futile things to someone who 'strikes the air with his fist or drinks from a mirage' (*hanyate muṣṭināmākāśaṁ pibate mṛgatṛṣṇikā*).[5] Although one could say that the first one is not very specific, and the second one can be found in other Tantras too, this direction of research is important to determine a similar idiom and to identify the milieu in which these texts may have been composed.

[4] This section has been provisionally edited by Prof. Sanderson, who has kindly shared his working edition with Olga Serbaeva and other scholars. See also Sanderson 2009, 187 on the incorporation of this old material in the composite *Jayadrathayāmala*.

[5] Hatley mentions that this expression was first noticed by Harunaga Isaacson. It is however also found in the *Tantrasadbhāva*, as Hatley remarks, in the form of *hanate muṣṭināmākāśaṁ pibate mṛgatṛṣṇikām* (28.88ab). See also the *Niśvāśakārikā* (IFI T0017A p. 454), and the thirteen-hundred verse recension of the *Kālottara* (in the form of *muṣṭināhata te vyomaṁ pibate mṛgatṛṣṇikām*, which is probably a misreading of *muṣṭināhanate vyomaṁ pibate mṛgatṛṣṇikām*) in its tenth chapter (NGMPP Reel No. B 118/7 = NAK manuscript no. 5-4632).

3. *Parallels, idioms, and some telltale signs*

Among the numerous parallel passages, one may distinguish between two types. In the first one, which represents the majority of cases, the parallels run very close to each other; and due to this closeness, there is no doubt that they go back to a common source. Sanderson (2009) shows that in all the examples he examines, the Śaiva source can either be considered the original, or at least the primary of the two. Similarly, Hatley (2018, 109ff) shows that the *Brahmayāmala* is either the direct or indirect source of *Laghuśaṁvara* 26.15, and that the original text becomes uninterpretable in the latter. In passages such as the ones analysed by Hatley (2009, 108) there are a number of additional signs that strongly suggest the direction of borrowing: for instance, the disappearance of the vocatives of the goddess (*devi*, etc.) in the Buddhist version, or the word *śiva* replaced by *yoga*.

There is another type of parallel in which the two texts do not run as closely together as in the examples above. Such is the case of the passage on initiation given in Sanderson 2009, 203ff, where the *Jayadrathayāmala* is the source of several chapters of the *Laghuśaṁvara*. While some *pāda*s agree verbatim, others are misplaced, paraphrased or simply omitted; in other words, this parallel is less neat than the other ones. For this very reason, Sanderson assumes that there might be a third text which was the direct source of the *Laghuśaṁvara*, but, as he shows, the model was certainly Śaiva. In such cases, there are several details that can clearly demonstrate the dependence of the *Laghuśaṁvara* on a Śaiva original, and Sanderson shows several of them.

In addition to the numerous examples analysed by Sanderson to show the dependence of this section of the *Laghuśaṁvara* on a Śaiva source, one could also cite a telltale sign that clearly betrays a Śaiva original: the expression *dakṣiṇāmūrtim āśritya* 'turning toward the southern image [of the god]' in *Laghuśaṁvara* 3.4d. This is in fact a very old Śaiva expression going back to the *Pāśupatasūtra*s (1.9 *mahādevasya dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ*) and recurring in the oldest Tantra, the *Niśvāsa*.[6] The

[6] The *Niśvāsamukha* uses it in 4.73 when summarising the Pāśupata observance: *ekavāso hy avāso vā dakṣiṇāmūrtim āśritaḥ*; 'in one piece of garment or without any clothes, he should resort to the southern image.' The tantric expression *dakṣiṇāyāṁ*

expression refers to the fact that the guru or the disciple must face the southern face or embodiment of Śiva on a four-faced (*caturmukha*) *liṅga*.[7] In the Śaiva context, this implies that the person faces the auspicious north, and the southern Aghora or Bhairava face of Śiva, which is the face associated with success (*siddhi*) in obtaining supernatural powers, including liberation (*mukti*). Kṣemarāja also points out that this face can destroy all the bonds (*pāśa*) of the bound soul.[8] The redactor of the *Laghuśaṁvara* retained this expression, which is out of context and uninterpretable in the Buddhist milieu. Consequently, the commentator Bhavabhaṭṭa, when commenting on this expression, struggles to find a meaningful way to interpret it. First, he takes it to mean that one must face the southern direction (*dakṣiṇābhimukhaḥ*), which is somewhat unlikely, for facing the south implies looking towards death (Yama), and it is usually considered inauspicious in South Asia.[9] Perhaps for this reason, Bhavabhaṭṭa then tries to find another interpretation: *bhagavato dakṣiṇāvartena caityavandanākrameṇa vā*; 'alternatively, [it can mean that one must be] turning around the Lord having him on the right side, in the way in which one does a reverential circumambulation of a *caitya*.' While this sounds less inauspicious, it is certainly a stretch from *dakṣiṇāmūrtim āśritya*, 'resorting to the southern image.' Clearly at a loss, David Gray proposes a word-by-word translation, i.e. 'resting his body to the south,' understanding *mūrti* to refer to the body of the subject (who must cast a flower). Note that the earliest commentator, Jayabhadra, avoids giving a commentary here, and another one, Kambala, explains away the expression by pointing out that facing different directions will give different results.[10] Typically, Śaiva expressions such as *dakṣiṇāmūrtim*

mūrtau (for *dakṣiṇasyāṁ mūrtau*) recurs many times in the *Guhyasūtra* of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā*.

[7] For a discussion see e.g. *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* vol III, s.v. *dakṣiṇāmūrti*.

[8] See the commentary on *Svacchandatantra* 4.39: *dakṣiṇāsyasya cāśeṣapāśadāhakatvāt*. See also Abhinavagupta in the *Tantrasāra* (13.17): *tatra mumukṣur uttarābhimukhas tiṣṭhet yathā bhagavadaghoratejasā jhaṭity eva pruṣṭapāśo bhavet*; 'There someone who wants to obtain liberation should face north so that he should have his bonds eliminated in an instant by the fiery power of Lord Aghora.'

[9] This rule is however sometimes violated on purpose both in Śaiva and Buddhist Tantras.

[10] For more details, see Gray's translation of the passage (2007, 173).

āśritaḥ, which cannot be interpreted in a Buddhist context, are among the most conspicuous telltale signs that point to a Śaiva original of the passage, whether we can identify the direct source or not.

Returning to the typology of parallels, in addition to the above mentioned two categories, the close parallel and the more distant but clearly Śaiva parallel, one could establish a third category: when the building blocks of these texts are similar or identical. If one dissects the *Laghuśaṁvara* into its basic metrical units or *pāda*s (even if the text is not always metrical, contrarily to Śaiva scriptures), it turns out that most of them have one or usually several parallels in Śaiva Tantras, which are either identical or nearly identical. Most importantly, they almost always correspond in the placement of the same word(s) in the same part of the *śloka* pattern. This is true at least for the bulk of the first two chapters, as Table 1 shows, based on individual searches of each *pāda*. Such a comparison would better be done by a computer-assisted analysis, but even this manual search managed to pick out many similar metrical units. Perhaps not all the parallels are worth noting, as some expressions may be just too general to be significant or may be similar coincidentally (although I tried to exclude expressions that were common in the epics, for instance, and I have excluded the parallel identified by Sanderson in the *Jayadrathayāmala*). However, the cumulative evidence this table provides suggests that the *Laghuśaṁvara* uses the same or very similar basic units to produce its text, which may be unlike other Buddhist tantric scriptures that are partly in prose (such as the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṁgraha* or the *Guhyasamāja*, categorised as representing a lower status of revelation by the exegetes) and unlike other versified Buddhist Tantras of its kind. Indeed, the *Laghuśaṁvara* could be seen as a unique patchwork of Śaiva expressions.

The two chapters of the *Laghuśaṁvara* cited in Table 1 also figure in the less close parallel with the *Jayadrathayāmala* pointed out and analysed in Sanderson 2009. On the one hand, the cumulative evidence of parallels in Table 1 strengthens Sanderson's hypothesis that the passage may come from a related (possibly lost) Śaiva source; on the other, it suggests that the *Laghuśaṁvara* may share the idiom of Śaiva Śākta Tantras even where no strict or close parallel is found.

It also becomes apparent from Table 1 that many *pāda*s are shared in particular with the *Brahmayāmala*. These shared *pāda*s include some less

Laghuśaṁvara	**Śaiva Tantras**
1.16a girigahvarakuñjeṣu	girigahvaram āśrite SvT 6.1d
1.15b mahodadhitaṭeṣu vā	≈ mahodadhitaṭeṣu ca BY 21.108d ≈ mahodadhitaṭe tathā TSB 15.19d, KMT 25.47d
1.15c ādisiddh-a/-e śmaśāne ca	ekavṛkṣe śmaśāne ca Ni Gu 8.4a araṇye ca śmaśāne ca KKGU 24.101c etc.
1.15d tatra maṇḍalam ālikhet	= BY 62.187d
2.1a tatra pāta/pāna-gomayena	tatra maṇḍalakaṁ kṛtvā gomayena mahāmati BY 18.34ab
2.1b maṇḍalabhūmiṁ pralepayet	tatra vediṁ pralepayet JY 2.19.10d
2.1c śmaśānabhasmanā yuktaṁ	śmaśānabhasma saṁgṛhya TSB 21.53c+66a
2.1d pañcāmṛtasamanvitam	= BY 70.38d
2.2a upalipya tato bhūmiṁ	= *Saurasaṁhitā* 9.93a
2.2b tatra maṇḍalam ārabhet	tatra maṇḍalam ālikhet BY kṛtvā maṇḍalam ārabhet JY 2.19.94
2.3a cityāṅgāracūrṇena	cityaṅgārais tadudbhavaiḥ VīŚ 178d
2.3b śmaśāneṣṭakasaṁyu(k)tam	= śmaśāneṣṭakasaṁyutam BY 5.119d śmaśāneṣṭakasaṁyuktā BY 81.75a
2.3c āliken maṇḍalaṁ divyam	madhye tu maṇḍalaṁ divyam TSB, SvT pūjayet maṇḍalaṁ divyam BY
2.4a saṁyagjñānatantrajñaḥ	tantrajñaḥ (common)
2.4b śrīherukamantrajñaḥ	mantrajñaḥ (common)
2.4d yogajño jñānapāragaḥ	-jño jñānapāragaḥ (common)
2.5a kapālakṛtamūrdhajañ	kapālakṛtaśekharaḥ BY, JY, SJU, etc.
2.5b bhasmanānuliptāṅga-	divyagandhānuliptāṅgaḥ SvT SJU Ni Gu bhasmalepitasarvāṅgo SYM 10.5a
2.5d asthimālāsaṁsthitaś ca	asthimālair vibhūṣitā TSB 7.53b asthimālākṣasūtradhṛk JY 2.23.52b
2.6c khaṭvāṅgakarasaṁsthitaḥ	= BY 21.72b
2.6d ātmānaṁ śrīherukaṁ kṛtvā	ātmānaṁ bhairavaṁ dhyātvā SvT 2.55a
2.7bc śrīherukatvaṁ tataḥ smarec cakram asya hṛdi nyaset	tato hṛdyāgam ācaret SvT 2.55b
2.8a evaṁ saṁnahya -m- ātmānaṁ	Cf. vidyāṅgaiś ca susaṁnaddho SYM 3.6c
2.9d 'bhedyas tridaśair api	Cf. avadhyas tridaśair api SvT, TSB, etc. common
2.10d mahāsiddhipradāyakam	= JY, KRU, etc.
2.15a kapālamālābharaṇam	= -am/=ām SvT, SYM, BY, TSB, etc.
2.15b divyaṁ trinetraṁ caturmukham	caturvadanaśobhanam SYM 20.24b trinetrāṁ vikṛtānanām TSB 21.70b
2.15c hasticarmāvaruddhaṁ ca	gajacarmottarīyakam SvT 2.93d, JY, etc. gajacarmāvṛtapaṭaṁ SvT 9.6c
2.16a khaṭvāṅgakṛtahastaṁ	khaṭvāṅgadhāriṇan BY 81.146a
2.23a sūtreṇa veṣṭayet kaṇṭhāṁ	sūtreṇa veṣṭayed grīve BY 34.71a sūtreṇa veṣṭayet kaṇṭhe SvT 3.102a
2.23b pallavāgrasamanvitān	pallavaiś caiva śobhitāṁ BY 34.71b

Table 1

Abbreviations used in Table 1: BY = *Brahmayāmala*, SvT = *Svacchandatantra*, TSB = *Tantrasadbhāva*, SYM = *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, JY = *Jayadrathayāmala*, KMT = *Kubjikāmata*, KKGU = *Kriyākālaguṇottara*, KRU = *Kularatnoddyota*, NiGu = *Guhyasūtra* of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā*, VīŚ = *Vīṇāśikha*, SJU = *Sarvajñānottara*

ubiquitous and therefore more significant ones, such as 2.3b (*śmaśāneṣṭa-kasaṁyu*[*k*]*tam*) or 2.6c (*khaṭvāṅgakarasaṁsthitaḥ*). Thus, although the parallel of *Laghuśaṁvara* 1–2 is with the *Jayadrathayāmala* on the whole, the greatest number of corresponding *pāda*s can be found in the *Brahmayāmala.* Considering that most borrowed passages in the *Laghuśaṁvara* also seem to come from the *Brahmayāmala*, the unique closeness of these two scriptures is beyond doubt.

4. *Burnt clay*

Among the unique parallel *pāda*s shared by the *Laghuśaṁvara* and the *Brahmayāmala*, one refers to a material not very commonly met with otherwise, namely *śmaśāneṣṭaka*, translated by Gray as 'charnel ground brick.' It seems to occur once in the *Laghuśaṁvara*[11] and twice in the *Brahmayāmala*, in slightly different contexts. In the *Brahmayāmala*, in both passages (5.119d and 81.75a), it is used in a mixture to anoint images (*abhyaṅgayet/lepayet*), while in the *Laghuśaṁvara* one is to draw the *maṇḍala* with it. The latter usage is confirmed by the commentators of the *Laghuśaṁvara*, for Jayabhadra introduces the passage by saying that the preparation of the (coloured) powders is explained, while Kambala spells out that pulverised charred material from the funeral pyre is used for black (*kṛṣṇarajaś cityaṅgāracūrṇena*), pulverised human bones for white (*sitarajo narāsthicūrṇena*), while 'cremation ground brick' is for red.

The mention of bricks is puzzling, for no brick buildings, nor any sacrificial altars made of brick can normally be found in a cremation ground. In ritual contexts, bricks may be used when constructing fire pits (*kuṇḍa*) or the sacrificial pavilion (*maṇḍapa*), in which case they are

[11] Note that this compound also occurs, in the same context of *maṇḍala* drawing, in the *Hevajratantra* (1.1.51).

usually called *pakveṣṭaka*, 'baked brick,'[12] for they are indeed prepared by putting clay in a kiln.

However, clay can naturally be found in a cremation ground, as many passages attest. Cremation ground clay is used for fashioning a doll in the form of a victim,[13] or for making divine images[14] and vases.[15] The compound *śmasāneṣṭaka* may therefore denote the clay found in the cremation ground that became burnt in the funeral pyre and resulted in small pieces of red *terra cotta* or, more precisely, *terra bruciata* 'burnt earth.'[16] Given that a funeral pyre can produce a heat over 600 or 700 degrees Celsius, at this temperature clay can be transformed without putting it in a kiln. A similar procedure called the 'bonfire firing of clay' when done intentionally is used in some traditional societies to produce vases and the like.[17]

Thus, red 'cremation ground brick' was most probably pieces of clay accidentally burnt during cremation. If the clay contained some iron, the resulting colour was indeed *terra cotta* red, as Kambala's commentary suggests. However, if the clay does not contain much iron, its single burning can rather produce what is called bisque colour, which is a slightly yellowish creamy hue. This may explain the fact that Bhavabhaṭṭa mentions yellow (*pīta*) rather than red (*rakta*) when describing the resulting colour.[18]

[12] For the expression *pakveṣṭaka*, which would be more correctly *pakveṣṭakā* (for the standard form is the feminine *iṣṭakā*), see e.g. *Sarvajñānottara* 7.8 and *Svāyambhuva-sūtrasaṁgraha* 19.19.

[13] See e.g. *Tantrasadbhāva* 23.248d (*śmaśānamṛdayākṛtim*) and 23.234a (*kṛtvā śmaśānamṛttulyaṁ rūpakaṁ tair vinirmitam*).

[14] See *Brahmayāmala* 4.288: *smasānamṛdayā vāpi kuryāt pratyakṣadevatāḥ* (note that the manuscript often confuses dental and palatal sibilants).

[15] See *Brahmayāmala* 46.41ab: *smasānamṛdayā kṛtvā kumbham*.

[16] I use this term here to denote accidentally burnt clay, but the term is normally used for clay that got burnt in the ground without requiring any human intervention, and which can mainly be found in some parts of the Mediterranean. See Sevink 2020.

[17] For a description, see https://drojkent.wordpress.com/2019/09/08/mastering-the-basics-of-bonfire-firing-ceramics/ (consulted on the 23rd of November 2024).

[18] He speaks of two colours (*rajodvayam*) resulting from charnel ground charred material (*cityaṅgāra*) and burnt clay from the cremation ground (*śmaśāneṣṭakā*): black and yellow (*kṛṣṇaṁ pītaṁ ca*). He also notes that the text has the short vowel in *iṣṭaka* instead of the long (*iṣṭakāyām hrasvatvam*).

Finally, it may be noted that while *śmaśāneṣṭaka* is a relatively rare compound, there are some other synonyms of it in Śaiva Tantras that occur to describe this red powder, in the company of two other impure substances used for black and white. The *Mṛgendratantra*, for instance, prescribes in the case of more violent *siddhi*s (*abhicāra*) ashes (for white), burnt clay (for red) and charred material (for black) from the funeral pyre (*citā*).[19] The expression referring to the funeral pyre also confirms that the *iṣṭaka*s were indeed burnt clay produced by the cremation itself. Another similar list can be found already in the earliest Śaiva Tantra (although it is in its latest stratum), the *Niśvāsa*'s *Guhyasūtra*, which speaks of powders of ashes, burnt clay and char, again most probably for the colours of white, red and black, respectively.[20]

After this clarification of the materials, let us go back to the original parallel passages of the *Jayadrathayāmala* and the *Laghuśaṁvara*. In fact, at this point, the *Jayadrathayāmala* does not appear to speak of burnt clay, and the parallel *pāda* mentions something very different: 'a beautiful eight-petalled one in the cremation ground' (*śmaśāne* [']*ṣṭadalaṁ śubham*). The expression 'eight-petalled' commonly describes the lotus which is to be drawn in the middle of the *maṇḍala*. However, the prescription has not yet reached that point, it is still about the preliminaries, and the lotus is to be drawn in a passage five verses further down in the text. Moreover, the sentence structure is problematic. In a literal translation, it would run as follows: 'taking cremation ground ashes, a beautiful eight-petalled one in the cremation ground, and pulverised cremation ground char, one should draw up a circle/*maṇḍala* of three lines.'[21] Now, if we replace this problematic *pāda* of the *Jayadrathayāmala* speaking of the eight-petalled one with the *pāda* in the *Laghuśaṁvara* about the burnt clay, the verse makes perfect sense: 'taking (*saṁgṛhya*) cremation ground ashes (*śmaśānabhasma*), together with burnt clay from the cremation

[19] *Mṛgendratantra*, *Kriyāpāda* 8.40cd: *citābhasmeṣṭakāṅgārapramukhaiś cābhicārake*.

[20] This passage concerns the drawing of the *maṇḍala: bhasmāṅgāreṣṭakacūrṇai*[*r*] *abhimantritaḥ ekahastāt samārabhya yathākāmaṁ samālikhet* (*Guhyasūtra* of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā* 14.6).

[21] *Jayadrathayāmala* 3.31.5: *śmaśānabhasma saṁgṛhya śmaśāne ṣṭadalaṁ śubham* | *śmaśānāṅgāracūrṇaṁ tu trirekhaṁ maṇḍalam likhet*.

ground (*śmaśāneṣṭakasaṁyutam*), and pulverised cremation ground char (*śmaśānāṅgāracūrṇaṁ tu*), one should draw up (*likhet*) a circle/*maṇḍala* of three lines (*trirekhaṁ maṇḍalam*).' Not only the *Jayadrathayāmala* passage now yields perfect sense, but the three lines mentioned correspond to the three colours, which are the same as in the *Mṛgendratantra* and the *Guhyasūtra* of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā* passages cited above: ashes for white, burnt clay for red and charred material for black. It might also be noted that in the *Mṛgendratantra* passage the immediate context also concerns the drawing of lines (*rekhā*), and in the *Guhyasūtra* the prescription is similarly about the *maṇḍala*.

One can only hypothesise as to why the *Jayadrathayāmala* was rewritten in such a meaningless way, but it does not seem too far-fetched to assume that, at some point, the transmitters no longer had a clear understanding of what *śmaśāneṣṭaka* was. Given that the wider context described the preparation of *maṇḍala*, they assumed that an eight-petalled lotus had to be meant when they read the line up to *śmaśāneṣṭa-*, which they parsed as *śmaśāne+aṣṭa-* rather than *śmaśāna+iṣṭa*(*ka*)-. The corruption is also explicable, at least in part, paleographically, for *śubham* and *yutam* can look similar in some north-east Indian scripts. No matter how this corruption was produced, it is the Buddhist *Laghuśaṁvara* that helps us to reconstruct a meaningful original Śaiva text here; and the reconstructed line also shows that the parallel with the *Jayadrathayāmala* may be closer than what we may assume at a first glance.

5. *Skull-topped vases*

After the description of the *maṇḍala* ritual, there is a short passage of about a dozen verses in chapter 2 of the *Laghuśaṁvara* that has no parallel at all in the *Jayadrathayāmala*, not even in a patchwork-like pattern. After the worship of the deities on a lotus (in the *maṇḍala*), in whose centre Heruka figures with Vajravārāhī, suddenly, without any transition, the text starts talking about some vases (2.20–25ab):

> *kalaśāṁś ca tataḥ kuryān mūlakālādivarjitān*
> *mauktikair hemaratnaiś ca pravāḍarajatais tāmraiḥ*

sarvabhakṣais tu saṁpūrṇān[22] *kapāloparisaṁsthitaiḥ*[23]
sūtreṇa veṣṭayet kaṇṭhān[24] *pallavāgrasamanvitān*
aṣṭau dvāreṣu vinyasya vastrayugmaiḥ suveṣṭitān
navamam madhyakalaśaṁ vastrayugmena veṣṭitam
kṛtvā rajataṁ hiraṇyaṁ vā ratnamauktikaśobhitān
vikiren maṇḍale sarvān ratnasauvarṇaśobhanān

Then one must make the vases, which are devoid of [faults] such as a black bottom,[25] [filled] with pearls, gold, precious stones, coral, silver; [they are made] of copper[26] and filled with all kinds of food, with skulls placed upon them.[27] One should wind their necks, which are [decorated] with the most beautiful blossoms,[28] with a thread, and wrap a pair of cloths around them. One must place

[22] The edited text reads *susaṁpūrṇāṁ*, which is to be understood as a variant of *susaṁpūrṇān*.

[23] Gray's I and J (two manuscripts of the *Abhidhānottara*) read the accusative plural here, which would be better, for the word should qualify the vases (*kalaśān*). The edited text's instrumental plural may be understood as standing for *kapālaiḥ+uparisaṁsthitaiḥ*, in the sense that the the vases are furnished (*upetān*) with such skulls.

[24] Again the edited text reads *kaṇṭhāṁ* for *kaṇṭhān*.

[25] This is translated by Gray as 'vases without bases, black [in colour] and so forth,' but as Szántó 2008 points out in his review, the compound *mūlakālādivarjitān* is a synonym (albeit an odd one) of *akālamūla(kalaśa)* 'vase whose bottom is not black.' One would rather expect the less ambiguous *kālamūlādivarjitān*, which would still be metrical. Note that Jayabhadra also describes the vases as *akālamūla* (not having a black bottom) in his commentary.

[26] Grammatically, it would be more natural to understand that the vases are to be filled with (pieces) of copper (*tāmraiḥ*), as Gray does in his translation, but this would be somewhat unusual as a prescription, for copper is not precious and is more likely to be used as material for the vases themselves. Indeed, Jayabhadra takes this word to refer to the vases (*tāmrair iti kalaśaviśeṣaṇam*). In this way, the eight vases are made of copper and the central one is made of gold or silver. It is possible that the original reading was *tāmrān*, although this word is unmetrical in any case.

[27] This translation corresponds to *uparisaṁsthitaiḥ kapālaiḥ*, for *kapāloparisaṁsthitaiḥ* should normally be translated by 'established on the top of skulls.' One could also understand the compound to qualify *sarvabhakṣaiḥ*, in which case the food would fill the skulls and not the vases.

[28] I take *agra* in the sense of 'best, excellent.' Gray translates 'their tips adorned with blossoms,' but this seems problematic, because the tips of the necks would be the openings of the vases, where the skulls are placed. One could also translate *pallavāgra* as 'blossom tips,' but it is unlikely that the vases are decorated with just the tips of the blossoms or buds rather than the blossoms themselves.

> eight of them in/at the doors, and make the ninth, which is [also] wrapped in a pair of cloths, the middle vase; it must be made of silver or gold,[29] and decorated with precious stones and pearls. One should then scatter all kinds of gems and pieces of gold as decorations[30] on the *maṇḍala*.

The arrangement of the vases is clearly problematic here. First, the locative *dvāreṣu* suggests that the eight vases should be placed in the four doors of the *maṇḍala*. However, it is unlikely that the vases should block the passage. The locative may also loosely designate the place near which the vases should be placed, and it seems indeed plausible that one should place the vases *at* the doors, as Gray translates. In that case, one might imagine them to be on both sides of the doors, and this kind of arrangement of the eight vases seems to be applied in some representations of this *maṇḍala*, such as the Nepalese Cakrasaṁvara-*maṇḍala* dated around 1100, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York[31] (Fig. 1). These vases are probably meant to be used for the consecration ritual, to sprinkle empowered water on the initiates.[32] However, there remains the problem of the ninth vase. It is said to be placed in the middle, but the middle is taken up by the divine couple both according to the text and according to the artistic representation. What is the function of this ninth vase? And why is it to be placed in the middle?

To answer these questions, I propose to look at a Śaiva Śākta parallel again, that is *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 25.37cd–42ab. Although this time it is not textually close to the *Laghuśaṁvara*, the rituals run parallel and the similarities are striking enough. The Śaiva ritual also prescribes eight vases in a circle and the ninth in the middle, and these vases are also topped with

[29] The words *rajatam* and *hiraṇyam* probably qualify *madhyakalaśam*, therefore they do not seem to be decorations, as Gray understands them ('decorated with gold, silver, jewels and pearls').

[30] I take *ratna* and *sauvarṇa* as a *dvandva* compound, forming a *karmadhāraya* with *śobhana*. Gray understands 'one should scatter precious golden ornaments on the maṇḍala.'

[31] The skulls on top of the vases seem to contain blood. They are easily recognisable by the sutures in the middle. See Fig. 2.

[32] This is also Szántó's assumption (2008).

skulls. The skulls contain blood, corresponding to the representation of the vases in the Nepalese Cakrasaṁvara *maṇḍala* in the Met:

> *evaṁ kṛte digvidikṣu kalaśān vāripūritān*
> *padmapatraniviṣṭāntān kuṅkumena sucarcitān*
> *kṣatajena vidhānajño rocanāyā yutena tu*
> *nṛśirā nyasya vaktreṣu pūrvavat kalpitās tu tāḥ*
> *calena mātṛjaṁ teṣu yathānyāyena pūjayet*
> *atha smṛtvātmarūpaṁ tu bhairavākārarūpiṇam*
> *praviśya maṇḍale vīra upaviśya samīpataḥ*
> *tato 'rcayen mahādevaṁ bhairavaṁ bhairavīpriyam*
> *bhairavyā sahitam devaṁ sarvasiddhyarthakārakam*
> *karṇikāyāṁ nyaset śaṅkhām anye patrāṣṭakāḥ smṛtāḥ*
>
> When the knower of the ritual has finished in this way [the *maṇḍala*], he should place vases filled with water and well-rubbed with saffron in the cardinal and intermediate directions, situated on the tips of the petals[33] of the lotus [of the *maṇḍala*]. Placing human skulls, which were previously prepared with blood and bright yellow pigment[34] [or: with blood and bright yellow pigment being in the vases],[35] on the openings of the vases, he should worship [the God] who is born from the mothers [Śabdarāśibhairava with the eight alphabet mothers] in them, with the Cala [mantra],[36] according to the prescription. Calling to mind the god who has a terrifying/Bhairava form as his own, the practitioner should enter [the place where] the *maṇḍala* [is situated] and sit down near it. Then he should worship the great god Bhairava, Bhairavī's beloved, the god who is together with Bhairavī, and who fulfils every wish. He is to place a skull on the pericarp of the lotus; the other [skulls] are meant [for] the eight petals.

[33] I understand the compound to stand for *padmapatrāntaniviṣṭān*. One could also understand or emend to *-niviṣṭāṁs tān*, in which case the vases would be placed on the petals.

[34] The word *rocanāyā* stands for *rocanayā*, which would be unmetrical.

[35] The line starting with *kṣatajena* probably describes what the skulls are furnished with, but it could also be understood to belong to the previous line, i.e. describing the vases.

[36] The identity of this mantra called *cala* is uncertain, but it is used in both the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* and the *Tantrasadbhāva*.

The deity called 'the one born of mothers' (*mātṛja*) is Śabdarāśibhairava, 'Bhairava of the heap of sounds,' mentioned in the verses preceding the passage. Another chapter (16) of the same text describes this male alphabet deity surrounded by eight mother goddesses who represent seven consonant classes (the five *varga*s, the semi-vowels and the sibilants) and the letter KṢA, while Śabdarāśibhairava stands for the vowels. The sequence of worship follows the common Śaiva pattern in that, firstly, these alphabet deities are worshipped on a lotus design, the mother goddesses being represented by the eight vases, with the ninth, that of Śabdarāśibhairava, in the middle. The practitioner identifies himself with Bhairava and enters the *maṇḍala*. Then the skulls are also placed on a lotus design, the central one standing for Bhairava accompanied by Bhairavī, surrounded by eight goddesses (who are enumerated subsequently). The vases and the skulls are unambiguously identified with the deities of the pantheon and are worshipped as such; in other words, they are not used as consecration vases. In this way, they are employed just as the pan-Śaiva vases of the Śivakumbha and the *vardhanī* (or *astra-kalaśa*), which also represent Śiva and his Śakti, the former being surrounded in some rites by eight vases representing the Vidyeśvaras.[37]

If we return to the *Laghuśaṁvara* passage, it is now clear that the problem is a ritual mismatch. The *Laghuśaṁvara* appears to prescribe this set of vases as consecration vases (although it does not make this function clear), while its probable Śaiva source prescribes the worship of the vases as a set of deities with the central deity as the ninth. The *Laghuśaṁvara* in fact does not need a central vase for the consecration ritual, while the same vase has the important role of standing for the central deity or divine couple in the Śaiva case.

The question may be raised as to why the *Laghuśaṁvara* needs these consecration vases at this point. The Śaiva initiation ritual does not involve consecration when the *maṇḍala* ritual is performed, for consecration is only given to a future guru or a *sādhaka* in a separate rite. However, the Buddhist tantric initiation always involves consecration as its major element. Indeed, consecration (*abhiṣeka*) is usually considered its most

[37] For an outline of the role of these water jars, see the entry *kumbha* in the *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* vol II. As pointed out there, the set of nine jars can also be used for consecration, representing Śiva surrounded by the eight Vidyeśvaras in Saiddhāntika contexts.

important part, and this is the case already in what may be the earliest mention[38] of the *maṇḍala* ritual in a Buddhist context (fifth–sixth centuries CE), in a Gilgit fragment entitled *Mahāmaṇivipulavimānasupratiṣṭhitaguhyaparamarahasyakalpadhāraṇī* (fol. 53r5):[39]

> *maṇḍalakaṁ suracitaṁ kṛtvā tato praveśadvāreṇa gatvodakapūrṇaṁ dvau kalaśau sthāpya* […] *yathābhiṣiktamātraś ca sarvāṇi niva*[*raṇā*]*ni pūrvajanmasaṁjātāni karmāvaraṇāni viśuddhāni bhavanti sarvaśuddhaparigṛhīto* [*bha*]*vati*: *sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhitaḥ sarvatathāgatābhiṣiktaḥ sarvatathāgatasamāśvas*[*taḥ*]
>
> Having well prepared the *maṇḍala*, he should then go to the entrance door and place two vases filled[40] with water there […] And as soon as he is just consecrated, all troubles [and] all the karmas that cover that person and that are produced in previous births become purified. He will be possessed by all the purities, being as he is empowered, consecrated and reanimated by all the Tathāgatas.

This Gilgit passage is also notable because of the arrangement of the two consecration vases, which are placed next to the door. Such placement may have been the reason why the *Laghuśaṁvara* also places the vases at the doors, two at each, rather than in a circle. Here, if there was a Śaiva original (as I propose), it might have read *aṣṭau patreṣu* ('eight on the petals') or something similar, for the vases are placed on the petals of the lotus design when they represent deities (see also the *padmapatra* mentioned in *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 25.38a cited above).

To summarise my hypothesis concerning this ritual parallel of the nine skull-topped vases in the *Laghuśaṁvara* and the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*: the *Laghuśaṁvara* passage may have well been taken over from a similar Śaiva prescription as the one found in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, with the vases and the skulls representing the deities. In the Śaiva version, they

[38] This is first pointed out in Sanderson 2009, 234–235. It may however be noted that in this particular case, consecration precedes the entry to the *maṇḍala*, while later on it is performed after the *maṇḍalavidhi*.

[39] Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts 22, plates 1724–1733, as in Matsumura 1983.

[40] The word *pūrṇam* should be in the dual as the vases (*kalaśau*), but the meaning seems clear in spite of this problem.

represent two sets of deity groups, with a central Bhairava in the middle, surrounded by eight goddesses, placed on an eight-petalled lotus design. The redactor of the *Laghuśaṁvara* may have taken over a similar passage about the vases for the purpose of having a consecration ritual that should close the *maṇḍalavidhi*, for any decent Buddhist tantric initiation had to involve a consecration. However, the vases of the Buddhist consecration ritual, although they are empowered by a mantra,[41] do not normally represent deities in the same way as in the Śaiva ritual. They are deposited at the entrance door or doors, in this case at the entrance doors of the *maṇḍala*, and are used as ritual implements. The borrowing therefore resulted in a ritual mismatch: what represented deities in the Śaiva context came to be ritual tools in the Buddhist one. This mismatch was particularly problematic because of the central vase, which represented the main deity or deity couple in the Śaiva context, but which now had no purpose or use in the Buddhist one.

The original function of the vases representing deities was nonetheless not fully ignored in the Buddhist context. The earliest commentator, Jayabhadra, explains that if one's resources are limited, then there are nine vases, but otherwise one should use thirty-nine, and twelve of the vases are dedicated to deities of the pantheon.[42]

Finally, it is also surprising that in spite of the presence of these vases in the text, the *Laghuśaṁvara* has no description of a prominent consecration ritual (*abhiṣeka*).[43] Consecration is mentioned on the side, in two somewhat obscure passages, at the end of the worship of the wheel of

[41] In the case of the above-mentioned Gilgit fragment, the mantra is *oṁ maṇi vipula supratiṣṭhita siddha abhiṣiṁca māṁ sarvatathā[ga]tābhiṣekai bhara bhara saṁbhara hūṁ hūṁ*. It is also clear from this mantra that the vase and its water do not represent all the Tathāgatas, but the consecration water with which the Tathāgatas consecrate the initiand.

[42] He must of course change the number of vases to match his interpretation: *alābhe kalaśā nava | lābhe tu punaḥ kalaśānāṁ pañcaviṁśatiḥ, lāmādīnāṁ kalaśa-catuṣṭayaṁ, kākāsyādīnām aṣṭau kalaśāḥ, sārvakarmikavijayakalaśau dvau, sarva ekonacatvāriṁśad bhavanti*; 'If they are not [much] available, then there are nine vases. But if they are, then there are [first of all] twenty-five, and [in addition to those] four vases for Lāmā and the other goddesses, and eight vases for Crow-Faced and other goddesses, two vases for all ritual actions and victory—altogether thirty-nine vases.'

[43] This is already remarked in Sanderson 2009, 209ff, showing how the commentators try to find allusions to the famous consecrations that are altogether missing here.

deities (*cakrapūjā*)[44] and after entry to *maṇḍala* (*maṇḍalapraveśa*);[45] but its description is not given. The total lack of this otherwise crucial element of the Buddhist initiation ritual suggests, once again, that the textual and ritual sources of the *Laghuśaṁvara* may well lie outside Buddhist circles.

6. *Supernatural powers*

The *Laghuśaṁvara*, after describing initiation, gives details of a wide variety of rituals to obtain supernatural powers. A few additional parallels may be found here, again not always fully textual, but rather concerning the ritual procedure. Three examples are examined below, each representing different problems. In the first case, the interpretation of an element is difficult, and a solution is proposed based on various parallels. In the second case, the text of the *Laghuśaṁvara* seems to be very corrupt and the commentaries are particularly fanciful. I propose a revised text with tentative emendations based on Śaiva parallels of mantra manipulation rituals. In the third case, we have no Sanskrit text at all in the *Laghuśaṁvara*, for this part of the work is lost in the original and only the commentaries and the Tibetan translation survive. Having found the probable Śaiva source of this passage, I propose that the *Laghuśaṁvara*'s reading must have been very close to it (although not fully identical).

6.1 *Flying, using a tree*

One of the most curious superpowers is described in the prose passage 9.2.1 of the *Laghuśaṁvara*: *vṛkṣam āruhya yatrecchati tatra gacchati*,

[44] *Laghuśaṁvara* 2.26a: *gandhokena saṁsicya ātmānaṁ sarvatomukham*; 'having consecrated himself with fragrant water as the one turning in all the directions.' Note that this is self-consecration, and that the expression *sarvatomukha*, although it may apply to Brahmā or Agni in some contexts, is an extremely common epithet of Śiva and his four-faced *liṅga* in Śaiva Tantras.

[45] *Laghuśaṁvara* 3.21ff: *eṣa yogavaraḥ śreṣṭhaḥ sarvayogeṣu cottamaḥ | yaḥ kāṅkṣiṣyate kaścit sa devāsuramānuṣān | abhibhūya gamiṣyaty atra maṇḍale yo 'bhiṣiktaḥ | sarvatantroktasādhakaḥ | gopya īkṣaṇa pāṇiṁ tu āliṅga dvandvam ādikam | abhiṣikto bhavet tatra sarvatantraikam uttaram | tattvasaṁgrahe saṁvare vāpi guhye vā vajrabhairave.* In this problematic passage, it is simply repeated that the person consecrated in this *maṇḍala* will have the right to practice all the Tantras, including, as mentioned at the end, the *Tattvasaṁgraha* (i.e. the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṁgraha*) and the *Saṁvara* (i.e. the *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinījālasaṁvara*).

'Having climbed a tree, he goes where he wants to.' Commentators try to explain this *siddhi* in various ways. Jayabhadra understands that *vṛkṣa* does not mean tree, but a machine (probably understood as made of wood) which is used to walk in the air,[46] while Bhavabhaṭṭa says that the word tree means a fivefold or five-formed (*pañcākāraḥ*? perhaps for *pañcaprakāraḥ*?) yoga practice, and that going wherever one wants means that one obtains whatever one desires.[47]

One could also imagine some other solutions, such as that the practitioner uses a wooden plank to sit on for flying, in which case *vṛkṣa*, 'tree,' would stand for *kāṣṭha*, 'wood.' This would be a possibility according to most dictionaries, such as Monier-Williams', but one that does not sound very natural. Alternatively, some flying tree may be used, which also defies imagination to some extent.

There are Śaiva Śākta passages that describe the same superpower in the following terms:

> *āruhya śakaṭaṁ vṛkṣaṁ yatreṣṭaṁ tatra gacchati* |
> *āyojanaśataṁ gatvā punar āgacchate drutam* ||
> *Jayadrathayāmala* 3.26.74
>
> Having climbed on a cart or a tree, he may go wherever he wishes. Having gone a hundred miles, he can come back quickly.
>
> *vṛkṣe vā śakaṭe vāpi āsane śayane pi vā* |
> *yāne vāruhya vidhivad gacchate tu manepsitam* ||
> *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 25.87
>
> Having climbed a tree, on a cart, a seat, a bed or a vehicle according to prescription, one shall go wherever one's mind desires.

The tree appears to be used in the manner of a vehicle in these contexts. No matter how it is used, it is neither a machine nor a yoga practice, but functions somehow as a means to fly. Indeed, the *Laghuśaṁvara* itself has another mention of this *siddhi*, where the tree is mentioned next to a palace, and all these means appear to be in the locative (10.6.1):

[46] Jayabhadra *ad* 9.2.1: *vṛkṣam āruhya yatrecchati tatra gacchati, vidyayā saha yantram āruhya sann ākāśagāmī bhavati*.

[47] Cf. Bhavabhaṭṭa *ad* 10.6.1: *vṛkṣaḥ pañcākāro yogas tam āruhya yatrecchati yam icchati labdhuṁ, taṁ prāpnoti.*

> *prāsādadrumabhuvaneṣv āruhya yojanakoṭiṁ ḍākinyā saha gacchati | ākāśe gatvā punar āgacchati.*

Here, Bhavabhaṭṭa understands that the words for palace and tree (*prāsāda-druma*) are used as stem forms instead of the accusative case, while he understands the locative *bhuvaneṣu* to mean 'in the [three] worlds.'[48] In other words, he takes the first part to mean 'Having climbed a palace or a tree, he shall go ten million leagues with a Ḍākinī in the [three] worlds.' This, however, is perhaps somewhat forced. As the above cited passage of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* shows, *āruh-* is commonly used with the locative of the object (onto) which one climbs, although it is certainly more correct usage to have the object in the accusative. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Bhavabhaṭṭa prefers seeing accusatives appearing as stem forms. However, one may simply interpret the passage to mean the following:

> If one climbs [to the top of] a palace, a tree or a mansion (*bhuvana*), one shall go as far as ten million miles together with a Ḍākinī. Moving in the air, one shall then come back.

I take *bhuvana* to be a *varia lectio* of *bhavana* in the sense of 'house, mansion,' given that these two forms alternate very often in tantric texts.[49] This passage, combined with the other occurrences, in turn suggests that the tree is perhaps not used as a vehicle, but possibly as a point of departure, just as the top of a high-rising palace or mansion. In other words, the practitioner is supposed to fly thanks to the power of the appropriate mantra (and ritual), but he may use a tool for flying such as a seat or a vehicle, or he may use a launch place that is situated relatively high, such as [the top of] a tree, a palace or a mansion.

6.2 *Neutralising another mantra practitioner*

Some prescriptions of the *Laghuśaṁvara* are not only difficult to imagine, but the text is also difficult to construe, even if one allows for many tantric

[48] Cf. Bhavabhaṭṭa *ad* 10.6.1: *prāsādadrumeti dvitīyā dvivacanalope sati | bhuvaneṣv iti | svargādibhuvanatraye.*

[49] In fact, this variation has even been noted in a dictionary, see Monier-Williams 1899 (MW) at *bhuvana*. Apte notes it only as Vedic usage.

irregularities. One such passage is the description of a *siddhi* that results in paralysing an enemy with the help of mantras. Here is the passage edited by Gray, with two small corrections and a literal translation:

> *ye prasiddhikarā mantrā bhedaṁ teṣāṁ*[50] *yathākramam* |
> *varṇadūtyādi yan*[51] *mantraṁ śaravega*[52] *paribhramet* ||
> *anyonyaghaṭitā mantrāḥ praveśena tu bheditāḥ* |
> *bījamālāṁ tato grastāṁ hūṁkārāntaḥpratiṣṭhitā* ||
> *nirodhāt tu bhavet sādhyaḥ padam ekaṁ na gacchati* | 35.2–4
>
> [Here is] the breaking[53] of those mantras that produce success, in due order. The mantra that is [made of] letters and *dūti* (?) must go around as fast as an arrow. The mantras are united with each other/rubbed against each other[54] and made to be broken by entering.[55] Then the garland of seed syllables is consumed, established inside HŪṂ syllables.[56] Due to his confinement, the victim will not be able to make a single step.

While many details are obscure in the passage, it seems clear that some mantra manipulation is performed, whereby one can neutralise the adversary's mantras and, in the end, confine him.

[50] Here Gray retains the manuscripts' *vakṣyāmi* added after *bhedaṁ*, which seems to be missing in Bhavabhaṭṭa's commentary and is not retained in Pandey's edition. I understand this verb to have been added secondarily, possibly to account for the accusative *bhedam*.

[51] Pandey has *tan* here, which does not change the meaning.

[52] Gray retains *śaravegena* from the oldest A manuscript, but the commentators (and Pandey's edition with Bhavabhaṭṭa's commentary) read a metrically correct *śaravega*. The stem form may be emended to or understood to stand for an adverbial accusative (or for the instrumental, as Bhavabhaṭṭa takes it).

[53] The accusative is used here for the nominative, or the neuter for the masculine, which is very common in all forms of tantric Sanskrit.

[54] There is considerable confusion between the verbs *ghaṭ-* and *ghaṭṭ-* even in standard Sanskrit, as the dictionaries attest (see MW in particular). The former would mean 'to unite' the latter would mean 'to rub/collide against.'

[55] It is unclear what enters what. It may be because of this enigmatic expression that commentators have very fanciful interpretations of the passage.

[56] There is an inconsistency in that two words in the feminine are in the accusative (*bījamālāṁ grastām*) and one in the nominative (*-pratiṣṭhitā*). I take all of them to be understood in the nominative. The commentators understand the verb *nirodhayet*, i.e. that 'one should block' the garland of seed syllables. Since the result is clearly the neutralisation of the seed syllables, it does not change the meaning fundamentally.

Similar passages can be found in Śaiva contexts, too, the following instance being formulated somewhat closely to what we have in the *Laghuśaṁvara*:

> *calena sahito dhyāto digvidikṣu vyavasthitaḥ |*
> *hūṁkārānalavinyāso yatra tatropadiśyate |*
> *yo 'pi tatraiva saṁyojya hūṁkārānalamaṇḍalam |*
> *tena -m- āruddhamātras tu padam ekaṁ na gacchati |*
> *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 26.33–34
>
> The placement of the fire of HŪṀ syllable(s), endowed with the Cala [mantra] and visualized [in the form of fire] in all the cardinal and intermediate directions, is taught in all cases. He who is simply surrounded by the fire circle of HŪṀ placed there by the practitioner will not be able to make even one single step.[57]

The mantra manipulations are very similar in that it is the syllable HŪṀ that blocks the enemy, who is then said to be unable to make a single step. The same chapter of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* also teaches various methods (26.44ff) of how to break (*chedana/bhedana*) other practitioners' mantras, therefore the proximity of the Śaiva and Bauddha passages is remarkable, even if the exact wording and the order of presentation are not the same.

Surprisingly, the commentators of the *Laghuśaṁvara* take the prescription to speak of a very different procedure. The tradition of this interpretation may have been started by the first commentator, Jayabhadra, who writes the following (in Gray's translation, who translates *praveśa* by 'placement'):

> Separated by means of placement means that, in the procedure of pacification, in one's mouth there are mantric syllables that enter within with the form of a linked chain. They are discharged from the urethra, and again enter the goddess' womb through the vagina. [Then] they proceed from the goddess' mouth to one's own mouth. In the fierce rites, it is distinguished by their procession from one's own mouth to the goddess' mouth.[58]

[57] Although the syntax is problematic here, the meaning seems clear.

[58] See Gray 2007, 313. Jayabhadra's text reads (in Sugiki 2001, 135): *praveśena tu bheditā iti śāntividhau svamukhād antaḥpraviṣṭāni mantrākṣarāṇi śṛṅkhalādāmarūpāṇi*

This interpretation may have been triggered by certain irregularities of language and most probably also by the appearance of the *dūti*, 'female ritual partner,' understood as denoting a goddess.

Now if we look at various other passages borrowed by the *Laghuśaṁvara* from Śaiva sources, it turns out that the word *dūtī*/*dūti* often replaces various words in the original Śaiva text. When borrowing from the *Brahmayāmala* (chapters 84–85), the *Laghuśaṁvara* replaces the word *dravya* (substance) with *dūtī*, *devatā* (deity) with the plural *dūtayaḥ*, and *unmattam* (fool) again with *dūtayo*. Although the reason for this is not transparent (does the redactor of the *Laghuśaṁvara* want to make the text more esoteric?), the usage of *dūtī*/*dūti* as a wild card is quite striking. For this reason, *dūtī* may well have replaced some other word here that is used in mantra manipulation rituals, such as *nuti* 'homage,' which would be a synonym of *namaḥ*, an ordinary part of mantras. In that case, *varṇanutyādi* in the passage could describe a mantra that has letters (*varṇa*), homage (*namaḥ*), etc.[59]

Furthermore, although the commentators appear to read *hūṁkārāntaḥpratiṣṭhitā* 'established inside HŪṀ syllable(s)' in the feminine, qualifying the garland of seed syllables (*bījamālā*), the earliest manuscript used in Gray's edition from possibly the twelfth century has a masculine ending here (*-pratiṣṭhitaḥ*, duly copied by manuscripts C and B). Bhavabhaṭṭa, who appears to read the feminine, also states that it is the victim who is established in between two HŪṀ syllables.[60] Given this evidence and the Śaiva Śākta parallel, it seems quite possible that the text indeed had the masculine reading here. The exact way in which this confinement is produced remains unspecified: the victim may be in the middle of a circle of (fiery) HŪṀ syllables as is prescribed in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*; or his name may be enclosed between two HŪṀ syllables, as Bhavabhaṭṭa's commentary suggests.

vajramārgeṇotsṛṣṭāni punar api padmamārgeṇa devatīgarbhapraviṣṭāni devatīmukhāt svamukham iti kramaḥ | krūravidhau tu svamukhād devatīmukhakrameṇeti viśeṣaḥ.

[59] This remains of course completely conjectural. One might also conjecture *varṇajātyādi*, for mantras also have a *jāti* element (*namaḥ, svāhā, vaṣaṭ, vauṣaṭ, huṁ* and *phaṭ*) see TAK vol. II under *jāti*.

[60] *hūṁkārantaḥpratiṣṭhitām iti | hūṁkārayor antaḥ pratiṣṭhitaḥ sādhyo yasyāṁ sā tathā.*

Finally, although commentaries read the word *ghaṭitāḥ* and understand it to mean 'joined/united,' *ghaṭita* and *ghaṭṭita* are often confused. The latter would rather mean a more violent meeting of things, i.e. 'collided/hit/rubbed,' which may be more appropriate in the context, given that mantras are being whirled around.[61] As a result of these considerations, I would propose the following pre-commentarial reconstruction and understanding of the *Laghuśaṁvara* passage:[62]

> *ye prasiddhikarā mantrā bhedaṁ teṣāṁ yathākramam |*
> *varṇanutyādi yan mantraṁ śaravegaṁ paribhramet ||*
> *anyonyaghaṭṭitā mantrāḥ praveśena tu bheditāḥ |*
> *bījamālā tato grastā*[63] *hūṁkārāntaḥpratiṣṭhitaḥ ||*
> *nirodhāt tu bhavet sādhyaḥ padam ekaṁ na gacchati |*
>
> [Here is], in order, the breaking of those mantras which may accomplish success [for the enemy, if not neutralised]. The [enemy's] mantra that consists of letters, reverence etc. must go around in circles, with the speed of an arrow. The mantra-[element]s, hitting/colliding against each other are made to break by entering [one another]. Then the [enemy's] sequence of mantra syllables (*bījamālā*) will be annihilated. The victim should then stand inside HŪṂ syllables, which should block him[64]—he will not be able to make a single step.

In this way, the prescription initially focuses on how to neutralise the enemy's mantras. Once the mantra elements, seed syllables and other parts, have been destroyed by causing them to whirl around and collide against each other, the enemy can be enclosed in HŪṂ syllables to imprison

[61] Note also that the compound *anyonyaghaṭṭana/-ghaṭṭita* 'rubbing/hitting against each other' is much more common, see e.g. *Haravijaya* 2.2 and *Guhyasamāja* p. 116. Cf. also the list of *siddhi*s, although very different ones, in *Brahmayāmala* 75: *vedhana, ghaṭṭana, nirodha, praveśa*. Three of these four terms occur in the *Laghuśaṁvara* passage under discussion.

[62] I assume that the masculine and neuter forms alternate freely for *mantra*, and that *bheda* is treated as neuter.

[63] Note that here, too, the oldest manuscript A and its copies read the nominative against the commentators.

[64] Note that construing *bhavet* with the past participle yields better sense too. The ablative *nirodhāt* may stand for the dative ('for the purpose of blocking') in tantric Sanskrit.

him. Although this reconstruction is based on tentative conjectures and emendations, they alter the text very slightly (apart from *dūti*, which is itself suspect, as shown above), they make use of the oldest manuscript of the *Laghuśaṁvara* and some of the hints of the commentarial tradition (*-pratiṣṭhitaḥ*) and are based on parallels with Śaiva passages. It seems to me important to attempt to make such reconstructions, even if they are tentative, because it is only then that we can understand and appreciate the ways in which the commentators appropriate the text in a period when the ritual and its understanding have probably considerably changed. It seems to me that by the time of the commentators such kriyātantric mantra manipulations as those described in the *Laghuśaṁvara* were perhaps felt too primitive and in need of some esoteric upgrading, and that Jayabhadra's interpretation may well be the result of an attempt at such upgrading.

6.3 *Subjugating a king with his army, etc.*

The short chapter 40 of the *Laghuśaṁvara* is entirely dedicated to the topic of how to subjugate others, but the bulk of it has not survived in the Sanskrit manuscripts. The chapter has been reconstructed from the commentaries and the Tibetan translation in various ways. While Pandey attempts to produce a fully conjectural Sanskrit text, Gray tries to retain only those fragments that can be reconstructed with some certainty. Although Gray is right in not making up a text, I present the chapter with Pandey's conjectures between angle brackets, for the sake of comparison with what is very likely to be the Śaiva Śākta source of this passage. I have slightly re-edited the passage following the readings of the commentators wherever it was possible:

> *tataḥ saṁpravakṣyāmi yena martyaṁ vaśaṁ nayet* |
> *māsena sidhyate vīraṁ mantrayogavidhisthitam* ||
> *piśitādy asya* [*paśyaiva*?] *matsyamāṁsayutasya ca* |[65]

[65] This line has been reconstructed according to Jayabhadra's commentary (*piśitādy asya matsyamāṁsayutasya ceti piśitam ādi paśyeti sāmānyenoktam, asyeti homasya*). Pandey has *piśitaṁ sonmattakena matsyamāṁsena saṁyutam*. Gray has *piśitam asya matsyamāṁsayutasya ca*, remarking that the Tibetan has something of the equivalent of *madya*.

sarvāvastho 'pi vīreśaḥ saptāhāt sādhakasya ca[66] ||
dadāti vipulāṁ siddhiṁ[67] *niśihomaparāyaṇaḥ* |
<aṣṭottaraśatenaiva[68] *trisandhyaṁ sādhayed yadi>* ||[69]
<sasainyaṁ nṛpatiṁ vaśyaṁ ardhena tu vīramantriṇam> ||[70]
<mantriṇaṁ ca tadardhena saptāhād vaśam ānayet> |
sāmantādiṣu[71] *dvātriṁśad dhomayed āhutikramāt* ||
<brāhmaṇaṁ viṁśatir eva saptāhena tu homayet> |
<evaṁ kṣatriyaṁ tu sapta vaiśyaṁ ca pañca homayet> |
<śūdre tu trayam eva syād ekaṁ juhuyāt tv antyaje> ||[72]
<ekam āsanam āśrityaivaṁ vīraḥ kulakramāt> |
<ākarṣayet sarvasattvān mantraśaktyā tu sādhakaḥ> ||

The Śaiva Śākta passage agrees with this passage in all the details. Both texts prescribe impure fire offerings of (probably human) flesh, meat and fish: one hundred and eight to subjugate a king together with his army; fewer, about half of that or fifty, to subjugate a minister (*mantrin*); and thirty-two to subjugate vassal kings (or neighbouring ones, *sāmanta*). Then come the four *varṇa*s in due order. At the end, the *Laghuśaṁvara* has outcasts (*antyaja*) controlled through one offering, while the Śaiva text is lacunose and corrupt at this point. Here is the Śaiva version with a translation:

adhunā saṁpravakṣyāmi pṛthvīśādiṣu sādhanam |
piśitādyasya dravyasya matsyamāṁsayutasya ca ||
parāvasthasya ***deveśe*** *saptāhāt sādhakasya tu* |
dadāti vipulāṁ siddhiṁ niśi yogaparāyaṇe ||
śatāṣṭādhikahomaṁ tu trisandhyaṁ sādhakasya tu |
rājā sakaṭakaṁ ***devi*** *vaśam eti na saṁśayaḥ* ||
pañcāśadbhir ***mahādevi*** *†tadanena† tu mantriṇaḥ* |
sāmantādiṣu sarveṣu dvātriṁśādiṣu homataḥ ||
ekaviṁśad brāhmaṇeṣu homayen †mastakaṁ† niśi |

[66] Gray omits the *ca*, retained by Pandey.

[67] Gray's reconstruction from Jayabhadra's commentary, which has this *pāda*. Pandey prints *mahāsiddhiṁ pradadāti*.

[68] Note that Bhavabhaṭṭa has the *pratīka* '*śatetyādi*.'

[69] Gray reconstructs *trisaṁdhyaṁ aṣṭottaraśatāhutidānaṁ vidhāya tataḥ*.

[70] Gray reconstructs two fragments: *saptena* [xxx] *ardhena tu* [xxx].

[71] Gray reconstructs this on the basis of Bhavabhaṭṭa's commentary, but Pandey prints *sāmantānāṁ*.

[72] Gray reconstructs the same here, except for the verb *syāt*.

kṣatriyāṇāṁ tathā sapta vaiśyānāṁ pañca eva hi ||
trayaḥ śūdreṣu evaṁ vai †*saṁskārāḥ* x x x † *smṛtāḥ* |
evaṁ varṇakramād ***devi*** *vīrāsanagato niśi* ||
anena vidhinā tūrṇaṁ karṣayej jagad eva hi |

> Now I shall teach you the *sādhana*s of [controlling] kings and the like. After seven days [of fire-offering] of materials such as [human] flesh, together with fish and meat, [the deity/the *sādhana*] shall bestow immense success onto a practitioner established in the Highest Stage and absorbed in the practice at night,[73] O queen of the gods. The practitioner who performs a hundred and eight offerings at the three junctures of the day shall control[74] [even] a king together with his army, O Goddess, no doubt. With fifty [offerings], O Great Goddess, †therefore, with that†[75] ministers will likewise be [under his control] and, starting with thirty-two[76] fire offerings, all neighbouring vassal kings and others. One should offer twenty-one [of such offerings][77] in the fire at night if [he wants to control] Brahmins; for Kṣatriyas he should offer seven, for Vaiśyas five, and three for Śūdras. Thus […] known. In this way, [with offerings] according to the *varṇa*s in order, the practitioner sitting in the heroic posture at night should attract the whole world quickly, O Goddess.

Not only the contents, but also the wording of this passage agrees with what we find in the *Laghuśaṁvara*. Note, for instance, that Pandey reconstructs *aṣṭottaraśatenaiva* for 108, but Bhavabhaṭṭa's *pratīka* has *śatetyādi*, i.e. he may have read *śatāṣṭādhikahomaṁ* as in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*. Certain elements are however missing or transformed in the Buddhist version—most conspicuously, all the vocatives of the goddess (typeset in bold above in the Sanskrit) disappear. Furthermore, the Śaiva

[73] Although the word *yogaparāyaṇe* is in the locative, the oblique cases are often interchangeable in the language of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, therefore I understand it to stand for the genitive with *sādhakasya*. The syntax is nonetheless problematic here for several other reasons too.

[74] Literally, 'a king will come under his control.'

[75] The manuscripts have the readings *tadanena* and *tadenena*, which seem corrupt.

[76] Here, both °*ādi* and the locative ending are difficult to explain, and it is possible that the text is corrupt.

[77] The manuscripts have a word *mastakaṁ*, 'head,' which is certainly corrupt, for it is not heads that are offered.

Śākta text is not unproblematic either (which is not surprising, given that only two late manuscripts of it survive). Nonetheless, the following reconstruction of the *Laghuśaṁvara* may be proposed:

> *adhunā*[78] *saṁpravakṣyāmi yena martyaṁ vaśaṁ nayet* |
> *māsena sidhyate vīraṁ mantrayogavidhisthitam* ||
> *piśitādyasya* [xxx] *matsyamāṁsayutasya ca* |
> *sarvāvastho 'pi vīreśaḥ saptāhāt sādhakasya ca* ||
> *dadāti vipulāṁ siddhiṁ niśi homaparāyaṇe* |[79]
> <*śatāṣṭādhikahomaṁ tu trisandhyaṁ sādhakasya tu*> ||
> <*rājā sakaṭakaṁ* [xx] *vaśam eti na saṁśayaḥ*> |
> <*pañcāśadbhir* [xxxx][80] *tadardhena tu mantriṇaḥ*> |
> *sāmantādiṣu dvātriṁśad dhomayed āhutikramāt* ||
> <*viṁśatiṁ*[81] *brāhmaṇeṣv* [*evaṁ*][82] *homayet saptakaṁ*[83] *niśi*>
> <*kṣatriyāṇāṁ tathā sapta vaiśyānāṁ pañca eva hi*> |
> <*trayaṁ śūdre* [xx] *ekaṁ juhuyād antyaje* [xx]> ||
> <*evaṁ varṇakramād vīra ekam āsanam āśritaḥ*> |[84]
> <*anena vidhinā tūrṇaṁ karṣayej jagad eva hi*> ||

While the wording of this reconstruction is probably closer to the original than what has been proposed thus far by Gray and Pandey, the meaning is not affected. The borrowing is interesting in itself for several reasons. It shows that tantric rituals were potentially involved in warfare; and the subjugation of a king with his army is the first to be mentioned, before the subjugation of different *varṇa*s.

The Śaiva text is probably the earlier among the two to come up with this sequence of subjugating different *varṇa*s with a different number of fire offerings, for Śaiva Śākta texts maintain many aspects of brahmanical

[78] See Jayabhadra's gloss: *adhunetyādinā sāmānyena rājādīnāṁ vaśīkaraṇam āha*.

[79] Jayabhadra remarks: *niśi homaparāyaṇa ity avaśyam eva rātrau kāyahomaḥ kāryaḥ*; 'By saying "at night, which is conducive to/connected with fire ritual" it is stated that the bodily fire ritual should be performed at night by all means.' From this remark, it seems likely that he read two locatives.

[80] One may conjecture *caturbhiś ca* here.

[81] This reading is confirmed by Bhavabhaṭṭa.

[82] *Ex conj*.

[83] Or: *saptāhaṁ*, which would be unmetrical.

[84] This is very tentative, but it is likely that the order of the Śaiva version was maintained (mentioning the *krama* first, and then the *āsana*). Perhaps *varṇa* was replaced by *kula*.

orthopraxy, such as the respect of class hierarchy, even when they prescribe impure offerings such as alcohol and meat.[85] It is nonetheless unusual that the king, ministers, vassals and the army should come as first in such lists, preceding Brahmins.

The Śaiva original allows us to conjecture a somewhat better Sanskrit text for the *Laghuśaṁvara* here, although there must have been several differences between the two versions, for the *Laghuśaṁvara* always adapts its source.[86] In this case, in addition to eliminating the vocatives of the goddess, it must have recomposed some other details too. But the *Laghuśaṁvara* also helps, once again, to better reconstruct the Śākta original in at least three places: the practitioner must concentrate on his fire offerings (*homaparāyaṇe*), rather than on yoga;[87] ministers are subjugated with half of the fire offerings (*tadardhena*) necessary for the subjugation of the king and his army;[88] and it takes seven nights (*saptakaṁ niśi*) of fire rituals to subjugate Brahmins.[89]

[85] See Törzsök 2019, 214ff, citing passages of the *Manusmṛti* borrowed in Śākta Tantras.

[86] For this reason, the above reconstruction remains very tentative, even if some details are confirmed by the commentaries.

[87] The (very corrupt) manuscripts of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* both read *niśi yogaparāyaṇe*; 'at night, concentrating on yoga/practice.' Although this reading does not seem impossible, no special yoga or other practice is prescribed in the passage, nor in the immediate context. The *Laghuśaṁvara* reads *niśi homaparāyaṇe*; 'at night, concentrating on the fire offerings.' This makes much better sense (even if we take the second word to qualify the first, as Jayabhadra does), for the whole passage is about fire rituals. The letters *ma* and *ga* are often confused, therefore the corruption from *homa* to *yoga* is explicable paleographically.

[88] When describing the fire offerings to subjugate a minister, the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* has two words that are not particularly meaningful: *tad anena* 'therefore/that, with that.' From the commentaries of the *Laghuśaṁvara*, it seems likely that there was an expression *tadardhena* 'with half of that' in this line, which was most probably there in the Śaiva version too. This allows one to conjecture *tadardhena* in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, even if the line remains problematic.

[89] There is an odd and inexplicable word that seems certainly corrupt in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*: *mastakam*, in the line that speaks of the fire offerings to subjugate Brahmins. In this line, from the Tibetan translations, Pandey conjectured the word *saptāhena*, 'after seven days.' This element must be at the place of the enigmatic *mastakaṁ*, which is then probably a corruption of *saptakam* (*yāvaddinasaptakaṁ* and similar expression being very common). With *niśi* ending the line, the prescription is for seven nights, rather than seven days. The letters *ma* and *sa* are often confused in all North-Indian scripts, and both the *sta* and *pta* ligatures have the main letter *ta* in them, which justifies the conjecture paleographically.

Conclusion

The *Laghuśaṁvara* appears to borrow from Śākta Śaiva Tantras not only in passages that clearly run parallel to their Śaiva original, but also in its idiom and in ritual details that are not always based on direct textual borrowing. Among the Śākta Tantras, it is very close to the earliest stratum of the corpus and in particular to the *Brahmayāmala*, with which it seems to share some terminological elements and formulae that do not commonly occur elsewhere. This may be explicable by the Eastern origin of both works.

Consequently, the *Laghuśaṁvara* can be best understood, at least as it was conceived at the time of its composition, by looking at these parallels. This does not imply that the Buddhist commentators did not have a legitimate understanding of this text when they proposed an interpretation that seems altogether alien to the original. But the only way to uncover the ways in which Buddhist tantric thought and practice developed is if we also understand the point of departure. For that, it would be essential to re-edit and retranslate the *Laghuśaṁvara* in the light of its Śaiva parallels.

At the same time, the *Laghuśaṁvara* sometimes retains original readings of the Śaiva Śākta Tantras that are irrecoverably corrupt in the Śākta transmission. For this reason, if we want to understand these Śaiva Śākta Tantras, we must compare the texts, often transmitted in a very bad state, with what remains from them in the Buddhist borrowings. In other words, it is of utmost importance that Buddhist and Śaiva tantric studies should further develop together.

Appendix: some additional remarks on the Hevajratantra and Śaiva, especially Kaula, Tantras

Although this paper concerns only the *Laghuśaṁvara* on the Buddhist side, some further thoughts may not be out of place concerning another important Buddhist tantric scripture of the *yoginītantra* category, the *Hevajaratantra*, and its relation to later Śākta Tantras. The *Hevajratantra* does not have the same kind of direct textual relationship with Śaiva Śākta Tantras that the *Laghuśaṁvara* does—its system is much more profoundly permeated by Buddhist thought. It has nonetheless some features that are shared with Śākta Tantras of the more esoteric Kaula branch, which is chronologically later than the early scriptures of the *yoginī* cult and forms a separate, more esoteric school of Śākta Tantras. Below, seven shared features or tenets are listed with citations from the *Hevajratantra* with mostly Kaula tantric parallels,[90] the first and the seventh not being particularly Kaula but rather generally Śākta and Śaiva respectively. Some may be more fortuitous than others, or simply very general, and one should certainly go beyond this preliminary and tentative list, but the shared elements seem to point to a possibly close relationship of the *Hevajratantra* (HT) and certain Śaiva, in particular Kaula scriptures.[91]

1. *No prohibitions in the name of non-duality*[92]

Both non-dualist Śākta Tantras and the *Hevajratantra* (HT) maintain that nothing is impure, for everything is made of Śiva/the goddess/the Buddha; one can therefore eat or do anything without prohibition. As the parallels below show, this idea figures already in scriptures of the early *yoginī* cult (and even before), but becomes more prominent and stressed in the Kaula sources.

[90] I have tried to include only parallels from the earlier stratum of the Kaula scriptures. They predate the Kashmirian exegetes of the tenth century and are probably earlier than the *Hevajratantra*.

[91] Dyczkowski 2009, 519, already mentions the similarity between Kaula doctrine and the *Hevajratantra*. Some features listed below are also touched upon in Sferra 2003.

[92] Although this idea is usually associated with Kaula Tantras, it appears already in several earlier Śākta sources.

HT I. 7.24 : *nākāryaṁ vidyate kiṁcin nābhakṣyaṁ vidyate sadā/ nācintyaṁ vidyate hy atra nāvācyaṁ yac chubhāśubham*; 'There is nothing one should not do, nothing one should not eat, ever, nothing one should not think of and nothing one should not say, whether it is good or bad.' This idea, at least concerning what one eats and does, is already present in the *Pāśupatasūtra*s and the *Brahmayāmala* (for a discussion, see Törzsök 2014). Kaula Tantras extend the principle to the non-respect of caste distinctions, as does the *Hevajratantra*:

HT II. 3.41ff: *khānaṁ pānaṁ yathāprāptam… ḍombacaṇḍāla-carmārahaḍḍikādyān tu duḥspṛśān… ātmadeham iva spṛśet*; 'Food and drink are whatever one finds. […] One should touch untouchables such as Ḍombas, Caṇḍālas, those who deal with leather or bones, […] as if one touched one's own body.' Cf. *Tantrasadbhāva* 15.129: *antyajānāṁ dvijānāṁ ca ekatra carubhojanam | kartavyaṁ sādhakenaiva yadīcchet siddhim uttamām*; 'A practitioner should eat rice meals together with outcasts and twice-borns/Brahmins alike[93] if he wants to obtain supreme perfection.'

The underlying principle is formulated in a very similar way: HT I. 9.4cd: *sarve te śuddhabhāvā hi yasmād buddhamayaṁ jagat*; 'All things are pure, for the world is made of the Buddha.' Cf. *Brahmayāmala* 92.57: *sarve devīmayaṁ te syuḥ sarvam etan mama sthitaṁ* […] *śuci dravyam aśuddhaṁ vā vivakṣā tasya no bhavet*; [Śiva speaking:] 'Everything is made of the goddess, and everything abides in me. One should not try to say that something is pure or impure.'

2. *Nirvacanas that go beyond plain understanding*

Nirvacana or exegetical semantic analysis is present everywhere in the Indian tradition, its function being to enlighten one about the deeper meaning of a word or a notion. They are however rarely present in the earlier scriptures of Śākta cults, while they come to the fore in Kaula Tantras.[94] Similarly, earlier Buddhist Tantras such as the

[93] Lit. 'should make a meal at one place with outcasts or twice-borns.' One could also understand that he should make them eat together, but the idea is most probably that he should not distinguish between eating with twice-borns or with outcasts.

[94] On the way in which such statements may form a kind of 'primary exegesis,' see Törzsök 2007.

Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṁgraha, but also the *Laghuśaṁvara*, do not seem to contain such reflections, while the *Hevajratantra* seems to be replete with them. As the following examples show, both the *Hevajratantra* and Kaula sources explain external ritual places as internal ones through *nirvacana*, analyse the deeper semantic meaning of ritual implements such as the *maṇḍala*, and give semantic explanation of names of deities, etc.:

HT I.3.16cd: *śvasatīty anayā yuktyā śmaśānety abhidhīyate*; 'One calls [the body] a cremation ground (*śmaśāna*) because of the idea that it breathes (*śvasati*).' Cf. *Tantrasadbhāva* 15.37 *śmaśānaṁ tu gṛhaṁ proktaṁ gṛhaṁ deha prakīrtitam | aṭanaṁ tu aviśrāntaṁ śmaśāna-gatacetasa*[*ḥ*]; 'The cremation ground is a house, and house denotes the body. One whose mind goes to the cremation ground [in fact] wanders around incessantly [in the body].'

HT II. 3.27: *maṇḍalaṁ sāram ity uktaṁ bodhicittaṁ mahat sukham | ādānaṁ tat karotīti maṇḍalaṁ malanaṁ/milanam* (?) *matam*; 'Maṇḍa(la) means the essence (/cream) (*sāra-=maṇḍa-*), which is the *bodhicitta*, the great bliss. It takes/grasps (*lāti*) [that essence/cream], therefore it is called a *maṇḍa-la*.'[95] Cf. *Kubjikāmatopaniṣat* 25.2, also taking *maṇḍa* to mean essence (from the meaning of 'cream') and *la* to mean that which gives (*lāti*): *sāraṁ maṇḍalam ākhyātaṁ phalaṁ sāraṁ parāparam | lāti yasmād yamātītaṁ maṇḍalaṁ tena kīrtitam*; 'the essence is called *maṇḍa*(la), the fruit which is supreme and beyond supreme, since that [*maṇḍala*] gives that which is beyond death [liberation] it is known as *maṇḍala*.' The same idea can also be found in *Tantrālokaviveka* 37.21: *maṇḍalam iti maṇḍaṁ śivāhvayaṁ sāraṁ lātītyarthaḥ*; '*Maṇḍala* means that which gives (*lā-*) the cream (*maṇḍa-*), i.e. the essence, which is called Śiva.'

[95] The word *malanam* or *milanam* seems to be corrupt. Something explaining the element *la-* as coming from the verb *lāti* should be there, although *ādānam* already points to that verb. One could even imagine *maṇḍalaṁ maṇḍalam matam*, i.e. '[that is how] *maṇḍala* is known as *maṇḍala*'; or *maṇḍalam tallanaṁ matam*, '*maṇḍala* is known to be the taking of that [essence].' Note that the word *lana* does not exist, but may have been created here to explain the *la-* element. All this is very conjectural, but the derivation seems clear. In a personal communication, Prof. Péter-Dániel Szántó has suggested that *malanaṁ* may be used in the sense of *dhāraṇa* according to *Dhātupāṭha* 1.566–567.

HT II. 4.31 *sukhasya rakṣaṇād eva sukhāvatīti śabditam* 'Sukhāvatī is called as such because of the protection (*avati*) of bliss (*sukha*).'

HT I. 7.27a : *śrīkāraṁ advayaṁ jñānam* … [In the name Śrīheruka] the word Śrī is nondual knowledge. Cf. the *nirvacana* of Bhairava in the *Kulasāra* fol. 55v: *bharitaṁ tena cāśeṣam* … [Bhairava is called such because] everything is nourished by/filled with him.

3. *External ritual is not needed*

The negation of the importance of external ritual is a defining feature of Kaula Tantras , in which they oppose not only the ritualists of the Śaiva Siddhānta, but also the scriptures of the early *yoginī* cult. Below, a scripture of the esoteric Krama school is cited next to the *Hevajratantra*.

HT I. 10.43: *na mantrajāpo na tapo na homo…*; 'There is no repetition of mantras, ascetic practices or fire rituals.' HT II. 9.6: *asmin tantre na hotavyaṁ mudrābandhakriyā na ca…*; 'In this Tantra, no need to perform fire rituals, and there are no rites [with the prescription of] performing *mudrā*s.' Cf. *Devīdvyardhaśatikā* 46cd–47ab: *nātra pūjā namaskāraṁ na japo dhyānam eva ca | na mudrā na ca uccāraṁ na cāhvānavisarjanam*; 'Here, there is no worship or homage, no mantra recitation or visualisation, no *mudrā*, no meditation with the rising of the mantra, no invocation or taking leave [of the deity].'

4. *Four stages of internal experience: body, speech, mind and beyond*

The four stages outlined here do not correspond in all details in the Śaiva and Bauddha texts and it may rightly be questioned whether they describe the same phenomena. One could also say that in India, sets of four are ubiquitous and always made up of three plus one (such as the system of the *varṇa*s), the correspondences are therefore simply fortuitous. Nonetheless, there are some reminiscences, and further study might confirm—or refute—these stages being parallels.

HT I. 10.13 etc. describes the so-called four blisses (*ānanda, paramānanda, viramānanda, sahajānanda*) associated with the body, speech, mind and beyond. It is not possible to outline the intricacies of this theory and all the debates that ensued about it in the exegetical literature,

including the question of the order of the last two.[96] This set of four blisses corresponds to some extent to the way in which the four stages of Kaula yoga are defined: *piṇḍa*(*stha*) = (abiding in) the body, *pada*(*stha*) = (abiding in) the location/word, *rūpa*(*stha*) = (abiding in) the form/image, *rūpātīta* = beyond form/image.[97]

5. *Worship or observance being performed during/through daily activities*

The idea that one performs worship or observances during everyday activities is mentioned as a common feature of various tantric traditions in Sferra 2003. It might nonetheless be specified that on the Śaiva side, this idea is characteristic of Kaula Tantras and the exegetical literature rather than the early scriptures; and on the Buddhist side, it is perhaps not prevalent until we reach the *Hevajratantra*.

HT II. 2.5–6 *aṅghriṁ prakṣālayan bhuñjan ācaman pūgaṁ bhakṣayan | candanair hastaṁ mardayan kaupīnaiś chādayan kaṭim || niḥsaran bhāṣayan bhāṣāṁ gacchan tiṣṭhan ruṣan hasan | bhagavatīṁ sevayet prājño yoginīṁ bhāvayed vratī*; 'When you wash your feet, when you eat or sip water, or chew betel, when you rub your hands with sandalwood paste or cover your loins with a loincloth, when you go out, speak, move, or stand, when you get angry or when you laugh, you serve the goddess if you have [right] knowledge. Performing your observance, you meditate on the *yoginī*.' Cf. *Kubjikāmata* 8.78–79cd: *mantrasannaddhadehas tu sarvāvastho 'pi sādhakaḥ | tiṣṭhan jāgran svapan gacchan bhuñjāno maithune rataḥ | caryādhārī nirācāro mantrasaṁsmaraṇāc chuciḥ*; 'A practitioner whose body has been equipped with the mantras is pure merely by remembering his mantra; and he always accomplishes his observance, without any prescribed conduct, in any state—while standing, awake or sleeping, moving or eating or having sexual intercourse.'

[96] For this question, see Isaacson and Sferra 2014, 96ff, referring to lectures by Prof. Isaacson.

[97] For a discussion, see Vasudeva 2004, 217ff.

6. *Transformation of the sense enjoyments into a transcendental experience*

All esoteric scriptures, whether Śaiva or Bauddha, stress that sexual rituals are not to be practised for the sake of mere sensual pleasures, but are a way to access a transcendental experience, whereby the practitioner can have a glimpse of ultimate reality. This question has been discussed in both the Śaiva and Buddhist tantric contexts in much of the secondary literature on the subject, which cannot be summarised here, nor is it possible to find just a few citations to illustrate the matter. The references below are just pointers, but once again, the closeness of the *Hevajratantra* to esoteric Kaula or Krama thought seems remarkable.

HT II. 4.44ff *rūpaṁ śabdas tathā gandho rasaḥ sparśas tathaiva ca | dharmadhātusvabhāvaś ca prajñayaivopabhujyate*; '[Objects of the senses involving] form, sound, smell, taste and touch have the nature of the Ultimate Reality/Buddha and are enjoyed with the Wisdom/consort.'

Vijñānabhairava 69: *śaktisaṁgamasaṁkṣubdhaśaktyāveśāvasānikam | yat sukham brahmatattvasya tat sukhaṁ svākyam ucyate*; 'One's own bliss [experienced]—ending with the act of entering the female consort/ending with being absorbed in Śiva's power (*śakti*) when she has been excited[98]/when it has been stirred up at the time of union with her—is known to be the bliss of [experiencing] ultimate reality.'[99] Although the later tradition tries to deny that a sexual practice is meant here, earlier exegetes, Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha, take this to prescribe actual sexual union.[100]

[98] Or: 'when she has reached orgasm.'

[99] One may take the predicate differently: 'The bliss of ultimate reality [experienced] … is one's own.' The word order supports this understanding, but the meaning seems perhaps less appropriate than saying 'One's own bliss [experienced]… is the bliss of [experiencing] ultimate reality.'

[100] Most available translations (Bäumer 2002, Singh 2006, and Hughes 2011, who all follow Swami Lakshman Joo) as well as the late commentary of Śivopādhyāya, understand the sexual union to be a comparison, rather than a prescription to practice it. However, as Silburn 1999, 112, points out citing Abhinavagupta's *Parātriṁśikāvivaraṇa*, this is a practice, and is taken as such by Abhinavagupta. See Jayaratha (*ad Tantrāloka* 5.71) quoting this passage and clearly taking *śakti* to mean an external *śakti*, i.e. a female consort, and the 'excitement/shaking' in the sense of 'enjoyment/orgasm': '*śākte kṣobhe' iti bāhyaśaktisaṁbhoge | yad uktam: śaktisaṅgamasaṁkṣubdhaśaktyāveśāvasānikam | yat sukhaṁ brahmatattvasya tat sukhaṁ svākyam ucyate* ||. Note that Silburn seems to take

For some Krama sources, see Sanderson 2007, 278, citing for instance Hrasvanātha's *Svabodhodayamañjarī*: *nābhimeḍhrāntare cittaṁ suratānte vinikṣipet | līyamāne ratānande nistaraṅgaḥ kṣaṇaṁ bhavet*; 'One should direct one's attention at the climax of love-making to the point between the penis and the navel. As the bliss of orgasm fades one will suddenly be freed of all perturbation.'

7. *Defilement is incidental, to be removed* (*Śaiva*)

The idea of an impurity (*mala*) that adheres to the self (*ātman*) and needs to be removed is shared by all Śaiva Tantras. While non-dualist exegetes and scriptures take this impurity to be some form of ignorance about the self's true nature, in the dualist Śaiva Siddhānta impurity is seen as material, and its removal, which occurs during initiation, is often compared to the removal of a cataract.[101] Curiously, a very similar idea pops up in the *Hevajratantra*, emphasising the adventitious nature of this impurity. The removal (*apakarṣa*) of impurity could also be understood in a metaphorical way in the passage (as the removal of ignorance), but the choice of the word suggests a quasi-physical act.

HT II. 4.69 *sattvā buddhā eva kiṁtu āgantukamalāvṛtāḥ | tasyāpakarṣaṇāt sattvā buddhā eva na saṁśayaḥ*; 'Creatures are Buddhas but covered with an incidental impurity. Once it is removed, they are Buddhas, no doubt.'

only the first *śakti* to refer to a consort, but then remarks in a note the double meaning of *śaktyāveśa*.

[101] For a summary of the development of this concept, see *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* vol. IV s.v. *mala* by Dominic Goodall.



Fig. 1: *Maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṁvara from Nepal, around 1100.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 2: One of the vases of the Cakrasaṁvara-*maṇḍala*, detail

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I am grateful to several scholars who have kindly made their unpublished papers, draft editions and etexts available to me. I am indebted to Diwakar Acharya for his unpublished edition of the *Saurasaṁhitā*, to Dominic Goodall for his unpublished edition of the *Guhyasūtra* of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā* and of the *Sarvajñānottara* and for his etext of the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṁgraha*, to Shaman Hatley and Csaba Kiss for their etexts of the *Brahmayāmala*, to Alexis Sanderson for his draft edition of the *Yoginīsaṁcāraprakaraṇa* of the *Jayadrathayāmala*, to Olga Serbaeva for her transcript of the whole *Jayadrathayāmala*, to Michael Slouber for his draft edition of the *Kriyākālaguṇottara*, to Tsunehiko Sugiki for his forthcoming edition of *Sādhananidhi* chapter 1, to Ryugen

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Religious patronage of the Buddhist, Śaiva, or Vaiṣṇava kings and queens of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty in Odisha

Annette Schmiedchen*
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

The mediaeval Bhauma-Kara[1] dynasty ruled in Odisha from probably the eighth to the tenth century. Their corpus of copperplate charters is noteworthy with regard to Śaiva–Vaiṣṇava–Buddhist encounters in general, but also from the aspect of potential differences in the activities of male and female rulers. It is a specific feature of Bhauma-Kara dynastic history that in addition to epigraphic information on the reign of twelve kings, we also have evidence of the fact that seven queens acted as rulers. Altogether eight copperplate charters issued by six kings, dated in the first 150 years of the so-called Bhauma-Kara era,[2] are extant, as well as fifteen

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[1] See Tripathy 2000, 5. Whereas the earliest copperplate charters of this dynasty (up to the year 103) refer to the rulers as belonging to the Bhauma family (*anvaya*, *kula*), all the later ones refer to them as Kara kings, probably because the names of the rulers ended in *°kara*; see Fig. 1. The full names, however, would be Śivakaradeva, etc.

[2] There has been some controversy on the beginning of this era; see Salomon 1998, 190–191, who was convinced by Sircar's dating of 831 CE (1953, 148–155). However, I am following the scholars from Odisha, who conclude that this era commenced in 736 CE; see Tripathy 2000, 52–54, after Rajaguru 1964, 100–108. As a consequence, I assume that the Bhauma-Karas ruled from the eighth to the tenth century and not from the ninth to the eleventh century. For a recent confirmation of Rajaguru's calculation, see Mercier 2021, 429.

1. Lakṣmīkara alias Kṣemaṅkara
|
2. Śivakara I alias Unmaṭṭasiṁha alias Unmaṭṭakeśarin + Jayāvalīdevī
|
3. Śubhākara I, y. 8 (1 cp) + Mādhavadevī_____
| |
4. Śivakara II, y. 12 (1 cp) + Mohinīdevī | **5. Śāntikara I Gayāḍa I**
| + Tribhuvanamahādevī I Gosvāminī
| |
6. Śubhākara II, y. 100 (1 cp) + Nṛṇṇādevī | **7. Śubhākara III Kusumahāra I Siṁhaketu**, y. 103 (2 cp)
| ¦
| **8. Tribhuvanamahādevī I**
| (Nāga origin; widow of ruler no. 5)
| |
| **9. Śāntikara II Loṇahāra I Gayāḍa II**
_____ | + Hīrāmahādevī
| |
10. Śubhākara IV Kusumahāra II, | **11. Śivakara III Lalitahāra II**,
y. 145 (1 cp) + Pṛthivīmahādevī | y. 149 (2 cp) + Tribhuvanamahādevī III
Tribhuvanamahādevī II | ¦
| **12. Pṛthivīmahādevī Tribhuvanamahādevī II**,
| y. 158 (2 cp) (from Kosala; widow of ruler no. 10)
| ¦
| **13. Tribhuvanamahādevī III**, y. 160–164 (2 cp)
_____ | (from the southern region; widow of ruler no. 11)
| |
14. Śāntikara III Loṇahāra II | **15. Śubhākara V** + Gaurīmahādevī
+ Dharmamahādevī | + Vakulamahādevī
| ¦
| **16. Gaurīmahādevī** (first widow of ruler no. 15)
| |
| **17. Daṇḍimahādevī**, y. 180–190 (8 cp)
| (daughter of rulers no. 15 and 16)
| ¦
| **18. Vakulamahādevī**, y. 204 (1 cp)
| (Bhañja origin; second widow of ruler no. 15)
| ¦
| **19. Dharmamahādevī** (2 cp)
| (widow of ruler no. 14)

Fig. 1: Pedigree of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty with attested years (y.) and numbers of their copper plates (cp)

title-deeds by five ruling queens, dated in the last 50 years of the Bhauma-Kara era.[3] I cannot explain why the number of extant inscriptions issued by the queens in the later phase of the dynastic history was comparatively larger, but we should always keep in view that the discoveries of copper plates are usually accidental finds, which is a fact that may, at least partly, account for the disproportionality in their distribution.

Almost all female rulers were widows of former Bhauma-Kara kings. The only exception known so far is Queen Daṇḍimahādevī (Fig. 1), who, in her own records, is described as the daughter and successor of Queen Gaurī, who had followed her deceased husband Śubhākara V on the throne.[4] It also appears that one female ruler succeeded another in the late period.

Like their male counterparts, queen regents of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty had typical royal title-deeds produced, with descriptions of the dynastic genealogy.[5] In their copperplate charters, male and female Bhauma-Kara rulers used imperial titles and religious epithets. Whereas some early Bhauma-Kara kings declared themselves to be followers of Buddhism, most male rulers of that royal line were Śaivas—like the 'mainstream' of mediaeval Indian kings. Up to King Śubhākara III (latest known attestation so far: year 103), the Bhauma-Kara rulers (here: Bhaumas) were described as Buddhists (*parama-saugata*, *parama-tāthāgata*, *paramopāsaka*, *śrī-sugatāśraya*). From King Śubhākara IV onwards (earliest known attestation: year 145), the Bhauma-Kara rulers (here: Karas) were labelled Śaivas (*parama-māheśvara*). In contrast, the queens Tribhuvanamahādevī II and Tribhuvanamahādevī III were labelled *parama-vaiṣṇavī*, while the queens Daṇḍimahādevī, Vakulamahādevī, and Dharmamahādevī were described as *parama-māheśvarī*. Especially the Vaiṣṇava influence in the early period of female rule might have been

[3] See the list in the appendix. Bhauma-Kara charters consist of single copper plates engraved on both sides, with a seal directly attached to the plate; see Figs. 2–4, also in the appendix.

[4] In Fig. 1, the broken lines [¦] of the pedigree are meant to indicate that the successors in such cases were not the offspring or other kin of their predecessors. The ruler count of homonymous kings and queens is a secondary one for easy reference, not contained in the primary sources.

[5] However, the actual line of succession does not always become completely clear from the individual charters, and full genealogies are never given.

due to the fact that these queens originated from non-Bhauma-Kara dynasties.

Despite the diverse religious affiliations of the individual kings and queens, their royal seal bore the Śaiva emblem of a couchant bull with the symbols for sun and moon throughout the whole rule of the dynasty, with only its legend being regularly updated and thus giving the name of the current ruler. In light of this evidence, we may assume that multiple layers of religious affiliation were conflated with each other: a dynastic and a personal one, and perhaps even more levels.

Most of the Bhauma-Kara charters record endowments of whole villages, usually in the form of one village per title-deed, sometimes with another hamlet attached to the main grant. The patronage patterns were the same among Bhauma-Kara kings and queens, with a strong preference—like in many other parts of the subcontinent—for Vedic Brahmins. Among Brahmanical grants, those favouring individuals and small groups predominate. Most of the extant Bhauma-Kara charters favoured individual Yajurvedins, while individual Ṛgvedins and Sāmavedins are rarely attested, and individual Atharvavedins are not referred to at all. Some charters do not contain any indication of the Vedic affiliation of the recipients; in a few others, it is not even clear whether the beneficiaries actually were traditional Vedic Brahmins.

BhK00001, the Neulpur or Darpan plate of Śubhākara I, stands out as it records the bestowal of two villages (merged into one settlement) on some 200 Brahmins (202 being actually listed). King Śubhākara I, who called himself a Buddhist devotee (*parama-saugata*), endowed a community of experts of the four Vedas belonging to different, unspecified, *gotra*s and different, (later) specified, branches of Vedic learning and teaching (*nānā-gotra-caraṇa cāturvidya-brāhmaṇa*). Regarding the Vedic affiliation of its members, the composition of this group seems to have been ideally balanced: It consisted of 51 Ṛgvedins, 51 Sāmavedins, 51 Atharvavedins and 49 Yajurvedins.

Despite this overall trend of the royal patronage preference for Brahmins, which accounts for some three quarters of the Bhauma-Kara corpus, there are some significant exceptions, too. We know of at least five 'institutional endowments,' i.e., grants to support religious institutions rather than individuals (Table 1). In the year 103 of the Bhauma-Kara era, the *parama-saugata* ruler Śubhākara III granted a village to a Śaiva

institution. In the year 149, the *parama-māheśvara* king Śivakara III bestowed two villages on a Buddhist establishment with two charters. At last, in the year 158, the *parama-vaiṣṇavī* queen Pṛthivīmahādevī Tribhuvanamahādevī II issued two title-deeds to endow a Śiva temple with a village, a hamlet and some land.

Number	**Title of the copper-plate charter**	**Donor's religious epithet**	**Recipient**
BhK00004	Hindol plate of Śubhākaradeva III, y. 103	*parama-saugata*	Śaiva
BhK00007	Talcher plate A of Śivakaradeva III, y. 149	*parama-māheśvara*	Buddhist
BhK00008	Talcher plate B of Śivakaradeva III, y. 149	*parama-māheśvara*	Buddhist
BhK00009	Baud plate A of Tribhuvanamahādevī II, y. 158	*paramavaiṣṇavī*	Śaiva
BhK00010	Baud plate B of Tribhuvanamahādevī II, y. 158	*paramavaiṣṇavī*	Śaiva

Table 1

These five charters have in common that the respective royal endowments were all made 'on request' (*vijñaptyā*) of a third party. In BhK00004, the petitioner was a certain Pulindarāja who had founded a Śiva temple named after him as Pulindeśvara. According to BhK00007 and BhK00008, *rāṇaka* Vinītatuṅga requested the king to make grants in favour of a Buddhist institution established by a person named Amubhaṭṭaka. BhK00009 and BhK00010, in turn, record that Śrī-Śaśilekhā of the Virāṭa dynasty, described as 'for the Vrāgaḍi family [like] the moon's crescent (*śaśi-lekhā*) for the water-lily,' the queen of the subordinate ruler (*mahāmaṇḍalādhipati*) Śrī-Maṅgalakalaśa,[6] submitted a petition to the Bhauma-Kara queen. The beneficiary in these two cases was a Śiva temple

[6] BhK00009 and BhK00010, ll. 29–30 each: *mahāmaṇḍalādhipati-śrī-maṅgalakalaśasya mahādevyā virāṭa-vaṅśodbhava-vrāgaḍi-kula-kumuda-śaśilekhāyāḥ*

founded by the lady and named Nānneśvara after her deceased father Śrī-Nānna.

An endowment 'on request' is also attested in BhK00003, the Terundia plate of Śubhākara II, dated in the year 100 of the Bhauma-Kara era. In this charter, the ruler granted a village in favour of six Yajurvedins after being petitioned by his queen (*rājñī*) Nṛṇṇā. The title-deed contains a notable stipulation saying that the donation was to be used for the upkeep of certain religious institutions, namely, *maṭha*s and *maṇḍapa*s[7] founded by these six Brahmins in their native village called Taramaṇḍapagrāma.[8] The intended purpose moves this grant, which on the surface appears to be Brahmanical, closer to the institutional endowments already mentioned. The fact that a purpose was specified in this charter points to the same direction, because typical Bhauma-Kara records in favour of Brahmanical recipients did not contain an explicit stipulation defining the purpose(s) which the donations should serve.

This seems to be a rather common pattern in the corpora of several dynasties in Odisha and a clear mark of difference between grants to Brahmins and endowments in favour of religious institutions in this region. In the latter category, the purposes apparently had to be stipulated more or less by default (see below), whereas Brahmanical recipients were often not explicitly told how to use the revenues derived from the grants, perhaps according to the dictum 'That goes without saying.' One might be inclined to concede a structural difference between the Brahmanical and institutional donations; however, all these pious land grants share a

śrī-śaśilekhāyā vijñaptyā. On Śrī-Śaśilekhā's description in this passage, see also Sircar 1951/52b, 224.

[7] BhK00003, line 21: *taramaṇḍapa-grāma-madhye tat-kārita-maṭha-maṇḍapa-pālanādy-artham*. In BhK00011, ll. 7–9, Queen Tribhuvanamahādevī III describes her predecessors (*mahārājeṣu atīteṣu*) on the Bhauma-Kara throne as 'having exhausted the treasures of their vast empire on religious works in order to adorn their own and other countries, and having decorated the earth by constructing, one after the other in unbroken continuity, various *maṭha*s, *vihāra*s, and sanctuaries, which were like staircases for ascending the city of Indra' (*prasādhita-sva-para-maṇḍalatayā dharmmopakāriṇī-kṣatāśeṣa-deśa-kośeṣu krameṇa nirantara-viracita-vividha-maṭha-vihāra-prāsāda-prabandhaiḥ purandara-purārohaṇa-sopāna-bandhair iva maṇḍita-mahī-maṇḍaleṣv*).

[8] In BhK00003, line 19, the six Brahmins are described as residents of the village Taramaṇḍapa (*taramaṇḍapa-grāma-vāstavya*). For a discussion of this charter, see also Acharya 2018, 37.

number of similar features and were clearly designed to generate religious merit (*puṇya*).[9]

In general, the queen regents made their endowments, like their male counterparts, with the aim of acquiring religious merit for themselves and for their parents. The deceased husbands were not specifically mentioned in these *puṇya* formulae, which somehow seems to imply that nobody born into the Bhauma-Kara family was singled out to directly benefit from the merit accrued through the grants of the ruling queens. However, in all extant charters of Bhauma-Kara kings and in most of the title-deeds issued by their queen regents as well, a very specific *puṇya* formula was used, namely: 'for augmenting the religious merit of [my] mother and father, myself, and all beings' (*mātā-pitror ātmanaḥ sarvva-sa*[*t*]*tvānāñ ca puṇyābhivṛddhaye*),[10] which is a distinctly Buddhist phrasing.[11]

The use of this expression in charters of the early Bhauma-Kara rulers can be explained by the fact that these kings had personal leanings towards Buddhism.[12] Hence, it does not come as a great surprise that the self-professed Buddhist king Śubhākara III dedicated his *puṇya* in BhK00004 for himself and his parents as well as 'for all beings,' although this was a grant in favour of a Śaiva institution. Likewise, it is perhaps not too astonishing that this very same formula was then used in BhK00007–00008,[13] which record Buddhist donations, even if these were commissioned by King Śivakara III, a self-professed Śaiva ruler. However, it is noteworthy that the formula which includes 'all beings' in the transfer of merit occurs not only in endowment records of Buddhist kings for Brahmins and Śiva temples and in grants by a Śaiva king in favour of a Buddhist institution,

[9] Moreover, there are numerous dynastic corpora from western and central India, in which the purposes of all the religious endowments, including the Brahmanical grants, are explicitly specified. For the discussion of the standard term *pañca-mahāyajña* occurring in this context in Brahmanical grants, see Schmiedchen 2014, 184–186.

[10] See, e.g., BhK00001, line 9; BhK00002, line 21; BhK00003, ll. 18–19.

[11] For this and other *sarva-sattva* formulae, see, e.g., Schopen 1985, 37–41; Einicke 2017, 238–242; Salomon 2018, 16–17. For the discussion of a specific Mahāyāna version of a *sarva-sattva* formula, see Schopen 1979, 5; McCombs 2014, 318, 350–352; Tournier 2014, 40–42.

[12] See Schmiedchen 2010/11, 161.

[13] For a discussion of the first of these two charters, see also Davidson 2002, 89, as well as Balogh's contribution in this volume.

but also in cases with no apparent link to Buddhism: in donations of Śaiva kings and Śaiva ruling queens in favour of Brahmins as well as in a Brahmanical grant of a queen who was an adherent of Viṣṇu.[14] The reason for its continued use also in most of the charters of the later Bhauma-Kara kings and queens, who were not self-professed Buddhists, may have been that this formula had already become a stock phrase in the donative vocabulary. BhK00009–00010 represent exceptions from this general rule, as the merit (here: *dharma*) was dedicated to Nānna, the late father (lines 30–31: *svarggī-bhūta-nija-tātasya śrī-nānnābhidhānasya dharmmāya*) of the foundress of the Śiva temple, which was the main beneficiary of the two endowments and which was called Nānneśvara after him.[15]

There are several terminological similarities between the Śaiva and Buddhist endowments of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty. The term *āyatana* is used to designate the temples in both contexts. All the names of the images installed in the shrines end in *-bhaṭṭāraka*: Vaidyanāthabhaṭṭāraka (BhK00004), Umāmāheśvarabhaṭṭāraka (BhK00009–00010), and Buddhabhaṭṭāraka (BhK00007–00008). It is somewhat conspicuous that the term *vihāra* does not occur in the stipulations regarding the two Buddhist endowments. However, at the very end of the grant portion, an explicit reference to a monastery called Jayāśramavihāra can be found: 'Having prepared a copper charter, [this village] was presented, tax-free [and] according to the regulation for a permanent deposit, at the Jayāśramavihāra' (lines 29–30: *tāmra-śāsanī-kṛtyākṣaya-nīvī-dharmmeṇākaratvena jayāśrama-vihāre pratipāditas*).

All the five institutional grants of the Bhauma-Karas also have in common that the endowments recorded therein are divided into several individual allotments (*bhāga*), dedicated for different purposes. These specific functions are very similar in the five charters, with the exception

[14] Only the three latest charters issued by Vakulamahādevī and Dharmamahādevī do not contain this addition; see BhK00021–00023.

[15] It is noteworthy, that one of the donative objects is called Nānneśvaratalapāṭaka; see BhK00009, line 27: *nānneśvara-talapāṭaka-sahitaḥ koṭṭapurā-grāma*[*ḥ*]. Hence, there must have existed a locality, perhaps a hamlet, which was named after the Śiva temple. It is also possible that the term *nānneśvara-talapāṭaka* denotes the area around the shrine. Or else, as suggested by the reviewer, *nānneśvara-talapāṭaka* could be 'cultivated land belonging to the temple/deity, which was awarded *śāsana* land status due to this grant.'

of Brahmins being explicitly mentioned in only two of the three Śaiva endowments. However, the actual divisions differ in the individual grants and do not seem to have followed a consistent principle, thus likely making them merely random:

BhK00004:
1. for worship, for the servants, and for repairs
2. for the Śaiva ascetics and for the *dānapati*

BhK00009-00010:
1. for worship, for repairs, and for the Śaiva ascetics
2. for the Brahmins
3. for the servants
4. for the *dānapati*

BhK00007-00008:
1. for worship, for the servants, and for Buddhist monks
2. for repairs
3. for the *dānapati*

The stipulations on the provisions make use of a specific 'sectarian' terminology with regard to the main protagonists: Śaiva ascetics versus Buddhist monks. In Śaiva grants, the clause for the recipients reads 'for food, loincloths and upper garments, as well as medicine for the Śaiva teachers and ascetics / Mahāvratadhārin ascetics' (*śaivācārya-tapasvināṁ satra-kaupīnottarāsaṅga-glānabhaiṣajyārthaṁ* or *mahāvratadhāriṇāṁ tapasvināṁ satra-kaupīnottarāsaṅga-glānabhaiṣajyārthaṁ*).[16] In the Buddhist endowments, the formula is framed as 'for robes, alms-food, beds and seats, as well as medicine for the ten monks together with their attendants' (*daśānāṁ bhikṣ*[*ū*]*ṇā*[*ṁ*] *sopasthāyaka-yuktānāṁ*

[16] BhK00004, line 23; BhK00009, ll. 32–33; BhK00010, line 33. For the various possibilities to identify Mahāvratadhārin ascetics, lit. the 'holders of the greater observance,' see De Simini 2016, 52–55. The term *satra* (or rather *sattra*) means 'charitable feeding.' For this originally Brahmanical term, widely used in grants for Hindu temples, see Sircar 1966, 306; Deva 1983; Schmiedchen 2014, 186 fn. 666. This term is also attested in a few Buddhist donations; see Schmiedchen 1993, 588. The word *kaupīna* denotes a loincloth, *uttarāsaṅga* a blanket.

cīvara-piṇḍapāta-śayanāsana-glānabhaiṣajyārthaṁ).[17] Hence, only the originally Buddhist expression *glāna-bhaiṣajya*, which means 'medicine for the sick,' is used in both contexts equally.

The five Bhauma-Kara endowment charters in favour of Śaiva and Buddhist donees all refer to a particular kind of stakeholder called *dānapati*. It is said that the respective *dānapati*, usually together with his offspring, was allotted a specific portion of each of these Śaiva and Buddhist grants. It is striking that this functionary is mentioned only in the institutional grants and not in typical Brahmanical endowments. However, neither the status nor the individual name of this *dānapati* is ever mentioned, and the term *dānapati* does not appear in any other context in any of the Bhauma-Kara charters.

From other regions and different kinds of sources, particularly but not exclusively in contexts of Buddhism, the term *dānapati* is known to denote a 'generous donor' or 'patron.' In Buddhist normative texts, it refers, inter alia, to the founder of a *vihāra* and could be used as a synonym for the technical term *vihārasvāmin* ('lord of a monastery').[18] Occasionally, the term *dānapati* also occurs in image inscriptions, denoting the person who dedicated or consecrated the image,[19] as well as in manuscript colophons,

[17] BhK00007 and BhK00008, line 28 each. This list of the four 'requisites' (*pariṣkāra*) is a common formula for defining one of the purposes of Buddhist grants all over India in this period. See also Edgerton 1953, 331. On the other hand, the framing of the beneficiaries of this stipulation is rather unusual. Binayak Misra, the first editor of these two Talcher plates, read the crucial passage as *daśānāṁ bhikṣuṇīsopasthāyakayuktānāṁ* and, hence, understood it as referring to nuns. His reading also became the basis of terminological discussions, e.g., for the term *upasthāyaka* in Silk 2008, 204 fn. 7. Snigdha Tripathy (2000, 142 and 149) read the phrase as *daśānāṁ bhikṣuṇāsopasthāyakayuktānāṁ* and thus took it as referring to monks. Photographs of the two Talcher plates, now preserved in the Baripada Museum in Odisha, which I could consult, clearly show the akṣara *ṇā*. The preceding akṣara might be read as either *kṣu* or *kṣū*. In any case, the restored text should be *daśānāṁ bhikṣūṇāṁ sopasthāyakayuktānāṁ*. Apart from the fact that Mishra's odd compound *bhikṣuṇī-sopasthāyaka-yuktānāṁ* would require more emendation, it is rather unlikely that nuns had male attendants (*upasthāyaka*).

[18] Schopen 1996, 101, 108ff., 113 fn. 62, 121; Schopen 2004, 27–29; Silk 2008, 142 fn. 24. For a twelfth-century epigraphic attestation of the term *dānapati* from Bengal, (indirectly) referring to the founder of a *mahāvihāra*, see Furui 2013, 112–113.

[19] Bhattacharya (1989, 163) remarks that although '[i]n the period between [the] eighth to twelfth century A.D. thousands of stone and metal sculptures were produced

alluding to the person who commissioned the writing of the manuscript if this act was meant for accumulating religious merit (*puṇya*).[20]

In all these sources, the technical term *dānapati* was used in its dictionary meaning for 'one who gives a gift.' However, in the relevant Bhauma-Kara charters, the *dānapati* is clearly not the donor of the respective endowment (which was either the king or the queen) and also most probably not the founder of or petitioner in favour of the religious institution to be maintained by the grant (who seem to have been members of the nobility), but rather a kind of donee or at least one of the beneficiaries of the donation.[21] It may be supposed that the *dānapati*, whose share is generally listed at the end of the enumeration of the beneficiaries and purposes of the endowment, acted as 'the lord of the gift' in the sense that he had to take care of the grant administration or management. Snigdha Tripathy (2000, 145, 152) assumed that the *dānapati* was 'the person in charge of receiving the royal grant on behalf of the concerned religious establishment.'[22] Umakanta Mishra (2018, 81) has surmised that he 'was to collect all revenues specified in the grant and distribute the earning into … shares.'

Regarding the *dānapati* stipulations, there are no differences in terminology between the Śaiva and the Buddhist endowments of the Bhauma-Karas. But it remains entirely unclear how these functionaries were recruited. S. C. De (1951/52, 211 fn. 1), who produced the *editio princeps* of the Śaiva grants BhK00009–00010, was the first to opine that the *dānapati* in these cases must have been a Brahmin. Snigdha Tripathy (2000, 81, 129, 166) followed his interpretation, suspecting further that the *dānapati* was 'in charge of the worship of the deity.' It is true that the second share of the grants in BhK00009–00010 was dedicated for provisions to Brahmins (without any specification): *brāhmaṇānāṁ grāsācchādanārthaṁ*.[23] But no Brahmins are mentioned in the Śaiva grant

in Bihar-Bengal […] the […] term *dānapati* finds mention in the records only in the twelfth century.'

[20] For attestations of this term in the colophons of some fourteenth-century manuscripts from Nepal, see Formigatti 2022, 58, 60, 79, 85, 97, 99, 101, 111.

[21] See also the detailed stipulation in BhK00004 mentioned below.

[22] See also Tripathy 2000, 81, 93ff., 129, 159, 166.

[23] BhK00009, ll. 33–34; BhK00010, line 34. See also von Hinüber 2013, 372–376.

of BhK00004, and there are no indications for the *dānapati* having played any direct role in the ritual practice either.

For the two Buddhist endowments of BhK00007–00008, Snigdha Tripathy (2000, 93) observes that '[t]he caste of the *dānapati* who received the grant on behalf of the Buddhist monastery at Jayāśrama *vihāra* … is not known.' In fact, it appears to be rather significant that an administrator in charge of the endowment—if this is what the *dānapati* was—is explicitly mentioned here in the context of Buddhism. Endowment records for Buddhist monasteries from other regions are usually lacking such references to administrators and one cannot but deduce that the local monastic communities (*saṁgha*) receiving such donations must have themselves been responsible for the grant management (Schmiedchen 2016, 570–572).

Although it remains unclear how these *dānapati*s were conscripted, it is conceivable that the petitioners of the respective religious endowments, who were in the case of the three Śaiva grants identical with the founders of the respective temples, had a saying in the selection of these people. The whole constellation reminds one of a stipulation attested in at least one Śaiva and two Buddhist grants of the Pālas of Bengal as final clause in the description of the purposes of the donation: 'also for the unobjectionable enjoyment of others approved by me [and] with a share allocated by me' (*anyeṣām api mamābhimatānām mat-parikalpita-vibhāgenānavadya-bhogārthaṁ*).[24] In Ryosuke Furui's (2021/22, 123) interpretation of the role of subordinate rulers and their families, who founded *vihāra*s, 'this clause alludes to the involvement of the petitioners in the management of the donated property and their persistent influence on it.' But in the Śaiva grant, which records an endowment to a temple founded by King Nārāyaṇapāla himself, the *anavadya-bhoga* stipulation refers to the ruler's involvement in the management of the institution. Ryosuke Furui (2020,

[24] For the two Buddhist Pāla endowments, see https://dharmalekha.info/texts/DHARMA_INSBengalCharters00073 as well as https://dharmalekha.info/texts/DHARMA_INSBengalCharters00091; for the Śaiva Pāla endowment, see https://dharmalekha.info/texts/DHARMA_INSBengalCharters00109.

144) suspects that in this particular case the Pāla king seems to have imitated the practice 'initiated by subordinate rulers.'[25]

From the reference to the offspring of the *dānapati*, which four of the Bhauma-Kara stipulations contain, we can assume that they probably held a hereditary position: 'for the maintenance of the *dānapati* in [uninterrupted] sequence of his progeny' (*dānapateḥ sva-santāna-paraṁparā-varttanārthaṁ* or *dānapati-sva-santāna-paraṁparā-varttanārthaṁ*).[26] Moreover, it is likely that lay people were active in this role, in a similar way as the 'original' *dānapati*s or *vihārasvāmin*s of the Buddhist textual sources, who were expected to care for their foundations in perpetuity.[27] The phrase in BhK00004 does not mention the offspring of the *dānapati*, but specifies some details of the means to be provided to him: 'for the maintenance of the *dānapati* through daily six *āḍhaka* rice [and] four *paṇa* of money' (*dānapateḥ pratyahaṁ taṇḍulāḍhakaiḥ ṣaḍbhiḥ hiraṇya-paṇa-catuṣṭayena varttanārtthaṁ*).[28]

Another group of beneficiaries is also mentioned in all the institutional endowments: servants (*pādamūla*). While the formula defining that a part of the income was to be used for 'providing [their] subsistence' is identical in the Śaiva grant of BhK00004 and in the Buddhist grants of BhK00007–00008: *pādamūlasya grāsācchādana-parikalpanārtthaṁ*,[29] it is modified in the Śaiva grants of BhK00009–00010 to *pādamūlādīnāṁ jīvana-bhukti-paridhānādy-arthaṁ*.[30] This alteration, however, does not seem to have been caused by any sectarian differences, but rather by the quest for variability in verbal expression, as the term *grāsācchādana* had already been used with reference to the Brahmanical beneficiaries of these two endowments (*brāhmaṇānāṁ grāsācchādanārthaṁ*; see above).[31]

As Oskar von Hinüber (2004, 315; 2013, 372–376) has argued, the term *grāsācchādana* does not belong to the Buddhist vocabulary and

[25] See also Furui 2008, 70, 73; Furui 2017, 347ff.; and Furui's contribution in this volume.

[26] BhK00007–00008, line 29 each; BhK00009, ll. 34–35; BhK00010, line 35. Literally, 'for the livelihood of the [uninterrupted] sequence of the *dānapati*'s own offspring'.

[27] Schopen 1996, 84, 104, 108; Schopen 2004, 21.

[28] BhK00004, ll. 23–24.

[29] BhK00004, line 22; BhK00007, ll. 27–28; BhK00008, line 28.

[30] BhK00009 and BhK00010, line 34 each.

[31] BhK00009, ll. 33–34; BhK00010, line 34.

is a typical Brahmanical phrase for 'food and clothing.' Hence, it fits very well in a stipulation regarding provisions for Brahmins, whereas its use in a Buddhist *pādamūla* formula is another example of the complex mutual influence of 'sectarian languages' in Sanskrit epigraphy.[32] In the two Bhauma-Kara copper plates in which the expression *grāsācchādana* is substituted by the (more neutral) phrase *bhukti-paridhāna*, *bhukti* replaces *grāsa*, and *paridhāna* is filled in for *ācchādana*. The complete alternate reads *jīvana-bhukti-paridhānādi*, and, hence, contains with 'livelihood' another component adopted from Brahmanical contexts.[33] This term is also used, either as *jīvana* or as *prajīvana*, in stipulations referring to *pādamūla* from other regions, namely in a number of Buddhist and non-Buddhist institutional endowments of the Maitraka dynasty from Gujarat, in which the basic formula reads 'for the livelihood of the servants' (*pādamūla*-[*pra*]*jīvanāya*).[34] This phrase is attested in royal Maitraka grants in favour of *vihāra*s of male Buddhist monastic communities,[35] in favour of Buddhist Tārā shrines and in favour of temples of Hindu deities, like Śiva, the Sun-god, or a local goddess.

Identical phrases are also attested in the Śaiva and Buddhist stipulations of the Bhauma-Kara charters which are related to image worship and to renovations of the respective buildings. The first phrase specifies that a portion of each grant was provided for the *pūjā* of the respective *bhaṭṭāraka* installed in the temple, i.e., 'for the continual performance of bathing and of worship with fragrant powder, flowers, lamps, incense [as well as] *nivedya*, *bali*, [and] *caru* [offerings]' (*satata-snapana-gandha-puṣpa-dīpa-dhūpa-nivedya-bali-caru-pūjādi-pravarttanārthaṁ*), combining a typical Brahmanical phrase (*nivedya-bali-caru*) with Buddhist technical terminology (*gandha-*

[32] The use of Brahmanical terminology in Buddhist contexts is, of course, more striking in the cases cited by von Hinüber (2004, 315; 2013, 372–376), as these are related to stipulations concerning Buddhist monks or nuns, not merely monastic servants.

[33] See von Hinüber 2009, 167 and 332 fn. 58.

[34] Schmiedchen 1993, 587–591; Silk 2008, 203ff.; Schmiedchen 2021, 129, 132; Schmiedchen 2021/22, 80–84.

[35] So far, no reference to *pādamūla*s in the context of Maitraka nunneries has been found; see Schmiedchen 2021/22, 80.

puṣpa-dīpa-dhūpa).[36] The second stipulation, again a rather common formula using Buddhist vocabulary, refers to provisions for repairs, most probably of the temple buildings, although not explicitly mentioned, namely, 'for restoring [those parts] which are split [and] cracked, etc.' (*khaṇḍa-sphuṭitādy-abhisaṁskārārtham*).[37]

Finally, it has to be noted that BhK00004 contains a specific perpetuity clause saying that this royal charter should continue to exist 'as long as the moon issues light from the head of the one whose frontlet is the crescent [Śiva] and as long as Lakṣmī, with the lotus in her hand, resides on the chest of Madhu's enemy [Viṣṇu]' (*yāvac candrārddha-mauleḥ śirasi śaśi-kalā kaumudīm ātanoti lakṣmīr vakṣaḥ-sthale vā vasati madhu-ripor yāvad bhoja-hastā*).[38]

Conclusion

The corpus of the copperplate charters commissioned by the Bhauma-Kara male and female rulers illustrates that multiple layers of religious affiliation of the protagonists were conflated with each other and, at times, different sectarian vocabularies were amalgamated. The royal seal of the dynasty bore the Śaiva emblem of a couchant bull with the symbols for the sun and moon throughout the whole rule of that royal house, only being updated regarding the name of the current king or queen. In all extant charters of Bhauma-Kara kings and in most of the title-deeds issued by their queen regents a distinctly Buddhist *puṇya* formula was used, which included 'all beings' in the transfer of the accrued religious merit. The use of this expression in charters of the early Bhauma-Kara rulers can be explained by the fact that these kings had personal leanings towards Buddhism. The reason for its continued use also in most of the charters

[36] For Buddhist terminology, see von Hinüber 2009, 166ff. For Hindu-Brahmanical terminology, see Willis 2009, 88, 93ff., 96ff. The expression *bali-caru* occurs in endowments in favour of Brahmins as well as in grants to Hindu deities, and can secondarily also appear in Buddhist donations. The term *nivedya* (or rather *naivedya*) does not seem to be attested in traditional endowments to Vedic Brahmins and is more confined to image worship.

[37] For the term and its Buddhist background, see von Hinüber 2013, 367ff., 374. For the early epigraphic use of this phrase, see also Willis 2009, 88, 93.

[38] BhK00004, ll. 30–32.

of the later Bhauma-Kara kings and queens, who were not self-professed Buddhists, may have been that this formula had already become a stock phrase in the donative vocabulary of the dynasty. Whereas some early Bhauma-Kara kings declared themselves to be followers of Buddhism, most male rulers of that line were Śaivas—like the 'mainstream' of mediaeval Indian kings. The queens who were contemporaries of the later Śaiva kings are described as adherents of Viṣṇu, perhaps due to a certain Vaiṣṇava influence from the non-Bhauma-Kara dynasties they originated from. In contrast, the later queens officially followed Śaivism.

The patronage patterns were the same among Bhauma-Kara kings and queens, with a strong preference—like in many other parts of the subcontinent—for land grants to Vedic Brahmins. The earliest known king of the Bhauma-Karas is described as 'one who has instituted the [four] *varṇa*s and the [four] *āśrama*s in their respective duties' (*sva-dharmāropita-varṇāśrama*) and, immediately afterwards, as a Buddhist (*paramopāsaka*) in a charter issued by his grandson Śubhākara I.[39] King Śubhākara II, also a Buddhist (*parama-saugata*),[40] is portrayed in a similar way in his own charter, namely as 'one by whom the proper and unmixed order of the *varṇāśrama* of the Golden Age was established following the supreme scriptures' (*niratiśaya-śāstrānusāra-pravartita-kṛtayugocitāsaṅkīrṇa-varṇā-śrama-vyavastha*).[41] In D. C. Sircar's (1949/50, 213) words, '[t]his no doubt points to the great influence of the Brahmanical social system on the lay followers of Buddhism.' However, the simultaneous characterisation of a king as an adherent of Buddhism and, at the same time, as the guarantor of Brahmanical values and supporter of Brahmins, may also be interpreted as a reflection of different layers of religious affiliation and a combination of personal Buddhist leanings with the traditional requirements of a ruler.[42]

[39] BhK00001, line 2.

[40] BhK00003, line 8.

[41] BhK00003, ll. 9–10. See also Mishra & Acharya 2016, 33 fn. 3.

[42] Acharya (2018, 37) interprets the motivations of the Bhauma-Kara who issued BhK00001, the Hindol plate, in the following way: 'The reason why this Buddhist ruler allowed a large number of brāhmaṇas in close neighbourhood of his capital cannot be explained precisely. But it could be largely seen as a political expediency that prompted the king to balance his Buddhist leanings.' It has to be remarked, however, that Śubhākara I did

In contrast to the widespread use of religious epithets, there is only very little evidence that the Bhauma-Kara kings and queens founded religious institutions of their self-professed personal preference. Apart from general allusions to the foundation of *vihāra*s and *maṭha*s by previous rulers,[43] all the actual religious establishments referred to in the known Bhauma-Kara charters mention members of subordinate families as their founders, which is a common patronage pattern also attested in other regions, namely in Bengal and Bihar as well as in Gujarat.[44]

The Bhauma-Kara title-deeds recording grants to Śaiva and Buddhist institutions show certain similarities in the terminology used for the different beneficiaries. Most stipulations contain a blend of phrases which are derived from Buddhist and Śaiva vocabulary. A clear terminological distinction along 'sectarian' dividing lines is only made with regard to the main protagonists: Śaiva teachers and ascetics versus Buddhist monks.

Appendix

BhK00001 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00001 = Neulpur (Darpan) plate of Śubhākara I, y. 8[45]
Banerji 1919/20; Misra 1934, 1–7; Tripathy 2000, 110–115; Acharya 2014, no. 1.

BhK00002 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00002 = Chaurasi plate of Śivakara II, y. 12
Tripathi 1928; Misra 1934, 8–9 (no edition); Tripathy 2000, 105–109; Acharya 2014, no. 2.

BhK00003 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00003 = Terundia plate of Śubhākara II, y. 100
Sircar 1949/50; Tripathy 2000, 120–124; Acharya 2014, no. 3.

not only 'allow' the Brahmins to settle, but he himself had them consciously settled there through his endowment, perhaps to counterbalance the influence of other Brahmanical groups.

[43] See above, fn. 7.

[44] See Furui 2017; Furui 2021/22, 107; Schmiedchen 2021, 109ff., 117; Schmiedchen 2021/22, 72.

[45] This is the reading of the year by Banerji and Acharya. Misra reads the year as '54,' Tripathy as '30.'



Fig. 2: BhK00010, recto

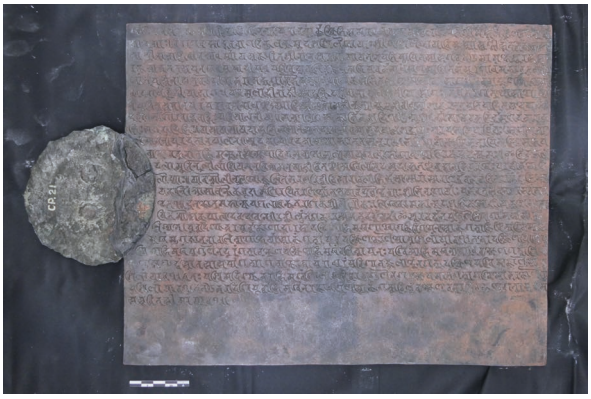


Fig. 3: BhK00010, verso



Fig. 4: BhK00010, seal

BhK00004 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00004 = Hindol (Chitalpur) plate of Śubhākara III, y. 103
Misra 1930; Misra 1934, 12–20; Tripathy 2000, 125–130; Acharya 2014, no. 4.

BhK00005 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00005 = Dharakota (Balichai) plate of Śubhākara III, y. 103
Rajaguru 1930; Misra 1934, 21–22; Tripathy 2000, 131–134; Acharya 2014, no. 5.

BhK00006 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00006 = Talcher plate of Śubhākara IV, y. 145[46]
Misra 1934, 32–39; Tripathy 2000, 135–139; Acharya 2014, no. 6.

BhK00007 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00007 = Talcher plate A of Śivakara III, y. 149
Misra 1934, 40–50; Tripathy 2000, 140–146; Acharya 2014, no. 7.

[46] This is the reading of the year by Acharya. Misra and Tripathy read the year as '141.'

BhK00008 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00008 = Talcher plate B of Śivakara III, y. 149
Misra 1934, 51 (no edition); Tripathy 2000, 147–153; Acharya 2014, no. 8.

BhK00009 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00009 = Baud plate A of Tribhuvanamahādevī II, y. 158
De 1951/52, 210–219; Sircar 1951/52b; Tripathy 2000, 154–160; Acharya 2014, no. 9.

BhK00010 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00010 = Baud plate B of Tribhuvanamahādevī II, y. 158
De 1951/52, 219–220; Sircar 1951/52b; Tripathy 2000, 161–166; Acharya 2014, no. 10.

BhK00011 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00011 = Dhenkanal (Bhimanagarigarh) plate of Tribhuvanamahādevī III, y. 160[47]
Shastri 1916, 419–427; Misra 1934, 23–31; Tripathy 2000, 167–172; Acharya 2014, no. 11.

BhK00012 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00012 = Udaranga/Odaronga plate of Tribhuvanamahādevī III, y. 164
Padhi 2003; Acharya 2014, no. 12.

BhK00013 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00013 = Ganjam plate A of Daṇḍimahādevī, y. 180
Kielhorn 1900/01, 133–140; Misra 1934, 57–58 (no edition); Tripathy 2000, 178–184; Acharya 2014, no. 13.

BhK00014 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00014 = Ganjam plate B of Daṇḍimahādevī, y. 180
Kielhorn 1900/01, 140–142; Misra 1934, 59 (no edition); Tripathy 2000, 185–190; Acharya 2014, no. 14.

BhK00015 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00015 = Sāntīragrāma grant of Daṇḍimahādevī, y. 180
Sircar 1951/52a; Tripathy 2000, 173–177; Acharya 2014, no. 15.

BhK00016 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00016 = Ambapua plate of Daṇḍimahādevī, y. 180
Rao 1956, A 22; Acharya 2014, no. 16.

[47] This is the reading of the year by Tripathy and Acharya. Sastri reads the year as '35,' Misra as '110.'

BhK00017 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00017 = Arabala plate of Daṇḍimahādevī, y. 183
Tripathy 2000, 191–196; Tripathy 2010, 253–254; Acharya 2014, no. 17.

BhK00018 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00018 = Kumuranga (Banpur) plate of Daṇḍimahādevī, y. 187
Panday 1919; Misra 1934, 60–67; Tripathy 2000, 197–202; Acharya 2014, no. 18.

BhK00019 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00019 = Sindaipadraka plate of [Daṇḍimahādevī], y. 187
Dubey & Acharya 2017; not in Acharya 2014.

BhK00020 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00020 = Patalinga plate of Daṇḍimahādevī, y. 190
Acharya 2011/12; Acharya 2014, no. 19.

BhK00021 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00021 = Plate of Vakula-mahādevī, y. 204
Srinivasan 1965/66; Tripathy 2000, 203–209; Acharya 2014, no. 20.

BhK00022 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00022 = Angul plate of Dharmamahādevī
Banerjee 1951; Misra 1934, 52–56; Tripathy 2000, 210–215; Acharya 2014, no. 21.

BhK00023 = DHARMA_INSBhaumaKara00023 = Taltali plate of Dharmamahādevī
Das & Panigrahi 1945; Tripathy 2000, 216–221; Acharya 2014, no. 22.

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Shiny toenails: Poetic borrowing in Sanskrit verses revering the Buddha and Śiva from early Bengali anthologies and from the Lokeśvaraśataka

Csaba Dezső*
ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

Phyllis Granoff, who devoted an inspiring article to the 'alchemy of borrowing' including Rājaśekhara's taxonomy of *haraṇa*, 'poetic appropriation,' observed that 'there is the pleasurable task, also left for the future, of rereading mediaeval poetry with these classifications in mind' (Granoff 2009, 143). On the following pages I make an attempt at such a rereading, focusing on Sanskrit poetry from Bengal written around the ninth to twelfth centuries, in praise of the Buddha or a Bodhisattva on one

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hand, and Śiva and his wife on the other, paying attention to influences, imitations, and borrowings.

The Sanskrit poets of Pāla- and Sena-period Bengal left us some of the most original and masterful *kāvya*s in the history of classical Indian literature. Suffice here to mention Abhinanda's innovative *Rāmacarita*,[1] or the poetry produced by the literary circle in king Lakṣmaṇasena's court (including Jayadeva, Dhoyī, and Govardhana). The two earliest 'treasure troves' of Sanskrit verses were also assembled in Bengal in the same period. The *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* was compiled around 1100 CE by Vidyākara, who might have been a Buddhist scholar at the Jagaddala monastery (Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, xxxix). The *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* was prepared by Śrīdharadāsa in 1205 CE at the court of Lakṣmaṇasena.[2]

Among the authors whose verses were anthologised by Vidyākara and Śrīdharadāsa, we find such all-time favourites as Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti, Murāri, and Rājaśekhara, but also many Bengali poets from the time of the Pāla and Sena dynasties.[3] There are several poets whose verses are known only from these anthologies, but we should not form the mistaken impression that they were all authors of detached stanzas (*muktaka*s). As Ingalls (1965, 35ff) pointed out, dramas were particularly important sources for Vidyākara (and probably also for Śrīdharadāsa) to cull verses from, and many of these *subhāṣita*s were originally embedded in plays.[4] A good example is Śāntākaragupta, who until recently was known only as the author of a couple of verses quoted in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* and the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*. The discovery of a small fragment of his play on Sudhana Bodhisattva has made it clear that at least two, but possibly all the

[1] On Abhinanda's epic and its connections with the 'Kanauj school' of poetry, see Tubb 2014b.

[2] Banerji 1965, viii. A third, later Bengali anthology which we will occasionally refer to is the *Prasannasāhityaratnākara* of Nandana. It dates from the fifteenth century and includes part of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (Sternbach 1974, 16). I refer to this anthology on the basis of Kosambi and Gokhale's apparatus and a Nepalese manuscript (NGMCP Reel. no. B 318/4).

[3] On the sources of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, see Kosambi and Gokhale 1957, lxiii ff., Ingalls 1965, 30ff. On the poets quoted in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, see Banerji 1965, vi ff.

[4] By the time of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, verses excerpted from plays, without the surrounding prose dialogues, also circulated as independent collections called *uddhāra*s (Granoff 2014, 536).

stanzas attributed to him in the two early Bengali anthologies belonged to this play.[5] This illustrates well how little we know about many poets and the original contexts of many *subhāṣita*s.

These two early anthologies contain verses of hundreds of poets (223 authors and works in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, 485 authors in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*) from a period of about five hundred years. Such a collocation brings out similarities in poetic imagery, syntactic structures, and figuration. The direction of influence is often hard to determine, because the absolute, or even the relative dating of many authors is impossible. But sometimes we can risk an educated guess and point out the emulative aspect in the verses of Pāla and Sena poets for example, some of whom self-consciously followed in the footsteps of Bāṇa and the poets of the 'Kanauj-school.'[6]

Imitation has many facets, among which plagiarism is just one. The training of poets included exercises of refashioning existing verses,[7] and as Salomon observed, 'it would only be natural for traditional readers of Sanskrit poems, be they students, scribes, or would-be poets, to compose such imitative verses and scribble them in the margins.' Such imitations, as Salomon argues, 'can [...] be seen as tributes to the original poet, rather than attempts to pawn off plagiarist's compositions in the name of the master' (Salomon 2019, 331). Such 'tributes' could also take the form of longer poems, such as the *pādapūraṇa*s written by Jain authors, the best known being Jinasena's *Pārśvābhyudaya* (c. 800), which incorporates one or two *pāda*s of the *Meghadūta* into each of its own stanzas.[8]

Borrowing was also theorised by authors on poetics. Towards the end of his *Dhvanyāloka* (4.12) (Krishnamoorthy 1982, 294), Ānandavardhana (ninth century) writes about different kinds of *saṁvāda,* 'correspondence' between 'ideas' (*artha*s or *vastu*s) in literary texts:

> *saṁvādo hy anyasādṛśyaṁ tat punaḥ pratibimbavat |*
> *ālekhyākāravat tulyadehivac ca śarīriṇām ||*

[5] See Dezső 2014.
[6] On Bāṇa's influence on the Pāla poets, see Tubb 2014b.
[7] Salomon 2019, 331, referring to *Kavikaṇṭhābharaṇa* 1.21.
[8] On Jain *pādapūraṇa*s, see Granoff 2009, 142ff.

> Correspondence is similarity to something else. It is like people's reflections, or painted representations, or individuals who look like them.

Ānandavardhana endorses only the last type (*tulyadehivat*) and says that poets should avoid the first two, because the 'reflection' type does not have a separate self (*ananyātmā*), and the 'painting' type has an empty (or worthless) self (*tucchātmā, ibid.* 4.13 and commentary).

Rājaśekhara (c. 900) took over and elaborated this classification in his *Kāvyamīmāṁsā.* His term for poetic borrowing is *haraṇa*, 'appropriation' and he provides definitions for each type. *Pratibimbakalpa,* borrowing that is 'like a reflection' is defined as follows (Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 63):

> *arthaḥ sa eva sarvo vākyāntaraviracanā paraṁ yatra |*
> *tad aparamārthavibhedaṁ kāvyaṁ pratibimbakalpaṁ syāt ||*
>
> In which the [central / striking] meaning is completely the same, but there is a construction of a different statement, that verse, not being genuinely distinct, will be like a reflection.

In the illustration, the model verse describes Śiva's black snakes as if they were the sprouts of the *kālakūṭa* poison watered by the moon's nectar, while in the imitative stanza the watering is done by the Ganges, but there is no request for protection, just an assertion of the snakes' superiority.

Ālekhyaprakhya, borrowing that is 'like a painting' is defined in the following verse (Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 63):

> *kiyatāpi yatra saṁskārakarmaṇā vastu bhinnavad bhāti |*
> *tat kathitam arthacaturair ālekhyaprakhyam iti kāvyam ||*
>
> In which the idea appears as if it were different due to however slight work of refinement, that verse is said to be like a painting by the experts of signification.

In the example, the model is the same as in the case of *pratibimbakalpa,* but in the imitation we read about Śiva's white snakes appearing as the sprouts of the crescent moon watered by the Ganges. (One might claim that what counts as 'refinement' is rather subjective)

Rājaśekhara defines *tulyadehitulya,* borrowing that is 'like a lookalike person' as follows (Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 63):[9]

> *viṣayasya yatra bhede 'py abhedabuddhir nitāntasādṛśyāt |*
> *tat tulyadehitulyaṁ kāvyaṁ badhnanti sudhiyo 'pi ||*
>
> Even the wise compose that [kind of] verse, which is like an individual who looks alike, where, although there is a difference in the subject, one cognises non-difference because of extreme similarity.

In the illustration, the model verse contrasts domestic animals with elephants that can only be found in either forests or royal palaces. The imitative verse contrasts useful stones that can be found in every house with jewels that either belong to their own mines or to royal palaces.

To these three categories, Rājaśekhara adds a fourth type of borrowing, which he calls *parapurapraveśa*, 'entering the body of another person,' i.e. possession:[10]

> *mūlaikyaṁ yatra bhavet parikarabandhas tu dūrato 'nekaḥ |*
> *tat parapurapraveśapratimaṁ kāvyaṁ sukavibhāvyam ||*
>
> (Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 64)
>
> Where the source may be the same, but the arrangement of the trappings is very different, that verse, which is like entering the body of another person, is to be composed (or approved) by good poets.

In the illustration, the model verse speaks about the enemy's wives, who look at the cloudy sky in the rainy season, shed tears of joy because they do not have to be afraid of military attacks, and smell the *kadamba* flowers with slightly squinting eyes. In the imitative verse, the enemy's wife snatches from his lover a fresh *kadamba* flower, which is a significant sign of the rainy season that stops military expeditions, kisses it with joyful

[9] Stchoupak and Renou (1946, 178) translated the name of this type as 'celui qui est pareil à une Ame de même forme' but as Granoff pointed out (2009, 139 fn. 17), *dehin* means here 'person / individual' rather than 'soul.'

[10] Stchoupak and Renou (1946, 178) translated this expression as 'celui qui est similaire à l'Entrée dans un cité étrangère' but as Granoff pointed out (2009, 139), Rājaśekhara borrowed this term from magical / yogic / alchemical literature.

eyes, and places it on her heart, on the parting of her hair, and then behind her ear as an ornament.

Rājaśekhara is more tolerant than Ānandavardhana concerning the practice of these borrowings:[11] he only rejects the 'reflection' type,[12] but approves of the 'painting,'[13] the 'lookalike,'[14] and the 'possession' types.[15] In his classification, the first two types are *anyayoni,* 'that which has something else as its source,' the latter two are *nihnutayoni,* 'the source of which is hidden' (Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 63). He also subdivided these four types of borrowing into eight subtypes each, duly providing definitions and examples. Rājaśekhara's system was adopted by two Jain *ālaṅkārika*s, Hemacandra and Vāgbhaṭa. Both of them took over the four basic categories, but not the subdivisions. Hemacandra (twelfth century) in his *Viveka* commentary on his own *Kāvyānuśāsana* copies everything almost verbatim from the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā,* including Rājaśekhara's illustrative verses (Parikh and Kulkarni 1964, 14–16). Vāgbhaṭa (fourteenth century?) shows a little more originality in giving his own examples (Śivadatta 1915, 12–13).

Both the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* and the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* contain *namaskāra* and *āśirvāda* verses (praises and benedictions) about the Buddha (and Bodhisattvas) and Śiva (and his family). The *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, not surprisingly, since it was compiled in a Buddhist milieu, has separate sections on the Buddha, Lokeśvara, and Mañjughoṣa, but also on Śiva and Śiva's household.[16] The *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* has several sections on Śiva

[11] Although I cannot agree with Salomon who writes, 'Rājaśekhara attributes no relative value judgement to these different classes' (Salomon 2019, 337).

[12] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 68: *so 'yaṁ kaver akavitvadāyī sarvathā pratibimbakalpaḥ pariharaṇīyaḥ,* 'That [borrowing which is] like a reflection confers the status of being a non-poet on a poet, [and therefore] it must be avoided by all means.'

[13] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 71: *so 'yam anugrāhyo mārgaḥ,* 'this is a path that is to be favoured.'

[14] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 75: *so 'yam ullekhavān anugrāhyo mārga iti surānandaḥ,* 'according to Surānanda, this path has refinement [and therefore] it is to be favoured.' On *ullekha,* see Granoff 2014, 539ff.

[15] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 64: *tat parapurapraveśapratimaṁ kāvyaṁ sukavibhāvyam,* 'that verse, which is like entering the body of another person, is to be composed (or approved) by good poets.'

[16] The manuscript fragment of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* recently discovered by Péter-Dániel Szántó also contains a section on Tārā (Szántó 2020, 7ff.).

and his various attributes and deeds (his dreadlocks, his eye, his dance, his burning of the Three Cities, etc.) and Śiva's extended family (the Goddess, Kārttikeya, Gaṇeśa, Bhṛṅgī, the *gaṇa*s), but only a few verses on the Buddha among the *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu. The third text I am going to look at is the *Lokeśaśataka*, a Buddhist *stotra* on Avalokiteśvara written in the Pāla kingdom in the ninth century.

1. *Śiva's fire*

There is a famous verse in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (no. 49), much quoted in works on poetics,[17] which appears to be attributed to Bāṇa in Vidyākara's anthology, but which is assigned to Amaruka in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* (no. 76):

> *kṣipto hastāvalagnaḥ prasabham abhihato 'py ādadāno 'ṁśukāntaṁ*
> *gṛhṇan keśeṣv apāstaś caraṇanipatito nekṣitaḥ sambhrameṇa |*
> *āliṅgan yo 'vadhūtas tripurayuvatibhiḥ sāśrunetrotpalābhiḥ*
> *kāmīvārdrāparādhaḥ sa haratu duritaṁ śāmbhavo vaḥ śarāgniḥ ||*
>
> When they scorned him / *threw it away*, he / *it* clung to their hands; though they struck him / *it* forcefully, he / *it* caught their garments' hem; when he / *it* was seizing their hair, they flung him / *it* away; when he / *it* fell at their feet, they did not regard him with respect / *did not see it in their confusion*; when he / *it* was embracing them, the women of the Three Cities shook him / *it* off with tears in their lotus-eyes, as if it were a lover who had freshly offended them—may that fire of Śambu's arrow take evil away from you.

Dhanika in his tenth-century commentary on *Daśarūpaka* 4.28 also assigns this verse to the *Amaruśataka* (Paṇśîkar 1927, 88), and we do find this stanza as the second one in Amaru's Century.[18] Garry Tubb in his article 'On the Boldness of Bāṇa' trusting the 'demonstrable reliability' of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*'s attributions, regards the verse as a composition of Bāṇa (Tubb 2014a, 318). However, a fragment of a manuscript of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, recently identified by Péter-Dániel Szántó,[19] swaps

[17] For references, see *Mahāsubhāṣitasaṁgraha* vol. 7, p. 3413 (verse no. 12169).
[18] See for instance Ācārya 1954, 4; Devadhar 1959, 4.
[19] NGMCP A 933/1 (Szántó 2020).

the order of verses 48 and 49, and has the attribution placed after 48, correctly, since it is the famous paean from the *Harṣacarita*, beginning with the words *namas tuṅgaśiraścumbi°* (exposure 30 = fol. 7v). I suspect that these two verses were interchanged in the course of transmission, the attribution got separated from the *Harṣacarita*-verse, and became attached to the Amaru-verse.

Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that the *kṣipto hastāvalangaḥ* verse was originally composed by Bāṇa, even though we seem to have lost the sole attribution to him. In fact, another verse in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (no. 61), which reads as a variation on the same theme, is attributed to Mayūra, Bāṇa's colleague in king Harṣa's court. This time the attribution is a bit more secure, since it is confirmed by the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, where the same verse is no. 73, though in the *Prasannasāhityaratnākara* it is ascribed to Cittapa (fol. 2v):

> *saṁvyānāṁśukapallaveṣu taralaṁ veṇīguṇeṣu sthiraṁ*
> *mandaṁ kañcukasandhiṣu stanataṭotsaṅgeṣu dīptārciṣam |*
> *ālokya tripurāvarodhanavadhūvargasya dhūmadhvajaṁ*
> *hastasrastaśarāsano vijayate devo dayārdrekṣaṇaḥ ||*
>
> It trembles on their mantles' hems, stays steady on their braids' strands, lingers in their shirts' crevices, blazes on the sloping breasts of the women of the Three Cities' harem—as God watches the fire, pity fills his eyes with tears, and the bow drops from his hand: He is supreme!

It would be tempting to see the two verses as written by Harṣa's two court poets emulating each other, were the attribution of *kṣipto hastāvalagnaḥ* to Bāṇa more credible. But even so, the two verses were probably not written independently: they are in conversation with one another. Mayūra's verse, with the list of attributes in the first two *pāda*s (with two allocations per *pāda*) and the delayed identification of the referent of these attributes, is very similar in its structure to the Amaru-verse.

But there are also crucial differences. The metre is different: the Amaru-verse is *sragdharā,* while Mayūra's is *śārdūlavikrīḍita.* In the case of the Amaru-verse, the listener is 'misdirected' by the description, and only recognises in the last *pāda* that it is Śiva's fire that attacks the

women, and not an importunate man.[20] Ānandavardhana argues that in the Amaru-verse both the erotic and the tragic sentiment (*śṛṅgāra* and *karuṇa rasa*) are subordinate to the main purport, namely the superiority of Śiva's power, and that is why the two usually contradictory sentiments can occur side-by-side.[21] He also gives an alternative interpretation: if the tragic sentiment is regarded as the purport of the verse, then the erotic *rasa* strengthens it in a subordinate position, 'for when things that are sweet by nature become pitiable, they generate even greater possession by sorrow, when one remembers the charms that were wont to arise in their former state.'[22] On the other hand, as Ingalls pointed out, the verse is ultimately a benediction, and God's violence and compassion are connected when the poet prays that Śiva's destructive fire have mercy on men and take evil away.[23]

The erotic aspect is much more subdued in Mayūra's poem. If at all, it is only hinted at by allusions to feminine beauty and the sensation of touch, while God's compassion is brought explicitly into sharp focus in the last *pāda,* so a possibly objectionable conflict of *karuṇa* and *śṛṅgāra* cannot arise. The ultimate purport of this verse (a paean, not a benediction) is to extol Śiva *as* the merciful Lord.

If it was Mayūra who was inspired by the Amaru-verse (of course it could have been the other way round), his poem could be classified as an *ālekhyaprakhya*-type of poetic borrowing. In Mayūra's verse, the *vastu* is the same: the fire of Śiva's arrows incinerating the women of Tripura. The major difference is the lack of the erotic simile, which makes this verse an example of the *vibhūṣaṇamoṣa,* ('removing the decoration') subtype of *ālekhyaprakhya,* defined as follows: 'something with poetic ornamentation is told without using such ornamentation' (*alaṁkṛtam analaṁkṛtyābhidhīyate*; Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 69). Rājaśekhara

[20] See Tubb's perceptive interpretation (Tubb 2014a, 319).

[21] *Dhvanyāloka* ad 2.5 (Krishnamoorthy 1982, 44): *atra tripura-ripu-prabhāvātiśayasya vākyārthatve īrṣyāvipralambhasya śleṣasahitasyāṅgabhāvaḥ … īrṣyāvipralambhakaruṇayor aṅgatvena vyavasthānāt samāveśo na doṣaḥ,* and again on 3.20 (Krishnamoorthy 1982, 170).

[22] *Dhvanyāloka* ad 3.20 (Krishnamoorthy 1982, 172) *yataḥ prakṛtimadhurāḥ padārthāḥ śocanīyatāṁ prāptāḥ prāgavasthābhāvibhiḥ saṁsmaryamāṇair vilāsair adhikataraṁ śokāveśam upajanayanti.*

[23] See Ingalls 1965, 22.

illustrates *vibhūṣaṇamoṣa* with a verse that describes the flame of a lamp using several similes, imitated by another verse that describes the same but without similes. In our case, the Amaru-verse compares the fire's acts to the importunities of a male lover, while Mayūra's verse does not contain any such simile.

If the borrowing happened the other way round, and Mayūra's verse was the model for the Amaru-stanza, one might still speak about an *ālekhyaprakhya*-type of appropriation, in which the 'refinement' (*saṃskāra*) consisted in adding the simile and thereby the erotic flavour. This could be regarded as an example of the *navanepathya*-subtype ('new costume'), which is defined by Rājaśekhara as follows: 'the same idea is made different by force of poetic expression' (*tad eva vastūktivaśād anyathā kriyate*; Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 70). In the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* examples, the first verse talks about a *tilaka* on a woman's cheek being washed off by her tears. The second verse elaborates on the same idea, but uses the word *pattralatā,* 'vines (i.e. curving lines) of leaves' for the patterns drawn on the cheeks and adds the idea of watering.

The *kṣipto hastāvalagnaḥ* verse became (justly) famous, as it is shown by its many citations in *alaṁkāraśāstra* works. It also inspired imitations. One example may be *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 67 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 77, attributed to Maṅgala[24] in both anthologies (but to Subhāṅga in the *Prasannasāhityaratnākara*, fol. 2v):

> *sindūraśrīr lalāṭe kanakarasamayaḥ karṇapārśve 'vataṁso*[25]
> *vaktre tāmbūlarāgaḥ pṛthukucakalaśe kuṅkumasyānulepaḥ* |[26]
> *daityādhīśāṅganānāṁ jaghanaparisare lākṣikakṣaumalakṣmīr*
> *aśreyāṁsi kṣiṇotu tripuraharaśarodgārajanmānalo vaḥ* ||
>
> A beautiful vermilion colour on their foreheads, an ornament made of orpiment about their ears, the red hue of paan on their lips,

[24] On Maṅgala, see Sternbach 1980, 194ff. He wrote devotional verses both to the Buddha and to Śiva. Most of his verses are quoted in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* and *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*. One stanza attributed to him in the anthologies is also quoted in the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (c. 1000).

[25] *karṇapārśve 'vataṁso*] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa; *karṇapāśāvataṁso* Saduktikarṇāmṛta; *karṇapāśe vataṁśo* Prasannasāhityaratnākara.

[26] *kuṅkumasyānulepaḥ*] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa, Saduktikarṇāmṛta; *kuṅkumasyānurāgaḥ* Prasannasāhityaratnākara.

> saffron paste on their broad, jar-like breasts, a gorgeous silk cloth dyed with lac on the wide hips of the women of the demon king—may the fire, born from the masses of arrows shot by the destroyer of the Three Cities, obliterate your misfortunes.

If Maṅgala's starting point was Mayūra's verse, then he 'refined' it similarly to the poet of the Amaru-stanza (*navanepathya*-type of borrowing): by additional figuration (adding metaphors in this case). The structure of Maṅgala's poem is very similar to the Amaru-verse: the final *pāda* is construed in a comparable way, and in the first two *pāda*s there are two allocations per *pāda*. The metre is the same: *sragdharā.* But here fire appears in the role not of a pleading lover, but of various reddish-yellowish things that are used by women as cosmetics or ornaments. *Śṛṅgāra* is present in the verse since all these things normally make women more attractive, while *karuṇa* is less emphatic than in the Amaru-verse (and much less than in Mayūra's poem). Here the association works on the visual level: fire is red, and so are these things, which is more banal than the personification of fire as a lover. If Maṅgala was inspired not by Mayūra's poem, but by the Amaru-verse, his borrowing could still be regarded as an instance of *navanepathya,* the idea (*vastu*) being the same, but the mode of expression (*ukti*) different: the Amaru-verse compares fire to an importunate male lover, while Maṅgala identifies fire with women's ornaments. Of course, it is also possible that Maṅgala knew and wished to emulate both Mayūra's verse and the Amaru-stanza.

Moving away from the theme of the burning of the Three Cities, the structural makeup of the Amaru-verse might have also inspired poets who chose another subject, for instance *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 51 (also in *Prasannasāhityaratnākara*, fol. 17v):

> *keśeṣu prāk pradīpas tvaci vikaṭacaṭatkārasāro 'timātraṁ*
> *māṁse mandāyamānaḥ kṣaradasṛji*[27] *sṛjann asthiṣu ṣṭhātkṛtāni* |

[27] *kṣarad*°] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa; *sphurad*° Prasannasāhityaratnākara.

majjaprāye 'ṅgabhāge jhagiti ratipater[28] *jājvalan projjvalaśrīr*[29]
aśreyo vyasyatād[30] *vas trinayananayanopāntavānto hutāśaḥ* ||

First a torch in his hair, then frizzling extremely raucously on his skin, lingering on his bleeding flesh, emitting crackling sounds on his bones, and instantly blazing up with a beautiful glare on the remaining part of Rati's husband that was mostly marrow—may the fire projected from the corner of the eye of the three-eyed god dispel your misfortune.

We see here the already familiar structure: a list of actions as something is working its way deeper and deeper into someone's body, who is revealed to be Kāma in the third *pāda,* but the identity of the consuming force is only disclosed at the end of the verse. We have two allocations per *pāda* in the first two lines, the final *pāda* is again very similar structurally to that of the Amaru-verse, and the metre is also *sragdharā*. This stanza has a striking sensory effect on the listener with its onomatopoeic words and impressive alliteration. The erotic sentiment is not present, we have instead a touch of horror (*bībhatsa*). The all-consuming, mercilessly thorough force of Śiva's fire is foregrounded in the first three *pāda*s, and it is the same fire which is then implored to have mercy on the listeners and dispel their misfortune.

This verse might be categorised as a *tulyadehitulya haraṇa* in Rājaśekhara's classification. As for the subtype, it could be regarded as an instance of *viṣayaparivarta* ('changing the subject'), defined as follows in the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*: 'the same idea acquires a different form through applying it to a different subject' (*tasyaiva vastuno viṣayāntarayojanād anyarūpāpattiḥ*; Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 71). In the verses that illustrate this kind of appropriation, one describes the breaths emerging from Śiva's right nostril, while the other one speaks about Viṣṇu's sighs (in both cases the sighs betray the god's longing for the goddess). In our case, both in the Amaru-verse and the stanza on the burning of Kāma, the idea (*vastu*) is fire that is mercilessly and systematically burning bodies; the poet prays that this fire will destroy all evils. The *viṣaya* becomes different, since the fire is burning Kāma, and not the demon women. On

[28] *jhagiti ratipater*] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa; *jhaṭiti ratiparer* Prasannasāhityaratnākara.
[29] *jājvalan projjvalaśrīr*] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa; *jājvalaj jvālanaśrīr* Prasannasāhityaratnākara.
[30] *aśreyo vyasyatād*] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa; *aśreyāṁsi syatād* Prasannasāhityaratnākara.

the other hand, the *viṣaya* is not completely different, since in both cases it is Śiva's fire (very similar, but not quite the same: the fire of his arrows in one case, and the fire from his third eye in the other). The execution of the basic idea, however, is quite distinct again: the poetic figures and sentiments are modified.

It was not just benedictions and paeans (*āśīrvāda* and *namaskāra* verses) that were composed using the same construction. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1423, for example, praises a king. It is attributed to Vasukalpa in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, who composed verses in honour of the Kāmboja king ruling Vardhamāna (West Bengal) in the tenth century:[31]

karṣadbhiḥ sicayāñcalān atirasāt kurvadbhir āliṅganam
gṛhṇānaiḥ kacam ālikhadbhir adharaṁvidrāvayadbhiḥ kucau |
pratyakṣe 'pi kaliṅgamaṇḍalapater antaḥpurāṇām aho
dhik kaṣṭaṁ viṭapair viṭair iva vane kiṁ nāma nāceṣṭitam ||

They pulled at the hem of their garments, embraced them with intense passion, grabbed their hair, scratched their lips, made the breasts of the

[31] Warder 1988, 683 (§4074). In *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 2128 Vasukalpa lists Bāṇa, Keśaṭa, Yogeśvara, and Rājaśekhara as his predecessors in employing 'boldness in speech' (*vacasi prāgalbhyaṁ*) in their poetry. Among the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* and *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* verses attributed to Vasukalpa, we find poems on the Buddha (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 3, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 6, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 15 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 242), Śiva (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 30 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 16), and Gaṇeśa (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 93 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 142, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 94 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 141), *śṛṅgāra* verses (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 399, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 542, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1358), verses on the moon (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 897 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 356, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 900 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 371, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 921 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 376, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 956 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1181), one stanza on the dawn (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 965 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1181), another one on a bee on a mango flower (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1794), one stanza on the breezes from Lake Pampā that might come from a Rāma-play (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1125), a verse on the south winds (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1126), one on the Malaya mountain (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1810), one on the *cātaka* bird (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1959), a verse on Prāgjyotiṣa (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 2085), a stanza on great poets (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 2121), another one on poverty (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 2237), and many verses that might have been part of a *praśasti* on the Kāmboja king (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1016, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1381 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1546, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1397, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1423, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1425 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1503, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1426 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1504, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1431, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1444, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1459, Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa 1576, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1385, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1420, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1461, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1496, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 1627, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 2065).

> harem ladies bleed before the eyes of the king of Kaliṅga. My god! How horrible! Is there anything the trees in the forest, behaving like lechers, have not done?

Just as in the Amaru-verse, we have a series of actions befitting a passionate and violent man, this time not begging for forgiveness, but committing sexual assault. In the third *pāda* we learn that we are witnessing a scene of adultery, or even the raping of a king's wives, but only the last *pāda* reveals the real identity of these rapists: they are the forest trees. The harem ladies probably escaped to the forest after their husband was defeated and his court dispersed. Along with the erotic, the tragic sentiment is also present, but just as in the Amaru-verse, both are subordinate to the ultimate purport of the poem, which is praising the king who defeated the lord of Kaliṅga. Fire is compared to a violently importunate man in the Amaru-verse, while trees are compared to passionately violent men in Vasukalpa's stanza: it also seems to fit the category of *viṣayaparivarta,* though it is one step further removed from the Amaru-verse than the stanza on the burning of Kāma.

Vasukalpa's verse also occurs in the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* (no. 1277), where it is attributed to Śrī Dhanadadeva (who might or might not be the same as the famous Dhanapāla).[32] Here, however, in the third *pāda,* we read *bhavadvirodhinṛpater,* 'of your enemy king' instead of *kaliṅgamaṇḍalapater,* 'of the king of Kaliṅga.' This appears to be an example of decontextualisation: with the original localisation removed, the verse becomes a generalised *cāṭu,* 'flattery' applicable to any king.

2. *Vajradatta's Lokeśaśataka*

According to Tāranātha,[33] Vajradeva lived in the time of the Pāla king Devapāla (ninth century). He was a householder and a great poet, who was cursed with leprosy by a *yoginī* in Nepal. Vajradeva then composed his hymn to Avalokiteśvara, which cured him. This hymn, says Tāranātha, was regarded as an example of excellent poetry everywhere in Āryadeśa. As Warder points out, the story of leprosy is strongly reminiscent of the

[32] See Sternbach 1978, 434.
[33] Schiefner 1869, 214, Chimpa, Chattopadhyaya and Chattopadhyaya 1990, 271.

tradition about Mayūra, the author of the *Sūryaśataka*, which was clearly a model for Vajradeva—the same *sragdharā* metre, long compounds, lots of alliteration, though fewer puns in the *Lokeśvaraśataka* (Warder 1988, 133, §2997). Vajradatta (as his name appears in the manuscripts of his poem) is called a *mahākṣapaṭalika,* 'chief record keeper' in the manuscript colophons of his hymn.[34] The *Lokeśvaraśataka* was translated into Tibetan around 1270, and an edition of the Sanskrit text and its Tibetan translation, accompanied by a French translation, was published by Suzanne Karpelès in the *Journal Asiatique* in 1919. A commentary on the first forty-eight verses of the hymn is preserved in a Nepalese manuscript.[35]

To illustrate Vajradatta's indebtedness to Mayūra, let us first have a look at *Sūryaśataka* 16, in which Sūrya is worshipped by the three great Hindu gods:

> *maulīndor maiṣa moṣīd dyutim iti vṛṣabhāṅkena yaḥ śaṅkineva*
> *pratyagrodghāṭitāmbhoruhakuharaguhāsusthiteneva dhātrā |*
> *kṛṣṇena dhvāntakṛṣṇasvatanuparibhavatrasnuneva stuto 'laṁ*
> *trāṇāya stāt tanīyān api timiraripoḥ sa tviṣām udgamo vaḥ ||*
>
> It is praised highly by the Bull-Bannered (Śiva), who seems to be afraid lest he (Sūrya) rob the splendour of the moon on his head; by the Creator (Brahmā), who appears to be sitting at ease in the hiding-place which is the hollow of the freshly opened lotus; [and] by Kṛṣṇa, who seems to fear the humiliation of his own body which is black like the night—may even that slightest emergence of the rays of the Enemy of Darkness be for your protection!

As we shall see, this verse has many parallels in the *Lokeśaśataka.*

While Mayūra begins his hymns with the description of the sun's rays (*Sūryaśataka* 1–43: *dyutivarṇanam*), Vajradatta starts with the flashing

[34] Karpelès 1919, 462, MS A133/8 (= N1) fol. 13v, MS HOD28 (= N2) fol. 25v. Dan Martin speculates about the possible identity of the poet and a general named Vajradeva, who appears as the founder of a monastery in a land grant dated to the reign of Mahendrapāla, Devapāla's successor (Martin 2014, 580, fn. 33).

[35] NGMCP B 108/28, http://catalogue-old.ngmcp.uni-hamburg.de/mediawiki/index.php/B_108-28_Loke%C5%9Bvara%C5%9Bataka (accessed on 7 January, 2024). Unfortunately, I do not have access to this manuscript, except for the beginning of the commentary on the first verse, transcribed in the online NGMCP catalogue entry.

toenails of Lokeśvara, and this develops into the longest section of his poem on Avalokiteśvara's feet, covering the first forty-five verses. Here is the first stanza of the hymn:

> *bhāsvanmāṇikyabhāso mukuṭabhṛti namannākanāthottamāṅge*
> *bhaktiprahve sarojāsanaśirasi hasanmālatīmālikābhāḥ |*
> *maulau mīlanmṛgāṅkām akṛśakapiśatāṁ śāmbhave śātayantyo*
> *loke lokeśapādāmalanakhaśaśabhṛtkāntayaḥ santu śāntyai* || 1 ||
>
> They dispel the rays of the shining rubies on Indra's bowing head that bears a diadem, they resemble the laughing jasmine-garland on Brahmā's head inclined with devotion, they disperse the thick redness, in which the moon twinkles, on Śiva's head—may the rays of Lokeśa's pure, moon-like toenails bring peace in the world.

In the third *pāda* Karpelès reads *śātayantyo,* but in fact all her manuscripts (including N2) read *śāntayantyo,* as do N1, N3 (NGMCP MS B99/8) and N4 (NGMCP 1327/16), as well as the commentary, glossing it with *hīnayantyaḥ,* 'making weaker / inferior.' This form is theoretically possible, but attestations to it are very few if any (the *Grosses Petersburger Wörterbuch* adduces only Chézy's edition of the *Śakuntalā*, but it does not seem to occur in other editions of the play). The causative verb *śātayati* is much more common, and its meaning fits the context here: the jasmine-white rays of light radiating from Lokeśa's toenails disperse the red glow of Indra's rubies and Śiva's ginger hair.

Sūryaśataka 16 as a whole can be compared with the first verse of the *Lokeśvaraśataka:* in both stanzas the basic idea seems to be three gods (Śiva, Brahmā, and Kṛṣṇa vs. Indra, Brahmā, and Śiva) venerating the supreme being, who emits rays that can or actually do have an effect on (or at least resemble) something connected with these deities. Perhaps this could be regarded as an example of the *pratikañcuka*-type borrowing. *Pratikañcuka* ('counter-garb'),[36] a subtype of *parapurapraveśa,* defined as follows in the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*: 'writing up an idea, which is dissimilar because [the things in question are] of different kinds' (*prakārāntareṇa visadṛśaṁ yad vastu tasya nibandhaḥ*).[37] In the illustration quoted by

[36] On the meaning of this word, see Aklujkar 1977–1978, 19–23.

[37] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 75. The meaning of this definition is not entirely transparent to me. Madhusūdana Miśra's commentary glosses *visadṛśaṁ* as *viśiṣṭasādṛśyavat*

Rājaśekhara, the first verse describes a moonstone jar from which wine red like the eyes of an intoxicated partridge is being poured, resembling a female goose with a waterlily-stem in its beak, while the imitative verse depicts a girl pouring wine from an emerald jar with a coral mouth, which looks like a pet parrot with a desert creeper (? *vallūravallī*) in its beak. Here the basic *vastu* seems to be a wine jar being compared to a bird, but the material and thus the colour of the jars and the species of the birds all become different.

In *Lokeśvaraśataka* 11, the shining whiteness of Lokeśvara's toenails gives rise to speculation:

> *bhāsvatkhaṇḍendukhaṇḍair apacitiracanā kiṁ kṛtā śambhuneyaṁ*
> *nyastā ratnāvalī vā kimu niratiśayotkaṇṭhayā bodhilakṣmyā |*
> *devair divyādbhutānām asamasumanasāṁ lambitā mālikā nu*
> *prīyāt paṅktir nakhānām iti janitamatir lokanāthāṅghrijā vaḥ* ||11||
>
> 'Is this an arrangement for worship made by Śambhu with the shining pieces of the crescent moon? Or is this a necklace of jewels placed down by Bodhilakṣmī, whose longing is unsurpassed? Or is it a small garland of matchless, celestial, wonderful flowers, suspended by the gods?' May the row of nails on Lokanātha's feet, which has given rise to such thoughts, delight you.

This verse is an example of *saṁdeha* (or *saṁśaya*) *alaṅkāra,* the poetic figure of 'doubt': someone, probably a divine worshipper, hesitates to identify Lokeśvara's toenails as such and wonders whether what he sees are shiny, white objects placed at the Bodhisattva's feet as offerings. Daṇḍin treats this figure as a variety of simile (*Kāvyādarśa* 2.26: *saṁśayopamā*), and indeed these 'doubts' imply that the toenails are just as beautiful as

(Miśra 1934, 227), but I do not find this interpretation plausible. Stchoupak and Renou translate (1946, 204): 'Une composition dont le thème est très dissemblable, le mode (de développement étant) autre.' But in the example, it is not so much the 'mode de développement' that differentiates the imitative verse from its model, since both verses describe wine being poured out of a jar, which is compared to a bird. It is the material of the jar and the species of the bird that are different. Could *prakārāntara* refer to this, 'a difference in kind'? But taking 'x-*antara*' not in the meaning of 'different / other X' is not very natural. So at present I am taking *prakārāntareṇa* in the meaning of *prakārāntaratvena*.

these divine offerings. This stanza might have been inspired by *Sūrya-śataka* 27, in which the sun's morning light is speculated to be a red path coming from Mount Meru, or Sūrya's saffron-dyed banner, or a row of red chowries on the heads of Sūrya's horses.

Padmapāṇi's toenails outshine the decorations of the gods in *Lokeśvaraśataka* 18:

avrīḍaś cūḍayāsau vahati paśupatiḥ kāmam ardhendubhūṣāṁ
śaureḥ śobhābhilāṣaḥ katham api kṛtinaḥ kaustubhenāstam eti |
dṛṣṭe 'smin so 'pi mogho maghavamaṇimahāmaulir ity āttacittair
yatkāntyācinti lokaiś caraṇanakhagaṇaḥ padmapāṇeḥ sa jīyāt || 18 ||

'No doubt Paśupati shamelessly carries the ornament of the crescent moon on his head. Clever Viṣṇu's craving for beauty somehow subsides thanks to the *kaustubha* jewel. When these [toenails] are seen, even the big, jewelled crown of Indra is useless!' This is what people thought, with joyful hearts, because of their lustre—may Padmapāṇi's group of toenails excel!

In the third *pāda,* Karpelès adopted the reading *āptacittair*, a possible orthographic variant of *āttacittair*, which corresponds to the Buddhist Sanskrit expression *āttamana(s)*, meaning 'glad at heart, delighted' (see Edgerton's *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* s.v.). The manuscripts I have consulted point in the direction of *ātta*° (*ānta*° N1, *artti*° N2, *ātta*° N3 N4).

In *Lokeśaśataka* 20, it is again the colour of the rays radiating from the toenails that matches the whiteness of various things:

dṛṣṭo hṛṣṭāmareśārcanacaturavadhūmuktakarpūrapāṁśu-
prodbhāso bhaktibhārapraṇataharajaṭābhūtivibhrāntibhūmiḥ |
pūjāvikṣiptalakṣmīkarakamalagalatkeśarāgrāṇureṇu-
cchāyaḥ pāyād apāyān nakhakaravisaraḥ padmahastāṅghrijo vaḥ || 20 ||

May the many rays spreading from Padmahasta's toenails protect you from misfortune! They are seen to have the radiance of camphor powder offered by joyful women skilled in venerating the lord of the gods, they can be confused with the ashes on Hara's matted hair as he bows down under the burden of devotion, and they have the colour of the tiny drops of pollen falling from the stamens of the lotus in Lakṣmī's hand that was thrown in worship.

In the first *pāda* Karpelès reads °*vadhūmukuṭa*°, but that reading would be unmetrical and the manuscripts clearly support °*vadhūmukta*°. In the

second *pāda,* N1 N2, N3 and N4 all read °*praṇata*° instead of °*pravaṇa*° adopted by Karpelès.

In *Lokeśaśataka* 23, the same rays perform deeds that usually moonbeams do, and thus they put the moon to shame:

kailāsodbhāsivindhye kavalitabalijitkāyakālimni kālī-
līlālāvaṇyalepe vihataharitimaśvetapūṣāśvaraśmau |
lokeśāṅghrer nakhānām urukaranikare kiṁ mayetīva śīrṇaṁ
śītāṁśoḥ pātu pūjācaturasurajanākīrṇakundacchalād vaḥ || 23 ||

'They make the Vindhya shine like Kailāsa, they swallow up the blackness of Viṣṇu's body, they are a mock beauty cream on Kālī, they remove the dun colour of the Sun's horse-rays so that they become white—when the wide-spreading rays of Lokeśa's toenails are such, of what use am I?' It seems the moon, having these thoughts, shattered to pieces in the guise of the jasmine flowers scattered by the gods skilled in worship—may this shattering protect you.

In the third *pāda* Karpelès reads *śīrṇatvam,* but that goes against the metre. The readings of the manuscripts support *śīrṇaṁ śītāṁśoḥ*,[38] where *śīrṇaṁ* is used as an action noun (*bhāve*, cf. *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 3.3.114), or *śīrṇaḥ śītāṁśuḥ*,[39] which is perhaps less good, since the poet is unlikely to ask the moon for protection, especially now that it has been outshone by Lokeśa's radiant toenails. The 'explosion' of the moon out of shame, however, is an auspicious event from the perspective of Lokeśa's devotees. In the fourth *pāda* Karpelès reads °*kuṇḍa*°, but we clearly want °*kunda*°, which is mentioned in her apparatus as the reading of the Cambridge manuscript.

In *Sūryaśataka* 16, Kṛṣṇa is afraid that the sunrays will humiliate his black body, while in *Lokeśvaraśataka* 23 the moonlight of Lokeśa's toenails 'swallows up the blackness of Viṣṇu's body': this could be classified as a *saṁkrāntaka,* the 'transference' of an idea, a subcategory of the *pratibimbakalpa*-type borrowing, defined by Rājaśekhara as 'the transference of a topic seen [in a certain context] to another [context]'

[38] The folio containing this verse is missing from N1, N2 (=B in Karpelès) reads *śīṇa śītāśo*, N3 reads *śīrṇṇa śītāṁśoḥ*. Manuscripts ACD in Karpelès's apparatus also read *śīrṇam.*

[39] N4. Manuscripts AC in Karpelès's apparatus also read *śītāṁśuḥ*.

(*dṛṣṭasya vastuno 'nyatra saṁkramitiḥ*).[40] Or, if we think that Vajradatta has added some extra refinement to the original idea (he speaks about not real moonbeams, but moonbeam-like rays of toenails), then we could perhaps classify this borrowing as a *samakrama,* 'similar manner' a subtype of *ālekhyaprakhya*, defined as 'a similar way of conveying' (*sadṛśasaṁcāraṇa*) in the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*.[41] In *Sūryaśataka* 16, the sunrays are able to 'rob the splendour of the moon on Śiva's head' while in *Lokeśvaraśataka* 23, the rays of Lokeśa's toenails 'remove the dun colour of the Sun's horse-rays so that they become white': this could be a case of the *tadvirodhin*-type of appropriation (a subcategory of *parapurapraveśa*), in which the idea is arranged in a way that contradicts the former meaning (*pūrvārthapratipanthinī vasturacanā*).[42]

In *Lokeśvaraśataka* 26, the toenails of Lokeśvara act again like moons: their rays make lotuses close and dispel darkness:

yatpūjāpārijāte valitam alikulaṁ mīlati śrīsaroje
sevāsaktaḥ svayaṁbhūr nalinamukulanād duḥsthito yatra tasthau |
yenāśyāmā dinaśrīḥ śamitasuravadhūklāntidoṣā niśābhūt
pādo 'sau padmapāṇer nakhavidhuvilasaccandrikaḥ pātu yuṣmān || 26 ||

As Śrī's lotus was closing, the group of bees moved over to the *pārijāta* blossoms offered to it in worship; Brahmā, engaged in veneration, positioned himself on it when he became uncomfortable because of the closing of his lotus; because of it the night was not dark any more, but bright as day, and relieved the troubling fatigue of the gods' women—may that foot of Padmapāṇi, with the moonlight of its moon-like nails flashing forth, protect you.

The three 'it'-s in the first three clauses refer to Padmapāṇi's foot. In the second *pāda,* Karpelès reads *mukulitanalinād,* but the manuscripts

[40] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 67. In the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* examples, in the first verse geese drink the drops falling from women's wet hair, while in the second verse young deer drink the drops falling from the wet hair of ascetics.

[41] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 69. In the examples adduced by Rājaśekhara*,* one verse speaks about the sun as the saffron-coloured cheek of the western quarter, while the other one describes the moon as the saffron-coloured cheek of the eastern quarter.

[42] Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 77. In Rājaśekhara's illustration, the model verse talks about a woman's all-white clothing that she might have learnt from the autumn moon, while in the imitative verse, a woman's all-black clothing was taught to her by darkness.

support *nalinamukulanād*.[43] In this verse the rays emitted by Lokeśvara's toenails act upon the world around like bright moonlight: Lakṣmī's day-blooming lotus closes and the bees relocate to the flowers of the heavenly *pārijāta* tree; Brahmā's lotus-seat is also closing, so he also has to move, and settles on Lokeśvara's (presumably lotus-like) foot; night becomes day, thus presumably shortening the duration of exhausting nocturnal lovemaking for the *apsaras*es.

In *Sūryaśataka* 16, Brahmā is sitting comfortably on his lotus that has just opened in the morning sunlight, while in *Lokeśaśataka* 26, Brahmā is forced to change seats because his lotus is closing in the moonbeams of Lokeśa's toenails: perhaps another example of the *tadvirodhin*-type of borrowing.

The fancy that the rays of shining toenails act on the world around them like moonlight might go back to Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*, where the *yukta hetu* ('appropriate cause') *alaṁkāra* is illustrated with the following *cāṭu* ('flattery') verse (2.257):

> *pāṇipadmāni bhūpānāṁ saṁkocayitum īśate |*
> *tvatpādanakhacandrāṇām arciṣaḥ kundanirmalāḥ ||*
>
> The jasmine-white rays of the moon-like nails of your feet are able to make the kings' hand-lotuses close [in obeisance].

Vajradatta might have had this verse in mind when he composed stanza 26, but he pepped up the *alaṁkāra* with a bit of humour (Brahmā is forced to change seats because his lotus is closing) and a bit of erotic *rasa* (the novel kind of moonlight refreshes the *apsaras*es, presumably after a long night of lovemaking), and added another closing lotus: that of Lakṣmī. On the other hand, Vajradatta's verse has one *alaṁkāra* less, Brahmā's and Lakṣmī's lotuses are not metaphorical. One might classify this verse as an example of the *cūlikā,* 'crest / offshoot' subvariety of *tulyadehitulya* borrowing, defined by Rājaśekhara as 'after saying something similar, adding something else' (*samam abhidhāyādhikasyopanyāsaḥ*; Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 72). In the examples of the *saṁvādiṇī* type of *cūlikā,* one verse speaks about a female swan which cannot see the sleeping male bird, because it looks like a heap of moonbeams, while the other stanza says that

[43] For *mukulana,* see e.g. *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 881 (*mukulanavidhau vṛddhābjānāṁ*).

a male swan cannot see his mate on the moonlit terrace and adds that he cannot even hear her because of the tinkling anklets. Vajradatta likewise took over and expanded the idea of the rays of toenail-moons closing lotuses and added another effect. In *Sūryaśataka* 20, Mayūra speaks about the sun's morning light, which makes 'close not just the cupped hands of the *siddha*s, but also the clusters of water lilies' (*bandhaḥ siddhāñjalīnāṁ na hi kumudavanasyāpi*).

As we have seen, Vajradatta, the ninth-century Buddhist poet who lived in the Pāla kingdom, clearly admired Mayūra's seventh-century hymn composed in Kanauj, and his admiration was channelled into the borrowing and adapting of poetic images of the *Sūryaśataka* to praise Avalokiteśvara instead of the Sun. The parallelism with the *Kāvyādarśa* shows that Vajradatta also knew his *alaṅkāraśāstra.* Religious persuasions, not surprisingly, do not seem to play a significant role in stylistic preferences.

3. *Shiny toenails in the early Bengali anthologies*

When we read the two early Bengali anthologies, we see gleaming toenails around every corner. Among the Buddhist-themed verses of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, in No. 25 (attributed to Vallaṇa) Mañjuśrī, 'covered with garlands of masses of rays ascending from his toenails' (*niryatpādanakhonmukhāṁśuvisarasragdanturaḥ*), looks as if he were 'worshipped with showers of flower-jets dropped by the gods' (*suramuktamañjariśikhāvarṣair ivābhyarcitaḥ*), similarly to *Lokeśvaraśataka* 11 above. But we also find gleaming toenails in many non-Buddhist verses. Here is a poem about the Goddess (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 81 = *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 107, attributed to Dakṣa[44] in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*):

[44] Almost all his known verses are quoted in *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* and *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*. In *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 1727 the poet laments that Dakṣa never saw king Utpalarāja, who might be the Paramāra king Muñja (end of the tenth century). If we can believe the attribution and the verse was composed by Dakṣa himself, he would post-date Muñja. If, on the other hand, someone else composed this stanza about Dakṣa, he might predate Muñja. Among his other verses in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, one is on the rains (259), one compares the line of nail-marks on a woman's breast to a copperplate inscription (628), one compares the moon to the skull on Śiva's *jaṭā* (950), one describes the dawn (969),

lākṣārāgaṁ harati śikharāj jāhnavīvāri yeṣāṁ
ye tanvanti śriyam[45] *adhijaṭāmaṇḍalaṁ mālatīnām |*
yāty utsarpadvimalakiraṇair yais tirodhānam indur[46]
devyāḥ sthāṇau caraṇapatite te nakhāḥ pāntu viśvam ||

May the toenails of the Goddess, as Sthāṇu prostrates at her feet, protect the universe. When the water of the Ganges washes the lac from their tips, they appear as lovely as jasmine flowers on the bundle of his matted hair, and they make the moon disappear with their rising, pure rays.

What we see in the verse is a lovers' quarrel: Śiva is lying at the feet of the Goddess, trying to pacify her. As the Ganges on Śiva's head splashes on her feet, it washes the lac stains off her toenails, which now resemble white jasmine flowers on his hair, and their bright rays eclipse the moon on his head. Śiva's prostration results in the manifestation of the pure, shining nature of Pārvatī's toenails, which in turn become ornaments on his hair and even outshine his bijou moon.[47]

In *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 52 the scene is the same: Śiva is lying prostrate before the Goddess. The verse is also found in the *Sūktimuktāvalī* (*namaskārapaddhati* 18):

vyalīke pārvatyāḥ parilaghulavair añjanajuṣaḥ
patadbhir bāṣpasya kramalikhitalakṣmā vijayate |
lasallīlācandraś caraṇagatamauleḥ smarajitaḥ
kiradbhiḥ svajyotsnāṁ[48] *nakhamaṇibhir āpūritakalaḥ ||*[49]

Supreme is the shining toy-moon of Kāma's Vanquisher, whose head was at Pārvatī's feet after he had offended her, its sliver filled

some are *cāṭu* verses (1015, 1392, 1393, 1446), and one describes the Vindhya (1588). *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 451 describes the wind blowing from the sea.

[45] *śriyam*] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa; *srajam* Saduktikarṇāmṛta.

[46] *yāty utsarpad° … indur*] Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa; *pratyutsarpad° … indor* Saduktikarṇāmṛta.

[47] A comparable, yet different configuration of toenails, lac, and wetness appears in *Gaüḍavaho* 309: *haraphaṁsaseyasaṁvaliyajāvayāsaṅgiṇahamaṇicchāo | sahaï ṇayacandalehāsurasarisaṁjjho vva te calaṇo ||*, 'Your foot, with its jewel-like nails' lustre sticking to the red lac that is mixed with the sweat caused by Śiva's touch, shines as if the crescent moon, the gods' river, and twilight have bowed down to it.'

[48] *svajyotsnāṁ*] *em.*; *svajyotsnā°* Saduktikarṇāmṛta; *sujyotsnāṁ* Sūktimuktāvalī.

[49] *°kalaḥ*] Sūktimuktāvalī; *°kaṇaḥ* Saduktikarṇāmṛta.

> by her jewel-like toenails scattering their own 'moonlight' and its mark gradually drawn by the tiny drops of her tears mixed with kohl.

In the *Sūktimuktāvalī* the order of *pāda*s is cdab, which gives a neater structure with the subject first and the predicate last. The *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* ascribes this verse to Vāmana (the famous Kashmirian *ālaṅkārika*?). Here the focus is on the moon on Śiva's head, which is being transformed, inadvertently, by Pārvatī: the moonlight of her toenails fills in its disc, and her kohl-stained tears draw its characteristic mark. Although the moon is said to be 'supreme' yet it is shown to be easily malleable by the Goddess. And perhaps just as the moon becomes full and complete, so do the divine couple when they reconcile.

Not surprisingly we also find similar images in *śṛṅgāra* verses. *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* 593 (attributed to Vāmadeva) combines the fancies seen in the two verses above. The speaker is a *nāyikā* whose unfaithful husband is trying to placate her. But she sees lac on the husband's head, and knows it to be from her rival's toenails when her husband prostrated at the rival's feet. She bitterly complains seeing this 'panegyric' of lac, written by her rival about her own (or the man's?) good fortune in love.

Sometimes toenails are so shiny that they reflect things before them like mirrors. To remain with the divine couple of Śiva and Pārvatī, Harṣa's *āśīrvāda*-verse from the beginning of his *Priyadarśikā* (anthologised in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* as verse 114) presents a scene of their wedding:

> *dhūmavyākuladṛṣṭir indukiraṇair āhlāditākṣī punaḥ*
> *paśyantī varam utsukā natamukhī bhūyo hriyā brahmaṇaḥ |*
> *serṣyā pādanakhācchadarpaṇagatāṁ gaṅgāṁ dadhāne hare*
> *sparśād utpulakā karagrahavidhau gaurī śivāyāstu vaḥ ||*
>
> Her eyes smarted from the smoke and then they were delighted by the rays of the moon; she became anxiously desirous as she looked at the bridegroom, then she bowed down her face again out of embarrassment on account of Brahmā; she became jealous at Hara bearing the Ganges reflected in the clean mirror of her toenails; she got goosebumps when her hand was touched at the marriage ceremony—may Gaurī bring you happiness.

Here the mixed emotions of the Goddess are in focus. Her well-known jealousy on account of anything feminine connected with Śiva manifests

already on their wedding day, when she notices Gaṅgā on the bridegroom's head reflected in her toenails. The moon, also on Śiva's head but masculine, only has its usual soothing effect.[50]

Often things reflected in the ten toenail-mirrors are multiplied tenfold, for instance in a *namaskāra* verse about Śiva and Pārvatī (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 43):[51]

> *nakhadarpaṇasaṁkrāntapratimādaśakānvitaḥ |*
> *gaurīpādānataḥ śambhur jayaty ekādaśaḥ svayam ||*
>
> Supreme is Śambhu, himself the eleventh one, accompanied by his ten reflections in Gaurī's mirror toenails as he bows down at her feet.

This verse, as Ingalls (1965, 471) pointed out, is an imitation, or one could say a Sanskritised version of the famous opening verse of the *Bṛhatkathā*, written in Paiśācī, and quoted in several works on poetics.[52] The version below comes from the *Gāthāmuktāvalī,* a recension of the *Sattasaī* (Bhayani 1993, 151):

> *panamata panaappakupitakolīcalanaggalaggapaṭibiṁbaṁ |*
> *tasasu nakhatappanesuṁ ekātasatanuthalaṁ luddaṁ ||*
>
> Bow to Rudra, who has eleven bodies, with his reflections fixed to the tips of the jealous Gaurī's feet in ten mirror-like toenails.[53]

[50] Harṣa's court poet Bāṇa also presented mirror-like toenails in his works. In the description of the royal camp, we read that some vassal kings, who were not admitted to Harṣa's presence, hung down their heads and seemed in their shame to enter into their own bodies by the reflections of their faces fallen on their toenails (Führer 1909, 96, reading with the variants in fn. 6).

[51] The verse is attributed to Bhāṣa (= Bhāsa?) in the *Prasannasāhityaratnākara* (NGMCP MS B 318/4 fol. 6v), but to Rājaśekhara in the fragment of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* manuscript (NGMCP MS 933/1, exposure 31 upper leaf, fol. 7r) discovered by Szántó (2020).

[52] *Abhinavabhāratī* ad *Nāṭyaśāstra* 19.129 (Kavi 1954, p. 70), Bhoja's *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* 2 example 4 (Siddhartha 2009, vol. I. p. 152), Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* 3 example 61 (Dwivedī and Dwivedī 2007, vol. I. p. 135), Hemacandra's *Chandonuśāsana* 4.1.5 (Velankar 1961, p. 129). As Raghavan noted, a commentary on the *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* identifies this verse as *bṛhatkathāyām ādinamaskāraḥ* (Raghavan 1978, 840). See also Ollett 2014, 445.

[53] In Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, king Harṣa appears to be bowed to by the ten directions (*diś,* feminine) in the form of a courtesan's reflections fallen on his toenails (Führer

This seems to be a case of the 'actor's costume' (*naṭanepathya*) subvariety of the 'mirror image' type (*pratibimbakalpa*) of borrowing in Rājaśekhara's classification. *Naṭanepathya* is a subtype when 'something composed in a certain language is translated into another language' (*anyatamabhāṣānibaddhaṁ bhāṣāntareṇa parivartyate*; Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 66). Rājaśekhara's example is an *āryā* from the *Sattasaī,* transcreated into a Sanskrit *mandākrāntā*, with whole expressions repeated (*diṇṇaṁ piṁḍaṁ / dattaṁ piṇḍaṁ, kāo / kākaḥ, pāsāsaṁkī / pāśāśaṅkī, °galiyavalaya° / galitavalayaṁ*). Rājaśekhara expresses his disapproval of *pratibimbakalpa* borrowing in toto, saying that 'it invests a poet with the state of being a non-poet' (*kaver akavitvadāyī*). In light of this it is rather surprising that *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 43 is attributed to Rājaśekhara in the recently identified manuscript fragment. One could perhaps defend the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* verse that it does not repeat so many words verbatim (only *nakhatappanesuṁ / nakhadarpaṇa°*).

The theme of the eleven Rudras appears elsewhere in Rājaśekhara's classification of borrowings (Dalal, Sastry & Sastri 1934, 72). The fourth subvariety of the 'like a lookalike' type (*tulyadehitulya*) of appropriation, called 'tweaking the number' (*saṁkhyollekha*) is defined as 'conveying the meaning with a difference in number' (*saṅkhyāvaiṣamyeṇārthapraṇayanaṁ*). Rājaśekhara cites the following two verses as examples:

> *namannārāyaṇacchāyācchuritāḥ pādayor nakhāḥ |*
> *tvaccandram iva sevante Rudra rudrendavo daśa ||*
>
> O Rudra, your toenails, inlaid with the reflections of the bowing Viṣṇu, seem to be waiting on your moon as ten moons of (ten) Rudras.

> *umaikapādāmburuhe sphurannakhe*
> *kṛtāgaso yasya śiraḥsamāgame |*
> *ṣaḍātmatām āśrayatīva candramāḥ*
> *sa nīlakaṇṭhaḥ priyam ātanotu vaḥ ||*
>
> May that Nīlakaṇṭha favour you, whose moon seems to acquire six selves when his head, after committing an offence, joins Umā's lotus-foot, which has glittering nails.

1909, 112). If Bāṇa was inspired by the *Bṛhatkathā* verse, then his might be considered a *viṣayaparivarta*-type borrowing.

In these two verses the toenails themselves are fancied to be moons, ten in the first verse and five in the second. The latter stanza does not feature the reflections of the bowing person in the toenails, but the former one does, and in this respect, it calls to mind the famous *Bṛhatkathā* verse. How should we label this latter kind of borrowing according to Rājaśekhara's classification? The central idea seems to be the same: Rudra is supreme, and the reflections of a bowing person (Rudra himself vs. Viṣṇu) in the toenails of another person (Gaurī vs. Rudra himself) are fancied to appear as ten Rudras. The image is, however, slightly different: in the *Bṛhatkathā* verse, Rudra's body, complete with the moon on his head, is reflected in the toenail-mirrors, while in the *namannārāyaṇa…* verse, since Viṣṇu does not wear a crescent on his head, the toenails themselves function as ten crescents and thus complete the impression of ten Rudras. Perhaps this slight tweaking of the original idea qualifies the verse on the bowing Viṣṇu as an *ālekhyaprakhya* rather than a mere *pratibimbakalpa,* since, as we have seen above, it is the presence of some poetic refinement *(saṁskāra*) that distinguishes the former from the latter. Within the category of *ālekhyaprakhya,* the *namannārāyaṇa…* verse best fits the *samakrama,* 'similar manner' subvariety.

If we turn to *praśasti*s, tenfold multiplication by reflection occurs for instance in a Bengali copperplate inscription from the time of Keśavasena (end of the twelfth century):[54]

> *avātarad athānvaye mahati tatra devaḥ svayaṁ*
> *sudhākiraṇaśekharo vijayasena ity ākhyayā |*
> *yadaṅghrinakhadhoraṇisphuritamaulayaḥ kṣmābhujo*
> *daśāsyanativibhramaṁ vidadhire kilaikaikaśaḥ ||*
>
> Then in that great lineage took birth the moon-crested god himself under the name of Vijayasena. They say the kings, their heads displayed in the series of his toenails, one by one created the mistaken impression of the ten-headed Rāvaṇa's bowing down.

Here the vassals of Vijayasena, an *avatāra* of Śiva, are transformed into Rāvaṇa, one of Śiva's greatest devotees, as their heads are multiplied by ten in the toenails of the king. This could perhaps be regarded as another instance of 'changing the subject' (*viṣayaparivarta*): the same *vastu* (bowing

[54] Edilpur Copper-Plate of Keśavasena, verse 4 (Majumdar 1929, 121).

persons reflected in toenails) is applied to different contexts. On the other hand, this verse also fits in the category of *vastusaṁcāra,* the 'transmission of the topic' a subtype of the 'entering another body' (*parapurapraveśa*) type of borrowing in Rājaśekhara's classification. *Vastusaṁcāra* obtains when 'one standard of comparison is exchanged with another' (*upamānasyopamānāntaraparivṛttiḥ*). In the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* examples, the beloved woman's glances are compared to different things. In our case, the ten images reflected in the toenails appear like ten Rudras in one case and like Rāvaṇa's ten heads in the other.[55]

In a verse attributed to Vasukalpa (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* 3),[56] multiplication is taken to a higher level. The great Hindu gods venerate the Buddha:

> *namrāḥ pādanakheṣu yasya daśasu brahmeśakṛṣṇās trayas*
> *te devāḥ pratibimbanāt tridaśatāṁ suvyaktam āpedire |*
> *sa trailokyaguruḥ sudustarabhavākūpārapāraṁgato*
> *māravyūhajayapragalbhasubhaṭaḥ śāstā tava stān mude ||*
>
> The three gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, very clearly became thirty by their reflections in his ten toenails as they were bowing down—may he, the guru of the three worlds, who has reached the further shore of the ocean of existence that is well-nigh impossible to cross, the soldier who bravely defeated the army of Māra, be your teacher for your joy.

In this verse, too, the toenails have a transformative power: Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are multiplied in their mirrors, and in this way thirty (that is all thirty-three *in toto*) gods venerate the Buddha simultaneously. The eleven Rudras are part of the thirty-three gods, together with the twelve Ādityas, eight Vasus, and two Aśvins. Vasukalpa's poem is probably a conscious response to the famous *Bṛhatkathā*-verse (or its Sanskrit transcreation): while in the toenails of the Goddess only ten Rudras are reflected, all thirty-three gods (thirty mirror images and three 'real') appear

[55] One might argue that the *Bṛhatkathā* verse and *praśasti* stanza are not similes (*upamās*) strictly speaking, but perhaps one could say that they are based on similes.

[56] On Vasukalpa see fn. 31.

to be bowing at the Buddha's feet.[57] This Vasukalpa-verse also matches the categories of both *viṣayaparivarta* and *vastusaṁcāra*, since both the subjects and the standards of comparison are changed.[58] And it also fits the category of *saṁkhyollekha,* since the number of reflections has changed.

To conclude, let us have a look at an instance of very close borrowing, this time in a Kashmirian Sanskrit epic. Sometimes poets focus not so much on the number, but on the size of the reflections. Vākpatirāja (eighth century) in his Prakrit *Gaüḍavaho* (verse 320) develops the theme of the miniature size of the mirror images:

> *ṇahamaṇisaṁkamaṇā maḍahapaṇaajaṇalaṁchaṇehiṁ calaṇehiṁ |*
> *sohasi paṇamijjaṁti vva aṁba taṁ vālihillehiṁ ||*
>
> With your feet, marked by tiny bowing people because they are reflected in their jewel-like nails, you shine, O Mother, as if you were being bowed to by the Vālakhilyas.

The poet fancies that the Goddess appears as if being bowed to by the miniature Vālakhilya sages because of the people's reflections in her toenails as they make obeisance. Ratnākara (ninth century, Kashmir) seems to have liked this fancy, and elaborated on it in the Caṇḍī-hymn of his *Haravijaya* (47.150):

> *pādānatās tava bhavāni nakhātmadarśa-*
> *bimbādhirūḍhatanudehatayā prapannāḥ |*
> *sadyaḥ praṇāmasukṛtāhitavālakhilya-*
> *rūpā iva śriyam udañjalayo bhajante ||*
>
> O Bhavānī, those who come to you for refuge, bowing down to your feet with tiny bodies reflected on the discs of nail-mirrors, at that moment obtain good fortune as they raise their cupped hands in supplication, having seemingly assumed the appearance of the Vālakhilyas thanks to the good karma of their obeisance.[59]

[57] In Namisādhu's opening *āśīrvāda*-verse of his commentary on Rudraṭa's *Kāvyālaṅkāra,* all the three worlds transfer their bodies to the spotless mirrors of Ṛṣabha's toenails as they bow down in front of him (Durgâprasâd and Paṇśîkar 1928, 1).

[58] Again, Vasukalpa's verse is formally not a simile, but it is fundamentally based on comparison.

[59] Diminution is also foregrounded in *Haravijaya* 6.182 (containing a *virodhābhāsa,* 'apparent contradiction'), where the bowing gods and demons, reflected in Śiva's

This is a remarkably close paraphrase, one could classify it as a *naṭane-pathya*-type borrowing, or, since the *ukti* is slightly different, perhaps as a *navanepathya*.

4. *Conclusions*

The verses we have examined above have shown that there is no separate Buddhist or Śaiva poetic language. Some poets, like Vasukalpa, composed verses both on the Buddha and on Śiva, and even for those who wrote poetry only on Buddhist or only on Śiva-related themes, the pool of poetic images, figures of speech and patterns of syntactic structure was in the public domain, of which poets freely availed themselves, regardless of their religious convictions. This also meant widespread literary borrowing, mappable on a broad scale ranging from outright plagiarism and translation through moderate tweaking of the original idea to witty and inspired transformation. Famous verses, like *kṣipto hastāvalagnaḥ* or the *namaskāra*-verse from the *Bṛhatkathā*, inspired all kinds of imitations, sometimes very close, sometimes more removed.

Rājaśekhara's four main and thirty-two subcategories of poetic appropriation were based on existing practice, but they are not exclusive, and sometimes rather subjective. The decision that an imitative poem has enough 'refinement' (*saṁskāra*) to be included in an approved class of borrowing is often founded on personal taste. I also think it unlikely that poets resorted to imitation with Rājaśekhara's classification in mind. Rather, the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* is a fascinating document of an eminent poet's reflections on the poetic praxis of his time.

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toenails, are made tiny, and yet they acquire all-surpassing greatness—but only because *adhigamyate sakalātiśāyi mahattvaṁ* can also mean 'they learn the all-surpassing greatness [of Śiva].' See also Smith 1985, 255.

Haravijaya = Durgâprasâd and Parab 1890.
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Can we discern a Śaiva and a Buddhist rhetoric in royal eulogies?

Dániel Balogh*
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

1. *Introduction*

'*This is the language of war. The Śaiva age had begun.*'[1]

In the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era, Āndhradeśa (the eastern region of the Deccan centred on the valleys and mouths of the rivers Krishna and Godavari) was a flourishing stronghold of Buddhism.[2] From the third and fourth centuries CE, however, the rulers of the region seem to have favoured the newer Hindu theist schools, while royal support for Buddhism dwindled.[3] Among the nearly one hundred

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[1] Bakker (2014, 37).

[2] See e.g. Tournier (2023) for the latest survey of the epigraphic evidence; Subramanian (1932, 11–52) and Mitra (1971, 198–199 and 200–222) about the monumental remains.

[3] See Sanderson (2009, 70–72) for a summary of continuing support for Buddhism under the Viṣṇukuṇḍis in the fifth and sixth centuries, and Tournier (2018) for in-depth discussion.

and fifty known copperplate charters issued by the Eastern Cālukyas of Veṅgī—who established themselves in the region in the second quarter of the seventh century and held unbroken sway over it until the last quarter of the eleventh—there is not a single one that even mentions Buddhism, much less donates something to a Buddhist cause.[4]

This is not to say that Buddhism disappeared altogether from the scene. Xuanzang, who visited the region shortly before the middle of the seventh century, reported that some Buddhist monasteries still functioned, although many had been abandoned, whereas Hindu temples were numerous (Li 1996, 276–279). A meagre number of (non-royal) inscriptions and a somewhat richer body of art objects dated on stylistic grounds attest to the continuing presence of Buddhism after the seventh century.[5] It is nonetheless apparent that several 'key sites' formerly associated with Buddhism were converted into Śaiva sites while retaining the spiritual nimbus and socio-economic significance of these spots and often repurposing some of their earlier architecture and artworks.[6]

Whereas early scholars tended to postulate some sort of intrinsic degeneration of Buddhism as the cause of its waning,[7] recent investigations of how and why theist Hinduism—especially Śaivism—ousted Buddhism from its former paramount position generally point rather to complex changes in the social, political and economic circumstances of the Indian 'middle ages' (e.g. Sanderson 2009, 252–254). Several scholars have also noted that the role played by violent conflict and active persecution in this process has been undervalued or downplayed.[8] In particular, Ronald Davidson (2002, 62–67) describes the 'culture of military opportunism'

[4] Out of this corpus, 87 inscriptions re-edited in the DHARMA project comprise the main body of texts analysed in this paper. At the time of going to press, the number of re-edited inscriptions is 101. Information regarding the content of the other known grants has been collected primarily from the Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy and, sporadically, from other publications referring to unpublished texts.

[5] See Ray (2008, 129–130) in general, Shimada (2013, 201) about inscriptions, and Knox (1992, 215–229) about sculpture.

[6] See Walters (2008, 177–184) about key sites in general and the career of Amaravati in particular; and Talbot (2001, 108–109) and Krishna Rao (1973, 220–222) about the Śaiva appropriation of other Buddhist sites in Āndhradeśa.

[7] See e.g. Cunningham (1854, 2, 167) or Fergusson and Burgess (1880, 19).

[8] See e.g. Davidson (2002), especially chapter 2; and Verardi (2011; 2018), especially chapter 4.

prevalent in early mediaeval India, where chiefs and rulers great and small increasingly saw armed conquest as the primary method of establishing and extending their sway. He proceeds to assert that in an apotheosis of kingship (2002, 68–71), '[w]ar became depicted as a facet of the erotic play of the king, who was understood as the manifestation of a divinity' (*ibid.*, 68), while simultaneously, the gods of theist Hinduism were increasingly conceived of in terms of a feudal hierarchy mirroring that of earthly rulers (*ibid.*, 71–74). The narratives associated with Śiva, 'who was, after all, represented as a killer divinity with a permanent erection' (*ibid.*, 90) would have suited the emerging trends in royal behaviour eminently, while on the contrary, Buddhist discourse, with its emphasis on non-violence and compassion, was less and less conducive to patronage by the military elite (*ibid.*, 89–90).[9]

This is but one factor in Davidson's in-depth analysis of the complex 'Buddhist experience' in the early Middle Ages (Davidson 2002, 75–112). He cautions that 'it is by no means clear that Buddhist kings were necessarily less bloodthirsty than non-Buddhist kings' and that the Buddhist's moral idealism 'does not mean that they were capable of adhering to the precepts of nonviolence in an increasingly militaristic culture' (*ibid*., 88), also pointing to some instances where Buddhist authors endorse or justify aggression (*ibid.*). While being thus clearly cognisant of the complexity of the relevant processes and their lack of one-way linear causality, he does posit a correlation between Śaiva leanings and the valorisation and eroticisation of warfare.[10] Moreover, he sometimes—though perhaps only as a figure of speech—strongly implies that this kind of rhetoric existed a priori in Śaiva discourse, there for the taking by rulers.[11] Similarly, Karen Lang (2008)—frequently citing Davidson for corroboration—imputes a predatory nature and an aggressive disposition

[9] Similarly, Bronkhorst (2011, 99–107) and Lang (2008, 140–142).

[10] 'Śaiva kings and poets over all seem to be particularly susceptible to this variety of diction' (Davidson 2002, 69).

[11] '[M]ilitaristic princes […] increasingly found that they were best represented by Śaiva values and rhetoric,' (Davidson 2002, 86); 'the Śaivas are often the ones who indulge in the expostulation of their attempts at turning the world into the charnel ground of Maheśvara' (*ibid.*, 89).

to Śaiva rulers in the early mediaeval Deccan, contrasting this with the Buddhist attitude.[12]

In section 2 below, I show that the inscriptional evidence cited by Davidson and Lang fails to demonstrate either a strong positive correlation of this kind of rhetoric with a Śaiva inclination, or a strong negative correlation with a Buddhist inclination. In a quest for more positive and empirical evidence, I explore in section 3 the research methodology of textual analysis, co-opted from the social sciences, which involves distilling data from a wider sample of texts. I then present and discuss my findings from the application of this methodology to the topic of Śaiva and Buddhist rhetoric in royal eulogies from the early mediaeval eastern Deccan.

2. *A critique of anecdotal evidence*

Both Davidson (2002, 68, 86) and Lang (2008, 134, 136, 143) avow that their assertions concerning Śaiva and Buddhist rhetoric are founded on primary sources prominently including inscriptions. However, on closer investigation, the specific evidence they showcase turns out to be wanting. For one thing, both scholars sometimes take inscriptional *praśasti* passages—composed by worldly courtiers—as specimens for Śaiva rhetoric, comparing these to excerpts from Buddhist philosophical treatises and mirrors-for-princes written by monastics. Given the representational/propagandistic nature of one genre and the exhortatory/moralising nature of the other, it is only natural that they strike different notes.

The evidence they draw exclusively from the epigraphic realm is no more convincing. As a representative example of the early mediaeval idiom in which 'belligerence is recast in the language of eroticism and heroism,' Davidson (2002, 69) points to the Aihole stone inscription of the time of the Bādāmi Cālukya king Pulakeśin II, composed by the poet Ravikīrti.[13]

[12] 'Against the lust for power, the pride in position, and the defense of violence, values characteristic of the Śaivite rulers who conquered the Deccan, Candrakīrti argued for generosity, restraint, and nonviolence' (Lang 2008, 128).

[13] Incidentally, Ravikīrti was not Śaiva but Jain, and the inscription commemorates the founding of a Jain temple by the king, which Lang (2008, 133) notes, but which Davidson abstains from pointing out.

Here, the ruler's 'conquering of Vanavāsī is rendered in language that portrays the city as a coy woman and the warlord as her ardent lover; their embrace depicted as the dalliance of idle courtiers, not the bloody pillaging of a terrified populace'—says Davidson (*ibid.*), cited verbatim by Lang (2008, 134). The actual text goes as follows:

> When he (Pulakeśin II) overpowered Vanavāsī—rivalling a city of the gods in grandeur, with a string of swans glittering on the stage of the brisk waves of [the river] Varadā for a girdle—[it seemed] to onlookers as if that fortress on land had momentarily turned into a fortress on water as the surface of the earth all around it was bedecked by the great ocean of his troops.[14]

Not a gritty description of the bloody pillaging of a terrified populace, to be sure. Belligerence in the attractive guise of heroism is definitely present here and elsewhere in the inscription. Then again, the diction is not unlike that of Gupta-period poetry,[15] and the imagery not very different from that of the great epics. Of coy women and ardent lovers, or embraces and idle dalliance, there is at best an echo. If one insists, a subtle sexual innuendo might be discerned in the connotations of the verb *ava-mṛd* 'overpower, subdue, wrestle down' and of the substantive *mekhalā* 'girdle,' specifically an ornamental belt of strings or chains worn as a feminine accessory; the compound *sañchāditorvvī-talaṁ* 'the surface of the earth … bedecked' might then be understood to include *ūrvī* 'the middle of the thigh' rather than *urvī* 'the earth.'[16] But all this may be

[14] Aihole stone inscription of Pulakeśin II, v. 18: *varadā-tuṅga-taraṅga-raṅga-vilasad-dhaṁsāvaḷī-mekhalāṁ vanavāsīm avamṛdnatas surapura-prasparddhinīṁ sampadā| mahatā yasya balārṇṇavena paritas sañchāditorvvī-talaṁ sthala-durgañ jala-durggatām iva gataṁ tat tat-kṣaṇe paśyatām||*. Inscriptions are cited throughout this article in 'curated' form, as read, restored and emended by their editors, without indication of editorial intervention or uncertainty. References to published editions are collected at the end of this paper in the list of Primary sources. Translations from Sanskrit are mine unless otherwise attributed.

[15] As pointed out already by Kielhorn (1900–1901, 3) and acknowledged also by Davidson (2002, 69), Ravikīrti explicitly compares himself to the Gupta-period Kālidāsa (as well as to the early post-Gupta Bhāravi) in lines 17–18 of the Aihole inscription.

[16] My thanks to the reviewer of this article for bringing this to my attention. Although this brings the number of potential erotic allusions to three, it is also a good illustration of the tenuous and strenuous nature of these allusions. First, *ūrvī* is apparently a technical term attested only in medical literature, whose meaning may be a particular artery of the

in the mind of the beholder. What is definite is that the centrepiece is the vision of a landscape inundated by troops, taking up half the stanza; and that the grammatically feminine name of Vanavāsī naturally invokes personification as a woman.

Where Davidson (2002, 86–88) explicitly juxtaposes two inscriptions putatively describing a Śaiva and a Buddhist king, the latter text's subject is in fact the abbot of a monastery, so it is a matter of course that he is represented in different terms than the king in the former.[17] Going on to '[p]erhaps the best index of the differences,' namely 'the alteration of epigraphic diction when a noble house exhibits a change of religious allegiance' (Davidson 2002, 89), he finds the late eighth-century or early ninth-century Neulpur plate of the self-professedly Buddhist (*parama-tāthāgata*) Śubhākara I of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty to be 'very indicative of traditional Buddhist values,' and contrasts this with a Talcher plate of Śivakara III, a Śaiva (*parama-māheśvara*) ruler of the same house about a century later. It is worth noting here that only the ruler's proclaimed religious alignment seems to have been considered here, but the Neulpur plate of the Buddhist Śubhākara I is a grant to two hundred regular Brahmins, while the Talcher plate of the Śaiva Śivakara III is to a Buddhist monastery.

In the 'Buddhist' grant, Davidson points out that Śubhākara I has 'the protection of his subjects as his highest aim' and 'has pacified the affliction

thigh rather than a part of the thigh's externally visible and erotically charged anatomy (Böhtlingk and Roth 1855–1875, *s.v.*). Second, *sañchāditorvvī-talaṁ* is a Bahuvrīhi compound qualifying the word *durga* 'fortress' in the neuter gender, and not the feminine *vanavāsī*. It is therefore impossible to read this compound as properly bitextual (*śliṣṭa*) or to connect it to the feminine imagery of the first hemistich.

[17] The source is the Ghosrawa inscription of the time of Devapāla, which Davidson cites in the translation published by Hirananda Sastri (1942, 89–91). Sastri, in turn, reproduces the earlier translation of Kielhorn (1888). In Kielhorn's translation, 'he, [the abbot Vīradeva,] … being treated with reverence by the lord of the earth, the illustrious Dēvapāla, shone like the sun, endowed with splendour …' (the clarification in brackets is my addition). However, Sastri's reproduction accidentally omits the comma after the name of Devapāla, with the unfortunate consequence that the long description that follows now seems to pertain to King Devapāla. The inscription itself (lines 8–11) is unequivocal: *so 'yaṁ … vīradevaḥ … śrī-devapāla-bhuvanādhipa-lavdha-pūjaḥ … pūṣeva dārita-tamaḥ-prasaro rarāja*.

of the world caused by the doings of his kinsmen.' The former assertion[18] is of course quite ubiquitous in royal *praśasti* regardless of sectarian orientation.[19] As for the latter, the account of 'pacification' described here is an open boast of fratricide thinly veiled in justification on the basis of the greater good.[20] In the 'Śaiva' grant, the issuer is supposed to have 'bragged that his older brother "was beyond delicacy in the matter of crushing the lotus-like heads of irresistible foes." ' The passage in question[21] is not immediately transparent, and it is perhaps for this reason that its editor gives two (differently inaccurate) translations of it,[22] of which Davidson follows the second. I contend that the most plausible interpretation of the passage is that the elder brother Śubhākara's[23] eminence (*unnati*) consisted in his reticence (*lajjā*) to engage (*vyāpāra*) in crushing the lotus-like heads of those irresistible enemies. Rather than a glorification of aggression and graphic violence, this is actually an attribution of the very Buddhistic value of compassion to Śubhākara, although that too is a rather thin veil over the admission that he had no great victories to his name.[24] Other epigraphic witnesses presented by Davidson give plenty of testimony for the representation of warfare and aggression in a positive light in mediaeval *praśasti*,[25] but none that would demonstrate a strong

[18] Neulpur plate of Śubhākara I, l. 4, *prajā-pālana-tatparaḥ*.

[19] Similar claims are found in 61 of the 87 non-Buddhist Eastern Cālukya grants analysed for this study.

[20] Neulpur plate, l. 3, *praśamitānucitādhipatyābhilāṣi-durvṛtta-dāyāda-janādhīyamāna-jagad-upaplavaḥ*.

[21] Talcher plate of Śivakara III, l. 15: *durvārāri-śiraḥ-saroja-dalana-vyāpāra-lajjonnatiḥ*.

[22] Misra (1934, 48): 'Śubhākara, who obtained eminence for crushing the lotus-like heads of irresistible enemies' (is Misra emending silently to *-labdhonnatiḥ* here?); later, '(Śubhākara), who was beyond delicacy in the matter of crushing the lotus-like heads of irresistible foes.'

[23] This is not Śubhākara I of the Neulpur plate, but Śubhākara IV, who reigned briefly in the late 9th century.

[24] Indeed, he may have died prematurely in a lost battle, leading to the succession of his younger brother.

[25] In addition to the examples scrutinised here, Davidson points to a Gurjara and a Kalacuri grant to illustrate erotic/heroic imagery (2002, 359 n. 150); cites the latter again as contrast to the Ghosrawa inscription (*ibid.*, 86–88); and refers to a further Pāla grant (*ibid.*, 89, 352 n. 53) by the supposedly Śaiva Vigrahapāla.

positive correlation of this kind of rhetoric with a Śaiva inclination, or a strong negative correlation with a Buddhist inclination.

I hasten to emphasise that my reason for dwelling at some length on the above minutiae is neither to personally criticise Ronald Davidson or Karen Lang, nor to challenge the theses—intuitively plausible and amply supported by evidence in addition to the adduced epigraphic sources—that images exalting and aestheticising warfare (and thus trivialising its horrors) become increasingly prominent in mediaeval Indic royal eulogy, that this trend is sociologically and politically significant, and that par excellence Buddhist discourse is less compatible with such imagery than typical Śaiva discourse. Rather, my central purpose here is to emphasise on the one hand that primary sources gleaned in support of a hypothesis are not necessarily representative of the sources as a whole, and on the other hand that sources which seem at first sight to support a hypothesis may require a closer look.[26] This is feasible when the source corpus in question is a very small one, but cherry-picked excerpts from a larger body of texts can at best serve as illustrations and do not constitute reliable evidence.

3. *Methodological overview*

My search for a more empirical and dependable way of comparing the prevalence of certain themes in groups of inscriptions led me to a family of textual analysis methods widely used in the social sciences and ultimately derived from the technique named content analysis. In the present paper, I restrict the introduction of the method to the barest minimum.[27]

My approach may be described in general as mixed methods research of the exploratory sequential type, meaning that it involves two quite distinct phases: the first characterised by qualitative analysis and the

[26] Peripherally to this purpose, I hope to highlight the need for reliable editions of primary sources, to urge historians to verify translated primary texts against the originals whenever possible, and to emphasise that correlation does not necessarily imply causation.

[27] As regards textual analysis methodology in general, I have found the works of Klaus Krippendorff (2004) and Margrit Schreier (2012) especially informative. The particulars of my research on copperplate *praśasti* are presented in more detail in two other current publications (Balogh 2024 and Balogh forthcoming). In addition, I am working on a detailed description of the technicalities, perhaps to be published only in electronic form (Balogh in preparation).

second by primarily quantitative comparison. In the first phase, the textual data are explored with attention to content relevant to the research interest. This leads up to the formulation of a set of 'codes,' serving to classify the meanings expressed in the texts into a manageable number of concepts or themes. Each occurrence of a relevant concept is tagged with a code, resembling an index entry which can be used subsequently both to retrieve actual instances of the concepts in the original texts, and to study the occurrence patterns of the concepts across the texts.

Analytical codes are thus a prop for locating meaning in textual data that were not created for the purpose of being analysed. The coding process reduces the multifariousness of texts in two ways. On the one hand, only those concepts which bear on the research interest at hand are coded. On the other hand, the set of potential meanings inherent in a single locus of the text is reduced to one perceived to be most prominent, and these prominent meanings are themselves allocated to categories at a higher level of abstraction than the specific meanings expressed in the texts.

In the course of this qualitative phase, codes are added and discarded, merged and split, and sorted and re-sorted hierarchically over several iterations of close reading and reconceptualisation. This is carried on until the coding frame is deemed satisfactory, meaning that it has reached a reasonable degree of homogeneity in the conceptual scope of each individual code and of distinctness across codes, and that the set of codes as a whole can cover all of the themes relevant to the analysis. The outcome of the qualitative phase is thus on the one hand the coding frame itself, a research instrument fine-tuned to the textual material; and on the other hand the actual mass of systematised data generated by coding the content of the texts.

In the quantitative phase, the texts are grouped on the basis of relevant criteria, and comparison is made between the frequencies with which various analytical codes occur in the resulting groups. The quantitative analysis is thus blind to the specificities by means of which the concept denoted by a particular code is expressed in the individual texts. This suppression of detail is what makes it possible to systematise meanings and to make comparisons from a wider perspective. The low-level detail is not, however, lost to the researcher's view: on the contrary, the presence of codes facilitates the retrieval of the original occurrences in the actual texts.

In the particular case of my research, the subject of interest was the representation of persons featured in copperplate charters, specifically the attribution of characteristic traits and actions to these persons. An initial set of codes had been established in my pilot study conducted on eighteen copperplate charters.[28] The approach showed some promise, so I subsequently devised a more mature methodology. This involved the close reading of a corpus of Veṅgī Cālukya copperplate grants, in the course of which the initial codes were greatly expanded and thoroughly revised.[29] Since, as already noted, Buddhism is altogether absent from the Veṅgī Cālukya corpus, for the present study I have included some earlier copperplate grants from the same region. The coding frame had thus already coalesced before applying it to these earlier texts, and only minimal modifications were needed to equip it to deal with concepts that did not occur in the Eastern Cālukya corpus. Accordingly, my specific approach to the present topic may be regarded as a primarily quantitative study in which a previously developed instrument was reapplied to a different corpus and a different research question.

4. *The texts and their classification*

The bulk of the corpus analysed here was comprised of 87 copperplate grants of the Eastern Cālukya dynasty of Veṅgī (seventh to eleventh centuries), which I have edited in a digital medium under the auspices of the project DHARMA.[30] These texts will be referred to in the discussion using five-digit numbers prefixed with the letters VC.[31] In addition, I used 10 texts from the Viṣṇukuṇḍi rulers (fifth to sixth centuries) and 5 from King Śrīmūla (mid-sixth century),[32] all of which were edited digitally by Arlo Griffiths and Vincent Tournier for the Early Inscriptions

[28] Published only in Hungarian (Balogh 2023).

[29] The findings are presented in Balogh 2024.

[30] My re-editions cover all accessibly published grants of the Veṅgī Cālukyas up to the tenth century as well as a few unpublished ones, but (as yet) lack several published texts of the eleventh century as well as those reported but not published at all, or not in internationally accessible media.

[31] See the Primary sources listed at the end about accessing the editions.

[32] Also referred to in the scholarly literature as Pṛthivīśrīmūla, Pṛthivīmūla and Mūlarāja.

of Āndhradeśa Project, and are referred to here by a four-digit number prefixed with the acronym EIAD.[33]

For quantitative analysis, the aggregated corpus of texts has been divided into groups on the basis of various independent variables. These are properties (metadata) of the texts themselves and were recorded for the analysis while the texts were being prepared for coding. The metadata relevant for the present study are the dynasty with which each text is associated, the approximate date at which the text was issued, and the sectarian alignment of the text.

Dynastic affiliation is straightforward for all of the texts involved in the study. Dates are much less precise, since most of the charters bear no date at all, some include only a regnal date, and only the barest handful are dated in an era. The reigns of Eastern Cālukya kings can be established reliably (Nilakanta Sastri and Venkataramanayya 1960) from the time of Bhīma I (r. 892–921 CE) onward, but a slight margin of uncertainty applies to his predecessors, and this margin increases as we progress backward in time. In dating the Viṣṇukuṇḍi kings and Śrīmūla and in attributing the Viṣṇukuṇḍi grants to specific rulers, I follow Sankaranarayanan (1977), but these dates are even more in doubt.[34] For my present purposes, however, a relative chronology and a rough allocation of texts into centuries shall suffice, and my findings are not greatly affected if one or three of the charters happen to hail from a century adjacent to that assigned.

The independent variable of primary interest for the present study is the sectarian orientation of grants. Five such alignments have been distinguished: Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Jain, Buddhist and Generic. One (and only one) of the former four categories was assigned to charters that feature some clue to a sectarian preference (discussed below), while the latter is the fall-back term used here for charters without any indication of

[33] See the Primary sources listed at the end about accessing the editions and for references to the inscriptions whose EIAD edition has not yet been completed. For the analysis of these latter, I have used preliminary e-texts kindly made available to me by Arlo Griffiths and Vincent Tournier.

[34] See Tournier (2018, 22 n. 2, 27–28 n. 16) for some of the problems.

dynasty	Buddhist	Jain	Śaiva	Vaiṣṇava	generic	total non-Buddhist	grand total
Viṣṇukuṇḍi	3	—	3	—	4	7	10
Śrīmūla	4	—	1	—	—	1	5
V. Cālukya	—	6	27	7	47	87	87
total	7	6	31	7	51	95	102

Table 1: Crosstabulation of dynastic corpora and religious grants

a specific sectarian orientation.[35] Generic texts thus include grants to householder Brahmins as well as donations to secular recipients, which are quite numerous in the Veṅgī Cālukya copperplate corpus.[36] The overview of the distribution of texts by denomination is shown in Table 1, while a complete list of the texts with their metadata is available online in the dataset for this article.[37]

The texts under study indicate religious orientation in a variety of ways, which are occasionally in contradiction. I have therefore established a hierarchy for determining the denomination of a grant on the basis of:

1. the alignment of a religious donee, secular donee or instigator; or, when not available,
2. the explicit religious profession of the issuing sovereign, as expressed in the text; or, when not available,
3. the sectarian orientation of the opening invocation of the grant; or, when not available,
4. the religious epithet of the issuing sovereign.

The occurrences of these criteria in the texts are shown in Table 2 for Buddhist, Jain and Vaiṣṇava grants (shown in green, blue and purple respectively) and Table 3 for Śaiva grants (shown in red). The colour

[35] One 'Generic' grant, VC00009, actually begins with a Saura invocation (*namas savitre*), which has been disregarded here.

[36] Such donees include on the one hand Brahmins holding court office, and on the other hand members of the military elite. See also Balogh (2024, 138–139).

[37] https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8338077

coding in the first column of these tables shows the religion to which the text has been assigned. The subsequent columns contain the various indications found in the text. The colours in these columns show whether these indications are conformant or contrary; paler shades stand for less overt indications that may be interpreted as endorsement or acceptance of a religion.

The foremost factor[38] in judging the sectarian alignment of a charter was the creed of the religious institution or person receiving the donation (shown in the second column). This is clearly stated in all of the grants identified as Buddhist and Jain as well as in four of the Śaiva grants.[39] However, in the majority of the Śaiva grants and all of the few Vaiṣṇava donations in the corpus under study, the donations went either to a secular figure or to a generic Brahmin of the householder type for whom no indication of theist religion is recorded (shown respectively as a dash and as 'Brahm' in the second column of the tables). When secular donees were associated in a charter with a religious profession (column 3), as in two Vaiṣṇava and four Śaiva cases, then the grant was classified under that denomination.[40] Moreover, some of the donations took place at the instigation (*vijñapti*) of a third party.[41] When an instigator is stated to be a follower of a specific religion or to have constructed a monument for one

[38] As pointed out to me by Vincent Tournier, an even more decisive factor would be the presence in the grant of a formula assigning the generated merit to a Buddhistic goal, found only in EIAD0174 (l. 21, for the cessation of the suffering of all beings) and EIAD0180 (ll. 30–31, for the attainment of unsurpassed wisdom by all beings).

[39] All the grants identified as Buddhist go to monasteries. The recipients of the Jain grants are mostly temples, though one (VC00080) may be or include a monastery (*vasati*), and another (VC00057) may be an *ācārya* himself rather than an institution represented by him. The overtly Śaiva recipients are deities (a Nagareśvara *liṅga* in VC00022, an Umā-Maheśvara in VC00045, a Somagireśvara identified as Triyambhaka [sic] in EIAD0182, and a Rājarājeśvara in VC00079). The donation in VC00019 is dedicated to the deity Karigalla-vaḍavaru without any further identification; this grant has been classified as Śaiva on the basis of the king's religious epithet.

[40] In three of the Śaiva grants, devotion to Śiva is claimed not for the secular donee himself but for one of his predecessors (his father in VC00030 and his grandfather in VC00041 and VC00087). I have assumed that a predecessor's religious preference would not have been explicitly recorded unless it were identical to that of the donee.

[41] Some, though far from all, of the 'secular' grants may also be of this kind, with the apparent donee being in fact an instigator, and the passing on of the grant to Brahmins or religious institutions as ultimate recipients being left unsaid.

(column 4), then it was again assumed that the grant went to support that religion. Such is clearly the case in some of the grants already assigned to a denomination on the basis of the donee,[42] so the one grant where sectarian affiliation is recorded for the instigator but not for the donee has been classified on this basis alone.[43]

Next, some texts explicitly mention the religious orientation of the issuing king in the *praśasti* or the executive section (column 5).[44] Such a statement was recognised as a basis for classifying the grant in absence of the previous kinds of sectarian indication, but was disregarded when it contradicted the highest tier of the hierarchy. Among the grants analysed here, the issuing king's explicit profession confirms a sectarian orientation determined on the basis of one of the earlier factors in four.[45] Three others (shown with a parenthetical religion in column 5) imply the king's favour, or at least tolerance, for the sect already identified on a stronger basis.[46] Conversely, the ruler is expressly stated to have a different religious inclination from the donee in two grants, which may even mean that he wished to distance himself as a person from acts of support undertaken for political reasons.[47]

[42] The Jain grants VC00056 and VC00057 were instigated personally by the *ācārya* into whose care the donation was made. VC00037, VC00038 and VC00040 were petitioned by influential secular personages whose Jain creed is expressly stated. The Śaiva grant VC00022 does not expressly mention instigation, but does involve a third party: a town council and the king had jointly installed a *liṅga*, which the king endows by this grant.

[43] This is VC00025, in which a wealthy merchant commissions a Śiva temple and then procures a grant for a very large number of householder Brahmins.

[44] Claims that a deity has favoured the dynasty were disregarded in this respect. For example, the phrases *bhagavac-chrīparvata-svāmi-pādānudhyāta* and *bhagavan-nārāyaṇa-prasāda-samāsādita-*[…], respectively common in Viṣṇukuṇḍi and Eastern Cālukya introductions, have not been taken as indications of Vaiṣṇava faith.

[45] The Buddhist EIAD0174 and EIAD0180, and the Śaiva VC00022 and VC00045.

[46] In the Buddhist EIAD0175, the issuer's ancestor Govindavarman I is described as a devout Buddhist (while the issuer's grandfather Vikramendravarman I is called *parama-saugata*, see below), which implies that the issuer Vikramendravarman II was himself not averse to Buddhism. In two Jain grants the issuing king receives *dharmopadeśa* from the Jain instigator (VC00056) or expresses his satisfaction with a prediction made by Jain *ācārya*s (VC00080).

[47] The Buddhist EIAD0189 presents King Śrīmūla with a theist, but non-sectarian, phrase (*iṣṭa-devatārādhanena*). The Veṅgī Cālukya king Amma II is described as a

text ID	religious donee	secular donee	insti-gator	sovereign	invo-cation	epithet *parama-*
EIAD0174	Buddhist	—	—	Buddhist	Buddhist	—
EIAD0175	Buddhist	— —	— —	(Buddhist)	victory	dhārmika (saugata)
EIAD0180	Buddhist	—	—	Buddhist	Buddhist	kāruṇika
EIAD0186	Buddhist	— —	— —	— —	Buddhist	māheśvara brahmaṇya
EIAD0187	Buddhist	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
EIAD0188	Buddhist	— —	— —	— —	Buddhist	māheśvara brahmaṇya
EIAD0189	Buddhist	— —	— —	theist	— —	māheśvara brahmaṇya
VC00037	Jain	—	Jain	—	—	brahmaṇya
VC00038	Jain	—	Jain	Śaiva	Jain	dhārmika
VC00040	Jain	—	Jain	—	Vaiṣṇava	—
VC00056	Jain	—	Jain	(Jain)	—	brahmaṇya
VC00057	Jain	—	Jain	—	—	—
VC00080	Jain	—	—	(Jain)	—	brahmaṇya
VC00003	Brahm	—	—	—	—	bhāgavata brahmaṇya
VC00024	Brahm	—	—	—	Vaiṣṇava	brahmaṇya
VC00034	—	Vaiṣṇava	—	—	—	brahmaṇya
VC00039	—	Vaiṣṇava	—	—	Vaiṣṇava	brahmaṇya
VC00054	Brahm	—	—	—	—	bhāgavata
VC00063	Brahm	—	—	—	Vaiṣṇava	brahmaṇya
VC00086	—	theist	—	—	Vaiṣṇava	brahmaṇya

Table 2: Buddhist, Jain and Vaiṣṇava sectarian indications

Only in the absence of stronger indications, the sectarian nature of a text's opening invocation (column 6) was used to classify the charter.[48]

devotee of Śiva (*hara-caraṇāmbhoja-yugala-madhupaś*) in one Jain grant (VC00038). The statement is, however, part of a stock verse featured in many *praśasti*s of this ruler, so its appearance here may be unrelated to the sectarian orientation of the grant.

[48] Opening invocations are quite rare in the Eastern Cālukya corpus, but more common in the grants of the Viṣṇukuṇḍis and Śrīmūla where, if they are sectarian, they confirm the alignment of the grant established on a stronger basis. The invocation also confirms the already established alignment in two Veṅgī Cālukya charters, but contradicts it in two others: the Jain VC00038 and the Vaiṣṇava VC00039 both begin with corresponding invocations; however, the Jain VC00040 and the Śaiva VC00025

text ID	religious donee	secular donee	instigator	sovereign	invocation	royal epithet *parama-*
EIAD0181	Brahm	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
EIAD0182	Śaiva	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
EIAD0183	Brahm	—	—	—	—	(brahmaṇya māheśvara)
EIAD0185	Brahm	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
VC00012	Brahm	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
VC00017	Brahm	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00018	Brahm	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00019	theist	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00021	Brahm	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00022	Śaiva	—	Śaiva	Śaiva	welfare	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00025	Brahm	—	Śaiva	—	Vaiṣṇava	—
VC00026	—	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
VC00027	—	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
VC00030	—	Śaiva	—	—	—	māheśvara brahmaṇya
VC00032	—	—	—	—	—	māheśvara brahmaṇya
VC00035	—	—	—	Śaiva	—	brahmaṇya
VC00036	Brahm	—	Śaiva	—	—	brahmaṇya
VC00041	—	Śaiva	—	—	—	brahmaṇya
VC00043	—	—	—	Śaiva	—	brahmaṇya
VC00045	Śaiva	—	—	Śaiva	Śaiva	māheśvara
VC00046	—	—	—	Śaiva	—	brahmaṇya
VC00047	—	—	—	—	—	māheśvara
VC00049	—	Śaiva	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00052	—	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00066	Brahm	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00067	Brahm	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00070	—	—	—	Śaiva	—	brahmaṇya
VC00071	—	—	—	—	Śaiva	lost, prob. brahmaṇya
VC00079	Śaiva	—	—	—	—	māheśvara brahmaṇya
VC00082	Brahm	—	—	—	—	brahmaṇya māheśvara
VC00087	—	Śaiva	—	—	—	—

Table 3: Śaiva sectarian indications

Whether such opening invocations reflect the religious preferences of the ruler, the donee, the composer, or some other contributor is a topic deserving further research. For the present study, the invocation has been accepted as an indicator of the grant's orientation mainly because otherwise the number of Vaiṣṇava grants would have been extremely small.[49]

Finally, in absence of any other indication, the issuer's religious epithet in *parama-* has been provisionally taken into account for the same reason (column 7; parenthetical values apply to a predecessor of the reigning king). Such epithets occur frequently, but by no means universally, in the corpus, and although they vary, this variance cannot be clearly linked to the possible sectarian dedication of grants.[50] The religious epithets in Viṣṇukuṇḍi grants to Buddhists seem to have been selected so as to express regard for Buddhism without openly endorsing it,[51] since these

both commence with a Vaiṣṇava invocation (a fully fledged stanza in the former, and a modest *oṁ namo nārāyaṇāya* in the latter). The Viṣṇukuṇḍi and Śaiva EIAD0182 lacks an invocation, but promises rebirth in Rudraloka for those who respect the grant.

[49] In addition to the charters listed here as having Vaiṣṇava invocations, four Eastern Cālukya charters commence with a stanza which refers to Brahmā as arising from the navel of Viṣṇu. Only one of these (VC00033) is a proper invocation, but I have deemed it too indirect to qualify as a Vaiṣṇava prayer. The other three are not invocations but an integral part of the Purāṇic origin story articulated in the very late charters of the dynasty (q.v. Fleet 1891, 274–275). Of the three texts included in the corpus which present this origin story, two (VC00049 and VC00079) are Śaiva, and one (VC00078) lacks sectarian indications.

[50] Von Hinüber (2013, 367) draws attention to the danger of establishing a king's religious conviction from such epithets; see also Schmiedchen (2010–2011, 158) for further considerations, and Schmiedchen (2021) about Buddhist endowments by Śaiva kings in Valabhī.

[51] EIAD0180 presents Vikramendravarman I as *parama-kāruṇika* 'supremely compassionate,' while Vikramendravarman II is said to be *parama-dhārmika* 'supremely devoted to *dharma*' in EIAD0175 (cf. the Jain VC00038 and note 51 below), occupying the middle ground as it were between on the one hand his grandfather (the above Vikramendravarman I), who is explicitly styled *parama-saugata* in this latter grant, and on the other hand the epithet *parama-māheśvara* applied to Vikramendravarman II in his other two known grants (EIAD0182 and EIAD0183), already pointed out by Sanderson (2009, 71–72). It is worth noting that *parama-dhārmika* is also applied to Govindavarman I in EIAD0177, issued by his son Mādhavavarman II. EIAD0177 is a 'generic' grant to a Brahmin, but Govindavarman I is generally represented as Buddhist. Styling him *parama-dhārmika* may be the son's way of acknowledging the father's Buddhist religion without being too clear about it. See also note 44 above and Tournier (2018, 28–35, 39). I thank Vincent Tournier for discussing this epithet with me.

rulers tend to call themselves *parama-māheśvara* in their other grants.[52] Conversely, the roughly contemporary Śrīmūla professes to be *parama-māheśvara* even while handing out gifts to Buddhist institutions. Most Eastern Cālukya grants, on the other hand, varyingly introduce their issuers as *parama-māheśvara*, *parama-brahmaṇya*, both (in any order) or neither. Given this fluctuation, it may be no more than chance that the Śaiva epithet is present (with or without *parama-brahmaṇya*) in all of their grants to Śaiva institutions and in two of their four grants to Śaiva secular recipients. However, the complementary absence of *parama-māheśvara* in all their donations to Jain or Vaiṣṇava causes[53] suggests that chance alone does not determine the royal epithet. Therefore, it is probably reasonable to classify the two Veṅgī Cālukya grants featuring the epithet *parama-bhāgavata*[54] as Vaiṣṇava, and not entirely unreasonable to classify those featuring *parama-māheśvara* as Śaiva.

The criteria on the basis of which texts have been assigned to denominations are thus admittedly something of a hodgepodge. The reason I feel justified in applying them nonetheless is twofold. On the one hand, I am specifically seeking evidence relevant to the sweeping claims made by Davidson. While he does not discuss his criteria for assigning sectarian orientations to inscriptions, it is evident from his discussion of Bhauma-Kara grants (Davidson 2002, 89) that he accepts the issuing ruler's religious epithet as relevant, and he also expressly assumes that the religious community patronised by a grant would influence the rhetoric

[52] Only one of these grants (EIAD0182) was made to an expressly Śaiva recipient; the others (EIAD0181, EIAD0183 and EIAD0185) are to householder Brahmins.

[53] The royal religious epithet is usually only the more neutral *parama-brahmaṇya* in these; or it may be entirely absent (in the Jain VC00057 and VC00040); or it may be replaced by *parama-dhārmika* (VC00038), unique in the Veṅgī Cālukya corpus and reminiscent of the same epithet in Viṣṇukuṇḍi inscriptions (see note 52 above) where it likewise seems to have been chosen for its acceptability to different religious groups.

[54] One of these is VC00003, issued by the dynasty's founder Viṣṇuvardhana I, who is merely *parama-brahmaṇya* in VC00002 and lacks a religious epithet in his third known grant, VC00001. The other such text, VC00054, attributes itself to the dynasty's fifth ruler Maṅgi Yuvarāja (who is either *parama-brahmaṇya* or has no religious epithet in his other known grants), but in fact seems to be a grant of an even earlier king re-issued under the much later Vijayāditya III.

of that grant.[55] Lang is even less explicit in this regard, but in calling the Viṣṇukuṇḍi kings Buddhist, she tacitly implies that the religion patronised by a ruler is a more relevant criterion to her than the religion indicated by the ruler's epithet.[56] On the other hand, it is indeed reasonable to assume that both the donee's and the donor's sectarian orientation can influence the way the donor is represented in a charter, and the same may well be said of any other party who had enough influence on the draft to select a sectarian invocation. Analysing a larger textual corpus may be able to reveal if (and how) the above diverse indications of religious alignment correlate with different aspects of representation, but for the present, aggregating the samples under the simplistic label 'sectarian orientation of the grant' must suffice. After all, the kings in the present corpus (with the probable exception of the Viṣṇukuṇḍi Govindavarman I) were not actually devout Buddhists, nor are any of them known to have been initiated Śaivas.

5. *Attributions, codes and dimensions*

The basic unit of my textual analysis was the 'attribution,' defined as a proposition which characterises a relevant person by imputing to them a relevant quality or action. The original framework I had set up for the textual analysis of copperplate grants (see Balogh 2025) incorporated several protagonists who tend to occur in such texts, as well as a wide range of characterising assertions, but this scope has been limited for the present analysis.

Among the people featured in the texts, only the issuing kings (called 'sovereigns' in my classification of protagonists) have been included here. However, characterisation of the issuer's predecessors or his dynasty as a whole has been qualified as characterisation of the issuer himself based on the underlying assumption that such entities—'satellites' in my termino-

[55] 'A comparison of inscriptions […] shows how the ethical positions of each religious tradition configured the rhetorical gestures of their respective supporters' (Davidson 2002, 86); 'wherever they received patronage, Buddhists injected (or attempted to inject) the rhetoric of ethical responsibility into their political dialogues' (*ibid.*, 90).

[56] 'The anonymous poets who praise the Buddhist Viṣṇukuṇḍin kings describe them as generous donors who gave away their fortunes and took pleasure in providing comfort to their people' (Lang 2008, 143).

logy—are not featured in the texts for their own sake, but to enhance the representation of the issuer.[57] Davidson (2002, 89) implicitly makes the same assumption when he speaks of a king bragging of his elder brother's deeds.

The comprehensive coding frame developed for the analysis of representation comprised 182 individual codes, to which I added 4 new ones during the close reading of the Viṣṇukuṇḍi and Śrīmūla grants. These codes were sorted for my earlier analyses into 12 'dimensions' on the most abstract level, and most dimensions included additional hierarchical tiers. The original coding frame has been greatly simplified for the present study, reducing the number of dimensions to four and disregarding all lower levels of the hierarchy. After the completion of this revision and after eliminating the data pertaining to persons other than royalty, I was left with just 68 different codes.

The process of reassigning codes to a smaller number of dimensions involved entirely disregarding some dimensions of the original coding frame, for instance Prestige, which makes up for a large proportion of all attributions pertaining to royalty, but which has been found to be present to an equal degree in grants of any sectarian orientation. Other dimensions of the original frame have been wholly or partially preserved, merging them into the broader dimensions of the revised frame. The four dimensions created for the present study are discussed below. Since the dimensions are conceived of as independent, their order is arbitrary. The complete list of codes contributing to each dimension, and the definition of each code, are available online in my dataset.[58]

Martiality encompasses both aggressive action and aggressive potential, which are distinguished in my original coding frame as the dimensions of Belligerence and Prowess. On the basis of Davidson's thesis, we expect the martial dimension to be most prominent in the depictions of rulers in Śaiva grants, and least in Buddhist texts. The 25 individual codes

[57] In terms of my broader conceptual model (Balogh forthcoming), I have analysed descriptions whose 'focus' is the sovereign, making no distinction on the basis of the 'orbit' occupied by the 'target' of each description. In my conclusions I return briefly to the distinct ways in which different target individuals associated with the king contribute to his image.

[58] See: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8338077

contributing to this dimension include on the one hand attributions of victory along with references to battles, warfare and heroic deeds; and on the other hand assertions of martial prowess through the traits of physical strength, valour, vigour and the possession of armed might. Some factors which in my original categorisation belong to other dimensions have also been assigned to Martiality. These are agonistic aspects of Dominance, such as the subjugation of enemies and being oneself indomitable, and of Competence, such as weapon skills and tactical proficiency. Finally, the possession of a body ornamented with scars has also been included as an assertion of martiality, though other aspects of rugged masculine allure have been ignored altogether along with all other components of the Appeal dimension of my comprehensive coding frame.[59]

Virtue, uniting traits of goodwill and ethical behaviour, is the second crucial dimension of the present study, expected to be more conspicuous in the representation of the donors in Buddhist grants than in grants of other sectarian orientations, especially Śaiva ones. The 25 codes counting towards this dimension include two major groups—separate dimensions of my original coding frame—namely Beneficence (acting in the interest or for the benefit of others), and Morality (acting on the basis of ethical or religious obligation). The former includes being charitable to those seeking support or in need as well as patronising meritorious people, cultural and intellectual professionals and religious figures. However, it excludes abstract generosity and displays of liberality, which I regard to be components of prestige (disregarded in the present analysis). It also includes the protection of subjects and the provision of safety and security. On the moral side, it encompasses personal traits such as discipline, dutifulness, honesty and patience as well as ethical principles such as purity, righteousness (*dharma*) and dutifulness. Virtue also includes the active suppression of immorality, for example claims that a king curbs tyrannical rulers, suppresses criminal elements or dispels darkness and sin with his effulgence. These are clearly aggressive actions, but they are

[59] Attributions of physical beauty and sexual attractiveness are sporadically but steadily present throughout the corpus. I have considered retaining some of these traits under the label 'sex appeal' to examine whether the eroticisation of the king's image can be made tangible in this way. However, their quantity is dwarfed by other attributions, so differences observable in the data are minimal and inconclusive.

presented in a moral guise, and my analysis is concerned with the way sovereigns are represented to the public.

Divinity is the collective name given to indications that the king is a god or like a god. The apotheosis of kingship is a prominent component of Davidson's thesis, but in the corpus under study, I see little indication that the king was presented as substantially divine.[60] What can certainly be felt in the text is the representation of kings as larger-than-life figures, but this applies equally to many other protagonists of the charters. Anyone worth wasting copper on must be the best of his kind, the crest jewel of her family, and the acme of this quality or that proficiency. There is in my opinion a single spectrum of superlatives with such qualifications at one end, comparisons to natural entities with or without a vague divine nature[61] in the mid-range, and equation to mythical heroes and actual divinities of the Purāṇic pantheon at the other end. Notwithstanding this, instances where a person is likened to a divine or mythical being or to an epic hero have been recognised for the present study as claims of divinity. Another clearly discernible current is the claim of divine sanction, where royal status is said to have been conferred on a king or his lineage by the boon of a god. While such assertions appear semantically very different from claiming actual divinity for the king's person, these too have been included in the dimension of Divinity for the present study, on the grounds that they at least imply an intimate connection between the king and a god.[62] Finally, assertions that the king possesses the bodily omens characteristic of a universal sovereign (*cakravartin*) occur now and then in the corpus, and have also been counted toward this dimension on the grounds that they elevate the ruler above the rank and file of humanity. Although Divinity is only comprised of these three distinct codes, such attributions are frequent enough in the corpus to allow meaningful comparison with the other dimensions applied here.

[60] In fact, the opposite is made explicit in VC00051, which styles Vijayāditya III (the issuer's father) as 'a mortal Śiva' (v. 1, *martya-maheśvara*).

[61] Such as lions, the earth, the sun, the moon, fire, wind, the ocean, the Himalaya or Meru, the submarine fire and the wish-fulfilling cow.

[62] See also Schmiedchen (2010–2011, 164 n. 19).

Finally, the dimension of **Aptitude** encompasses traits indicating that the ruler is the ideal candidate for his role on the grounds of his personal qualifications, as distinguished from being entitled to kingship through legitimate succession or divine sanction. As far as I am aware, Davidson or Lang, whose hypotheses form the starting point of my investigation, do not suggest that such attributions would be more characteristic of Buddhist charters than of others, but it is intuitively plausible that this may be the case. It is my feeling that emphasis on the king's actual ability to govern may be a counterpart or complement to his presentation as a divinely entitled being of superhuman stature. Furthermore, Burton Stein (1998, 142) describes the ideal of 'moral kingship' as being 'most salient in Buddhist and Jain thought,' and also speaks of a 'Jaina emphasis upon the personal qualities of the king, his intellectual mastery and virtue' (*ibid.*, 145). He thus senses a connection between the qualifications of a king on the basis of morality and on the basis of competence, although he does not explicitly connect the latter to Buddhist ideals. The 15 codes assigned to Aptitude in this study combine the more specific dimensions of Competence and Intellect. The latter includes attributions of intelligence, wisdom and sophistication along with claims of learnedness in various fields, while the former comprises skills and qualities which are neither academic nor martial in nature, and are often expressed in vague terms. Attributions of generic good qualities have been counted towards this dimension along with claims of success and ambition, while more nebulous claims of greatness, exaltedness and superiority to others have not.

6. Results

Most findings of the quantitative analysis are presented here as profiles in 'spider charts.' The spokes of such a chart correspond to the dimensions of my content analysis. As already noted above, the ordering of dimensions is arbitrary. The particular sequence used here for the spokes of the charts was deemed best for clarity of presentation, but any other arrangement would have been equally appropriate as far as the data are concerned. A point plotted for a particular group of texts on a particular spoke of a chart shows the prevalence of the corresponding dimension within the corresponding group. The points are connected by lines into a profile,

but as the dimensions are in principle independent, these lines have no meaning in themselves: they are merely visualisation aids that help pick out the shape of a particular profile. To further facilitate distinguishing superimposed profiles, I use colour coding and, in some charts, differing line styles and differing point markers.

Prevalence is computed as the frequency of attributions, and ignores other measures such as the amount of text space taken up by those attributions.[63] In order to avoid distortion caused by uneven sample sizes, the charts always indicate relative prevalence, expressed as a percentage of the total number of assertions (in any of the four dimensions of the analysis) occurring in the group in question.[64] Thus, in Fig. 1 below, where the textual corpus has been partitioned on the basis of denomination, the green (Buddhist) dot on the upward (Virtue) axis is located at 42%,[65] meaning that in the analysed Buddhist texts as a whole, attributions of Virtue make up 42% of the totality of attributions in any of the four dimensions. The other three dimensions accordingly make up 58% of all attributions in Buddhist texts; specifically, as shown in the chart, 30% are attributions of Aptitude, 24% are of Martiality, and 4% are of Divinity. These four points on the four axes of the chart together comprise the profile of sovereigns as represented in Buddhist grants.

Partitioning the texts on the basis of religious denomination, we can now obtain separate profiles for the different religions. Recall that these are the representational profiles of issuing sovereigns (along with their associated family members), and phrases like 'Buddhist profile' are shorthand for 'profile of the issuing sovereign as represented in charters deemed to have a Buddhist orientation.' The first results, shown in Fig. 1, look promising. The king's image articulated in the Buddhist texts has distinctly more emphasis on virtue (42%) and aptitude (30%) than any of the other profiles (all below 26% in Virtue and no more than 15% in

[63] An attribution may be expressed in a text as concisely as a monosyllabic word in a compound or, occasionally, as verbosely as a whole stanza. The latter is arguably more emphatic, but this analytical method is blind to the difference.

[64] For example, since the Buddhist grants in the corpus are few in number and generally short in extent, the absolute number of assertions made in them could not be meaningfully compared to the absolute number of assertions made in a subsample consisting of more and/or longer texts.

[65] All percentages in my discussion have been rounded to the nearest integer.

Aptitude), and distinctly less on Martiality (24%, against over 36% in the other groups) and Divinity (4%, against over 21%). This is fully in line with what could be expected on the grounds of Davidson's hypothesis and my speculation that personal qualifications would be foregrounded in the Buddhist charters as a counterpart of divinity. The other four profiles are much more alike, with none of them standing out conspicuously in any of the dimensions.

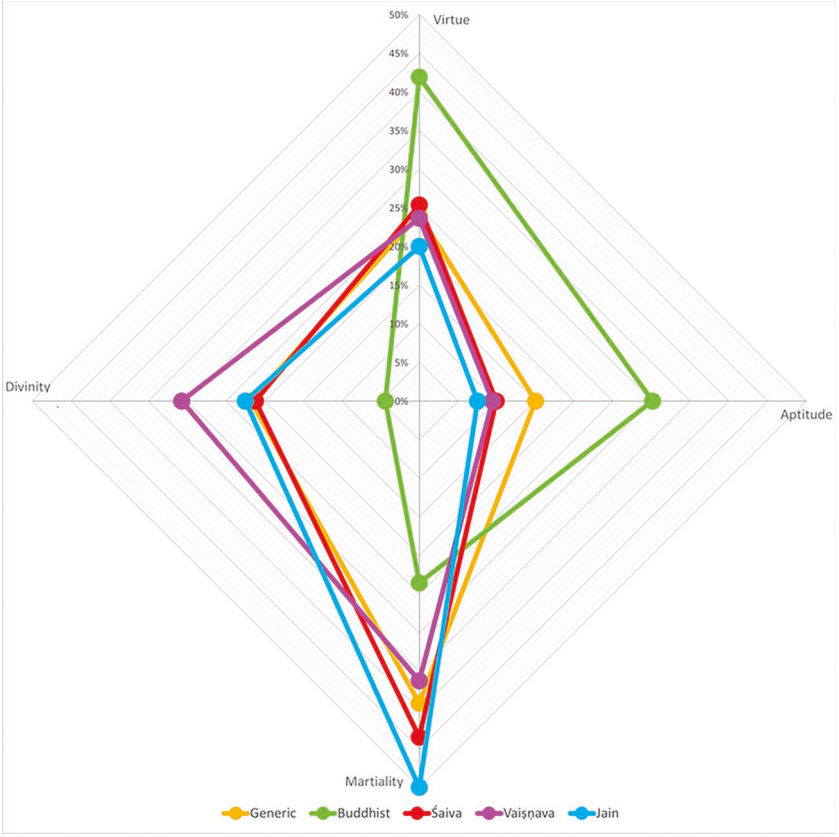


Fig. 1: Profiles of sovereigns by denomination of grant

At this point, however, it must be remembered that the distribution of Buddhist grants in the corpus under study covaries with other factors. Most notably, all of the Buddhist charters come from Śrīmūla and the Viṣṇukuṇḍis, while the overwhelming majority of the Śaiva and Generic

grants, as well as all of the Jain and Vaiṣṇava ones, were issued by the Veṅgī Cālukyas. Taking a cautious glance at the profiles obtained separately for these dynastic corpora (Fig. 2), it turns out that each of the three

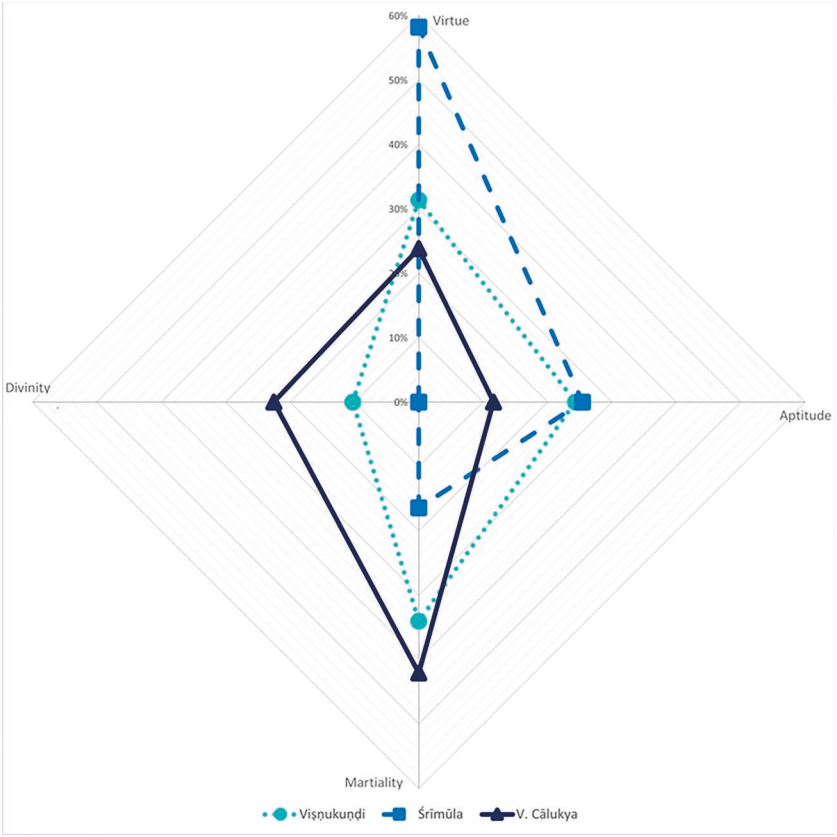


Fig. 2: Profiles of sovereigns by dynasty

is as starkly different from the others as Buddhism was from the other religions in the first comparison. Indeed, the profile for the aggregated Veṅgī Cālukya rulers looks very much like the profiles obtained above for non-Buddhist texts, which, on second thoughts, should be of no surprise as this dynasty is responsible for almost all of the non-Buddhist grants in the analysis (87 out of 95 as shown in Table 1, thus, almost 92%).

To obtain a more refined picture, we may look at separate religious profiles within each dynastic corpus. Fig. 3 shows such profiles derived

from the Viṣṇukuṇḍi texts alone. The Buddhist profile retains some distinction here, at least in the dimensions of Aptitude (where it scores highest at 34%) and Martiality (lowest at 27%). In accordance with expectations, Śaivism is at the opposite end of the range of profiles in both of these dimensions (10% Aptitude and 48% Martiality), while the Generic group lies in between (21% Aptitude, 35% Martiality). A much smaller difference, but also in the expected pattern, is found in Divinity, where Śaivism again stands highest (15%) and Buddhism lowest (8%). The prevalence of Virtue, however, changes even less from religion to religion, and while it is least prevalent in the Śaiva grants (28%), it is a shade more emphatic in the Generic ones (33%) than in the Buddhist ones (32%).

The religious profiles of Śrīmūla, illustrated in Fig. 4, are much less disparate. We are looking here at a mere five grants (4 Buddhist and 1 Śaiva) by a single ruler, so the idiosyncrasies of these specific charters surely influence the profiles to a great degree. The pattern is nonetheless worthy of serious consideration inasmuch as it goes almost entirely contrary to expectations. The Śaiva and Buddhist profiles of Śrīmūla differ very little, and the only dimension where they diverge conspicuously is that of Martiality, which is altogether absent in his Śaiva grant (0%) while being present in his Buddhist ones (19%). Claims of Divinity are not found in any of his charters, while attributions of Virtue and Aptitude are slightly more prevalent in his Śaiva charter (70% and 30% respectively) than in his Buddhist ones (56% and 25%).[66]

The four profiles obtained for the religions supported by the Veṅgī Cālukya kings are shown in Fig. 5. As Buddhism is not among these religions, this comparison is not directly relevant to the search for a Śaiva-Buddhist divide in rhetoric. However, the similarity of the four profiles, coupled with their collective difference from the other dynastic profiles (Fig. 2), cautions that the represented image of rulers can depend more strongly on dynastic affiliation than on the religious orientation of a grant. Then again, the profiles do deviate a little by denomination, and

[66] This is primarily because prevalence is expressed as a proportion relative to the other dimensions: in the Śaiva grant, the entirety of the relevant representation of Śrīmūla is comprised of just Virtue and Aptitude, while in the Buddhist ones, Martiality takes some of their share. Looking at absolute numbers of attributions (not illustrated here), virtue is very slightly more prevalent in the average of the Buddhist grants than in the Śaiva grant.

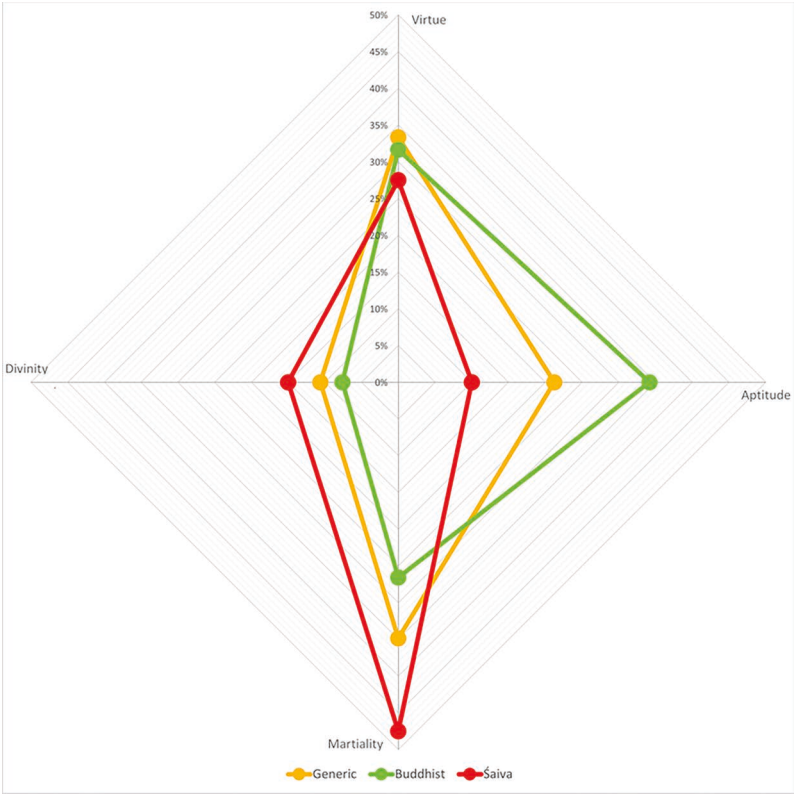


Fig. 3: Profiles of Viṣṇukuṇḍi sovereigns by denomination of grant

because the number of texts is relatively high (especially in the Generic and Śaiva categories), the differences that do emerge may well reflect genuine sectarian influence rather than random fluctuation of the features emphasised in various land grants. In this light, it is interesting to note that the prevalence of Virtue is in fact the highest in the Śaiva grants (25%), although by just a fingernail (20% to 24% in the other groups).[67]

[67] A further intriguing finding, without relevance to the topic at hand, is that the Jain grants show the least prevalence of Virtue and Aptitude and, somewhat surprisingly, the highest prevalence of Martiality. This is rather contrary to the concept of moral kingship hypothesised by Stein (1998, 142, 145) to have a connection to Jain ideals, though see also Dundas (1991, especially 175–176). The issue is, however, more complex than it appears from this aggregated profile. The three earlier Jain grants of the Eastern Cālukyas, up to

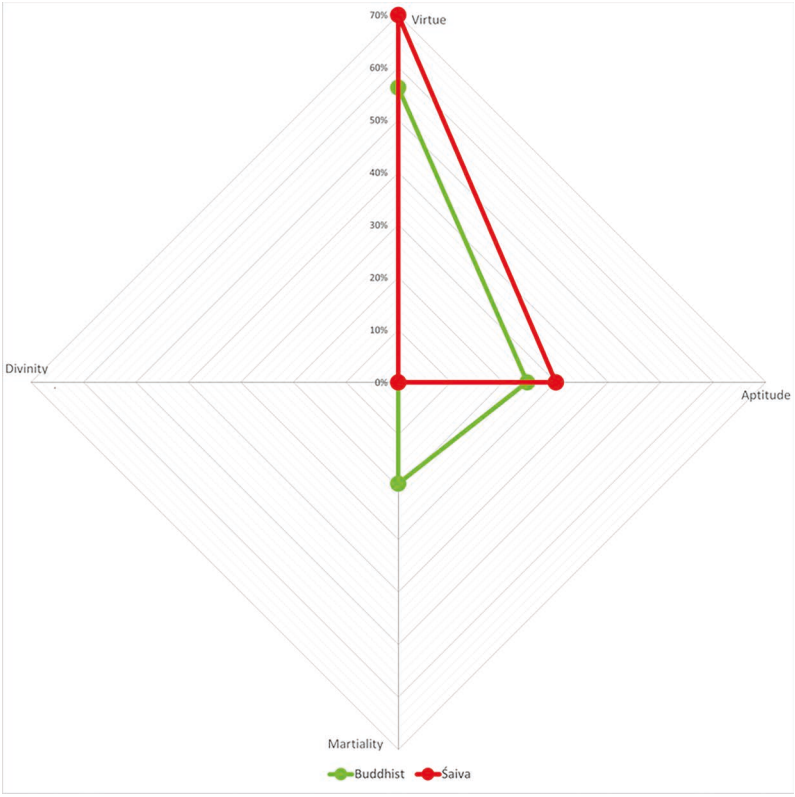


Fig. 4: Profiles of Śrīmūla by denomination of grant

Simultaneously, the prevalence of Divinity is the lowest in the Śaiva texts (22%), while the Vaiṣṇava grants stand out in this respect (31%).

Another factor which may influence the representational profiles of rulers is time. The temporal distribution of the studied corpus is uneven, and that of sectarian grants even more so. Moreover, donative charters tend to contain increasingly more verbose *praśasti*s with the progress of

the time of Viṣṇuvardhana III (r. c. 719–755 CE), exhibit high Virtue and low Martiality, but this is outweighed by the three late grants, all from the time of Amma II (r. 945–970 CE). In the former three, the sovereign donates directly to the Jain recipient, while the latter three are instigated grants where the instigator's Jain orientation may have had less influence on the rhetoric of the charters.

time, with the later documents containing a correspondingly higher total number of attributions.[68] This in turn means that when an aggregated profile is computed for a sample that includes both early and late grants (such as for the Śaiva and the Generic religious subsamples), then the later texts may overshadow the earlier ones by their sheer mass of attributions. This fluctuation in the number of assertions made in various centuries is illustrated in Fig. 6, where the height of each column indicates the total number of attributions found in the corpus for that century, and the coloured bars within the columns show the sectarian orientation of the grants making those attributions.

To visualise the possible effect of time, Fig. 7 shows the profiles of sovereigns broken down by the century in which each text was issued. While individual profiles are difficult to tell apart with so many superimposed, an eventual progressive influence of time may be discerned with the help of the colours of the spectrum: the red end represents the lower end of the time range, shifting gradually through yellow, green and blue to the violet end of the spectrum representing the upper end of the timespan.

Such a progression is most distinct in the dimension of Martiality: the steady increase of its prominence from 20% in the 5th century to 53% in the 11th is only disrupted very slightly inasmuch as it hovers between 32% and 34% throughout the 6th to the 8th centuries, and within this span it is highest by a small margin in the 7th and lowest by a split hair in the 8th. This finding lines up excellently with Davidson's and others' insights about the proliferation and idealisation/idolisation of military culture in mediaeval India, but simultaneously warns that variation in the prevalence of Martiality within the corpus studied here may be driven rather by time than by sectarian orientation.

The other three dimensions also shift with time, but do so in a less linear fashion. Virtue is prominent (over 36%) in the 5th and 6th centuries, but then drops and stays on the back burner (21–25%) for the rest of the time. Inversely, Divinity is barely present in the 5th and 6th centuries

[68] In the corpus studied here, the average number of attributions pertaining to the sovereign per text is 32 in the fifth to sixth centuries, then rising slightly in the seventh and eighth to 37, rising more substantially in the ninth and tenth to 49, and again very sharply in the eleventh century to 144.

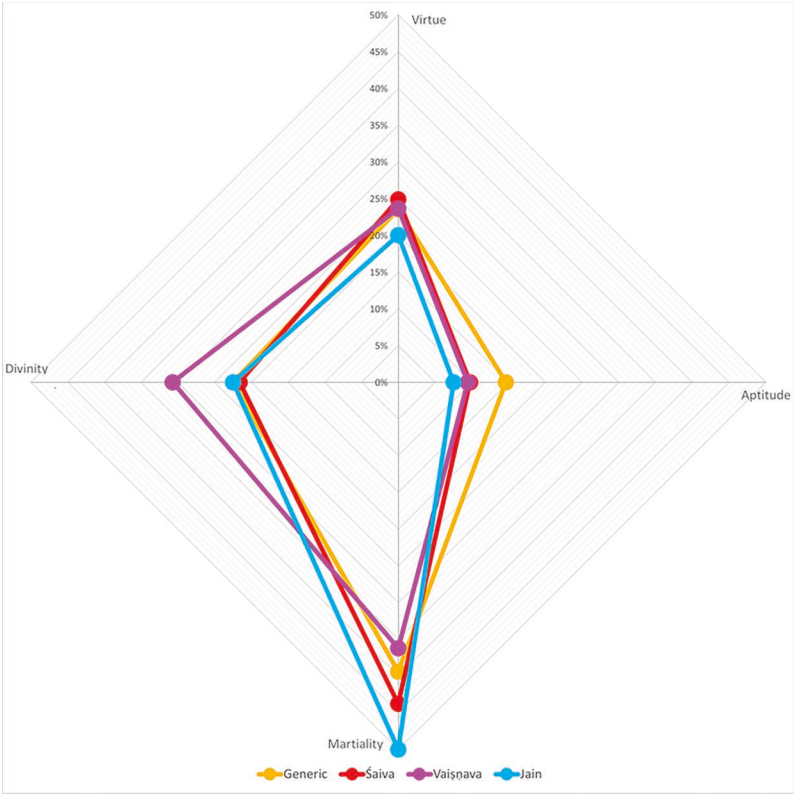


Fig. 5: Profiles of Veṅgī Cālukya sovereigns by denomination of grant

(around 7%) but comes to the forefront in the 7th to 10th centuries (fluctuating between 22% and 29%) with a peak in the 9th, then plummets again in the 11th (11%).[69] Finally, Aptitude shares first place with Virtue in the fifth century (36%), drops and stays quite level in the next three (21–22%), then drops again for the next two centuries (6–7%), ultimately rising a bit again in the eleventh century (11%). I do not venture to conclude anything from these findings here, except that these dimensions too are clearly influenced by the temporal factor. It must, however, be kept in mind that the profiles obtained here are biased by religion just as the profiles obtained above for religion are biased by time.

[69] The values found for the eleventh century are not necessarily accurate, since only four texts from this time have been included in the corpus, and these may be idiosyncratic.

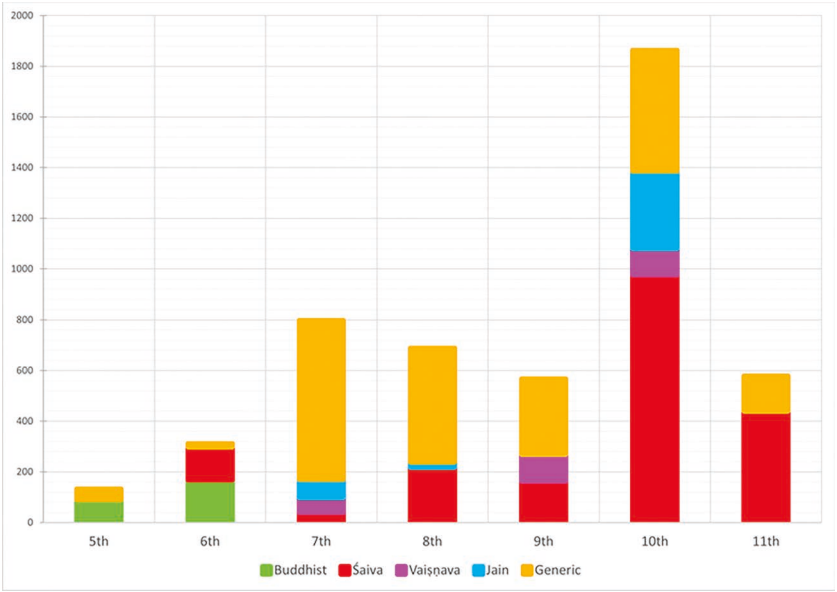


Fig. 6: Number of attributions made in each century spanned by the corpus

To mitigate the effect of temporal and dynastic bias on the results, I have repeated the comparison of religious groups in a restricted sample. The idea of simply drawing the line at a selected date and discarding later texts was ruled out because placing such a temporal divide early would have resulted in eliminating all or most of the Śaiva charters of the Veṅgī Cālukyas, while putting it late would have left in far too many generic charters of this dynasty, creating an imbalance with earlier generic charters. I have therefore decided to apply more complex selection criteria.

First, I have chosen to eliminate Vaiṣṇava and Jain texts, mainly because these orientations are only present in the grants of the Eastern Cālukyas, but also because it has been found (Fig. 1) that charters associated with these sects do not differ as substantially from Śaiva ones as from Buddhist ones. Second, I drew the temporal line for Śaiva texts at the reign of Vijayāditya I (r. c. 755–772 CE) in order to include his four

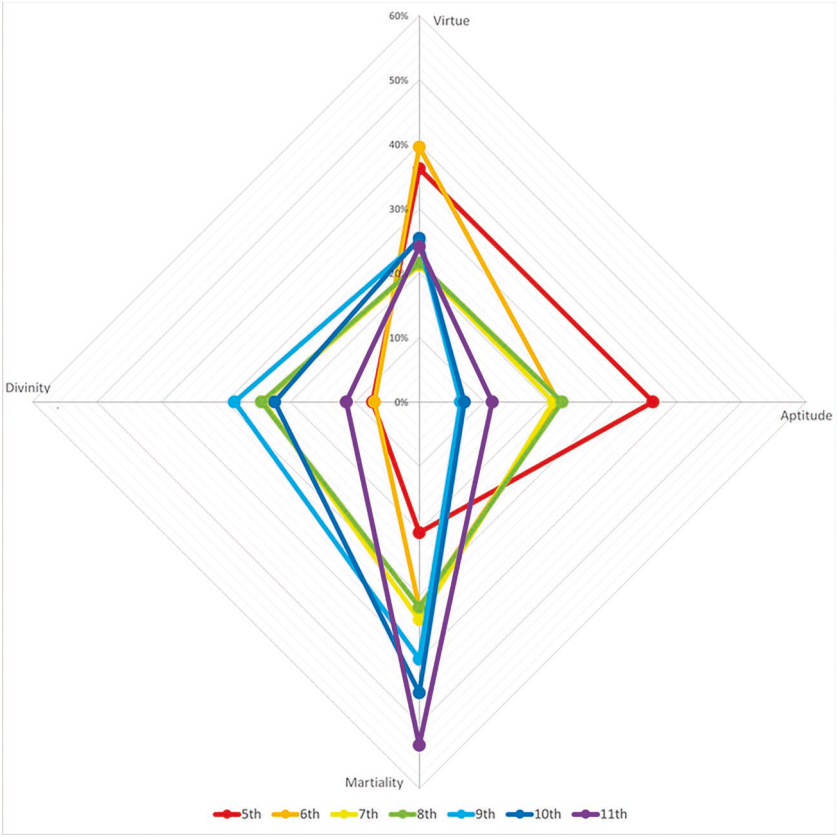


Fig. 7: Profiles of sovereigns by century of issue

Śaiva grants in the final comparison.[70] However, out of the generic grants from the Veṅgī Cālukyas, I have retained only the two known charters of this kind issued by their first ruler Viṣṇuvardhana I (r. c. 624–641 CE) on the grounds that he is closest in time to the earlier rulers in the corpus; and in addition, I have included one generic grant from each of the two rulers whose Śaiva grants have been retained: Viṣṇuvardhana II (r. c. 673–

[70] Thus, the nine Śaiva grants included in the restricted corpus are EIAD0181, EIAD0182, EIAD0183, EIAD0185, VC00012, VC00017, VC00018, VC00066 and VC00067.

dynasty	texts				attributions			
	Buddh.	generic	Śaiva	total	Buddh.	generic	Śaiva	total
Viṣṇukuṇḍi								
Śrīmūla	4	—	1	5	104	—	17	121
V. Cālukya	—	4	5	9	—	135	200	335
Total	7	8	9	24	258	258	329	845

Table 4: The reduced corpus: number of texts and attributions crosstabulated by dynasty and denomination

682 CE) and the above Vijayāditya II.[71] As detailed in Table 4, after the application of these restriction criteria, both the number of discrete texts and the number of representational assertions made in these texts are relatively evenly distributed both across the three religious orientations and across the two dynastic groups (the Viṣṇukuṇḍis and Śrīmūla together comprising the early group, and the Veṅgī Cālukyas comprising the late group), aside from the fact that there are no Buddhist grants by the Eastern Cālukyas.

As shown in Fig. 8, the profiles of sovereigns obtained from this restricted sample and broken down by religious group still differ perceptibly, but in most dimensions much less sharply than in Fig. 1 above. The most conspicuous difference is, as before, Divinity, which is featured in only 4% of the assertions made in Buddhist grants, as opposed to 19% and 22% in Generic and Śaiva texts respectively. The next largest difference is in Virtue, with a prevalence of 42% in the Buddhist group and only 32% and 26% in the Generic and Śaiva groups. Given, however, the almost complete absence of Divinity in the Buddhist profile, the remaining dimensions are naturally expected to be more prevalent (as the four add up to 100%). Accordingly, the difference in emphasis on Virtue may not be as significant as it first appears. The same may to some extent apply to Aptitude (Buddhist 30%, Generic 17%, Śaiva 18%) where, however, the divide between Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts appears sharper than in the case of Virtue. On the same grounds, conversely, the evidently lower

[71] The eight Generic grants in the restricted corpus are EIAD0177, EIAD0178, EIAD0179, EIAD0184, VC00001, VC00002, VC00011 and VC00020.

Martiality in Buddhist grants (24%, as opposed to Generic 32% and Śaiva 34%) is certainly noteworthy.

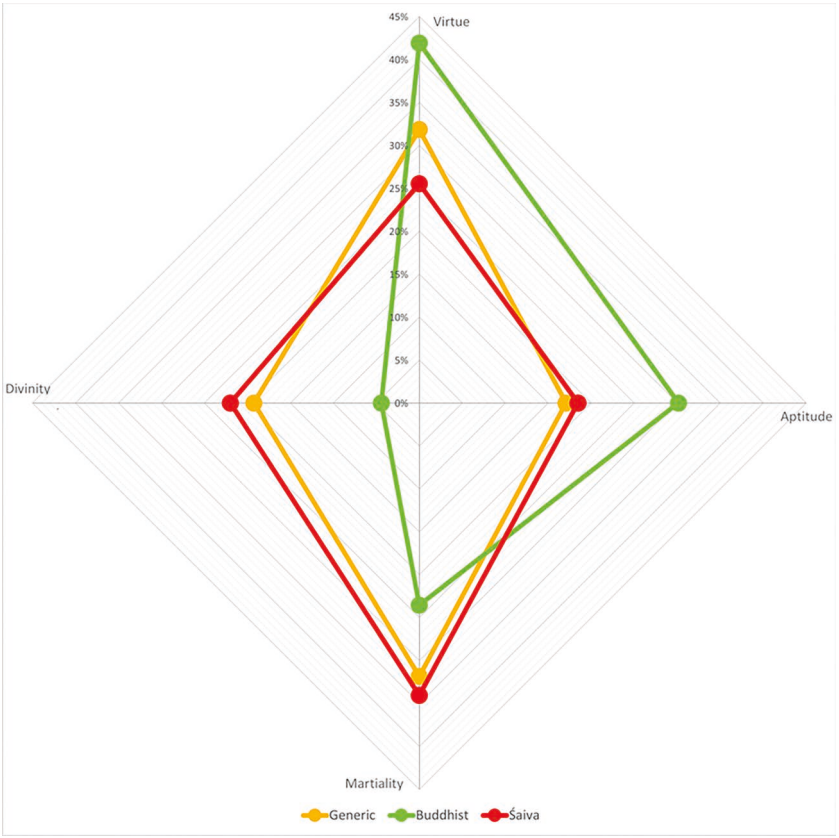


Fig. 8: Profiles of sovereigns by denomination of the grant, in the restricted sample

7. *Conclusions*

Analysing the representational content of royal copperplate grants from the early mediaeval Eastern Deccan has demonstrated that the sectarian orientation of grants—as determined on the basis of several criteria in an order of priority—has tangible influence on the image of the sovereign who issued the grant. It has also to some degree confirmed the hypotheses formulated for this study: that the representation of the royal donor in

Buddhist grants differs from that in Śaiva grants in specific ways. To wit, the donor's moral and social virtues as well as his personal qualifications and competence are more emphatic in the former, while his martial capacity and activity as well as his superhuman stature are more prominent in the latter.

Nevertheless, several caveats apply to these conclusions. On the most basic level, there is great idiosyncratic variation between individual grants. To better illustrate this, Fig. 9 presents the 24 texts of the last analysis in a scatter plot, with the dimension of Virtue represented on the horizontal axis and Martiality on the vertical.[72] The expectation would be for Śaiva texts (red dots) to appear above and to the left of the 45-degree line dividing the field in half, and for Buddhist texts (green dots) below it and to the right. The actual dots are, instead, pretty much all over the place, except for the Generic texts (orange dots), which tend to cluster near the middle. While the overall trend of the dots' distribution (shown with coloured ellipses indicating a 75% confidence range) does resemble the expected pattern, both the Buddhist and the Śaiva group are dispersed over a broad area and include some extreme outliers. It would be rather futile to attempt to deduce the sectarian orientation of any particular grant from the prevalence of Martiality and Virtue in the representation of the ruler. The only way to mitigate the idiosyncrasy of texts is to analyse a larger sample.

On a more abstract level, there are strong systematic differences between charters issued by different dynasties, and between charters issued in different time periods, as illustrated in Fig. 2 and Fig. 7 above. All of the Buddhist grants analysed here are from an early period, and none of them were issued by the Veṅgī Cālukyas, yet the representational content of *praśasti*s is to a large extent dictated by 'Zeitgeist' and by the conventions established at individual royal chancelleries. Needless to say, these factors are themselves not absolute, as they evolve in reciprocal interaction with each other and with further, less clearly identifiable processes. The degree to which *praśasti* is standardised can itself vary from

[72] The numbers plotted are the same as those used for profiles above, i.e. the proportion of the number attributions in a given dimension to the proportion of all attributions in the four dimensions of the analysis. The figure has been slightly retouched for clearer presentation: in fact, the three texts clustered near the coordinates (25;25) and the two near (70;0) have the exact same values in these two dimensions.

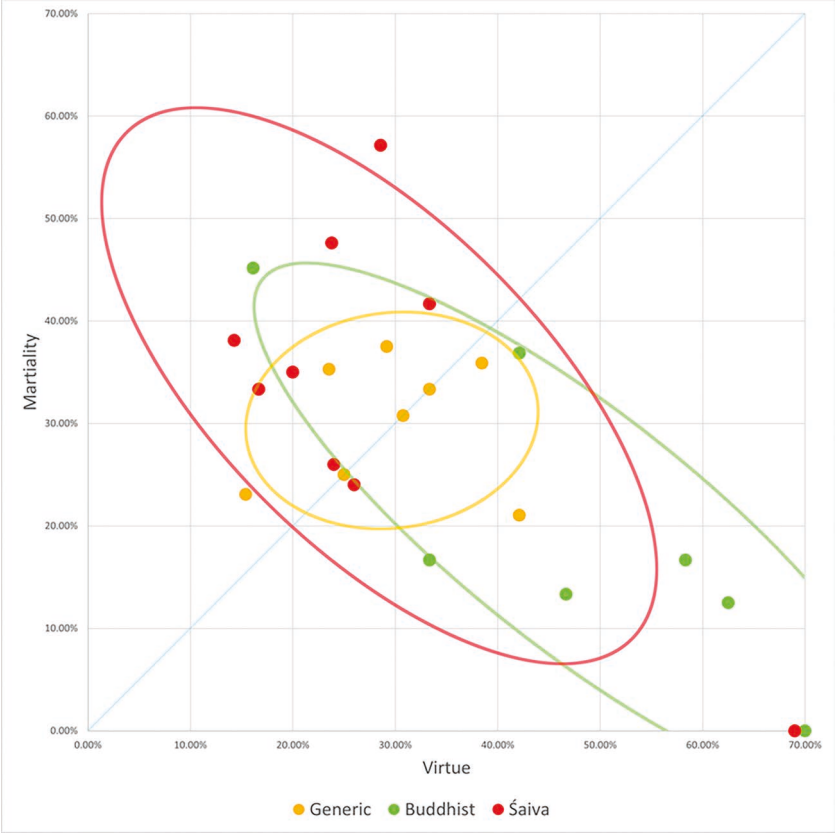


Fig. 9: Individual grants grouped by religion, plotted with reference to the Martiality and Virtue of their donor

dynasty to dynasty and from stage to stage in the lifetime of a dynasty. In the present study, the grants of Śrīmūla are particularly homogeneous, and it seems that the rhetoric of their *praśasti* section was not noticeably influenced by the identity of the religious community he happened to be supporting, but rather by other contingent factors.[73] It is thus desirable to

[73] Martial attributions to the sovereign are absent from two of Śrīmūla's plates (EIAD0185 and EIAD0187, the former being Śaiva, the latter Buddhist). Both were issued in his 25th regnal year. Martiality is used to characterise him in his other three grants (EIAD0186, EIAD0188 and EIAD0189, all Buddhist), the latter two of which are dated

extend the analysis to textual corpora in which grants to different religious communities occur without a coincident difference in dynastic affiliation or a major time gap. The copper plates of the Maitrakas, the Bhauma-Karas and the Pālas would suggest themselves in this connection.

Yet another detail that I have ignored in this study is the actual person being depicted, called the 'target' of a description in my terminology. As noted above, descriptions of the issuing sovereign's relatives ('satellites') have been bundled together in this analysis with those of the sovereign himself. In fact, however, a division of labour is definitely present between the representations of the sovereign himself, of his individual patrilineal predecessors, and of his lineage as a whole. The abstract lineage is most prominently represented as divine, the patrilineal predecessors as exceedingly martial (but also quite virtuous), and the king's person as virtuous and apt to his task. This tells a neat story to contemporary audiences. Since time immemorial, the king's dynasty has held approval of the gods. In historic time, his forefathers have proven their mettle on the battlefield and asserted their right to dominion, which they exercised justly. Finally, in the here and now, your actual living king is an honourable man who knows his business, and not a rapacious warlord.[74]

In fact, if the restricted analysis illustrated in Fig. 8 is repeated with only the data pertaining to the sovereign himself, then Martiality in Śaiva grants actually turns out to be a little lower than in Buddhist ones, while the Buddhist advantage in Virtue and Aptitude is starkly reduced; Divinity alone retains a strong distinction between Buddhism and other religions. This additional insight qualifies the above-reported findings without negating them, so long as it is clear that the royal image under scrutiny here incorporates the representation of the royal family.

to his 43rd year. EIAD0186 bears no date, but Sankaranarayanan (1977, 97) argues that it must be later than EIAD0185, which in his interpretation reports Śrīmūla's attaining of independence from his overlord the Viṣṇukuṇḍi Indrabhaṭṭārakavarman. (Martial imagery does feature in EIAD0185, but in connection to the underlord Indrādhirāja, not to Śrīmūla himself.) In this light, it may be the case that Śrīmūla had a martial aspect added to his formerly meek image at a point subsequent to asserting his independence, with EIAD0185 being a transitional document where his Martiality is vicarious. EIAD0187, EIAD0188 and EIAD0189 were found together at Kondavidu in 1987, and were thus not yet known to Sankaranarayanan.

[74] This observation definitely merits further investigation and it would be extremely interesting to see whether it also applies to other dynasties.

Davidson's general insights about the proliferation of martial imagery in mediaeval royal rhetoric, formulated on the basis of a bird's-eye view of numerous primary sources, are thus compatible with the smaller and regional set of data analysed here in minute detail. However, instead of a specific Buddhist/Śaiva dichotomy, a distinction into Buddhist and non-Buddhist or at most Buddhist and Theist may be more appropriate. As Fig. 8 has shown, Śaiva grants do not differ essentially from Generic ones in the restricted and balanced sample of texts, and Fig. 1 indicates that all of the non-Buddhist profiles, including the Jain one, are rather alike.[75]

While a distinction between Buddhist and non-Buddhist representation seems to manifest already in the grants of the Viṣṇukuṇḍis (Fig. 3), the values characteristic of Buddhism are also present in the non-Buddhist grants, both early and late. With the passage of time, royal representation in non-Buddhist charters diverges increasingly from that in early Buddhist ones. Yet this divergence does not consist of a waning of the king's moral aspects or his personal aptitude, but rather in the increasing detail dedicated to other aspects of his personality, which are predominantly but not exclusively martial. In this connection, it is worth keeping in mind that Śaivism itself is not incompatible with ethical behaviour and peaceful prosperity.[76] Moreover, as *praśasti* becomes progressively longer with the passage of time, there is only so much that can be added to it about the king's moral integrity and proficiency without losing rhetorical impact, whereas heaping on ever more violent action may keep the audience engrossed and impressed.[77] Thus, rather than describing the process in Davidson's terms of kings responding to and eventually adopting a pre-given Śaiva rhetoric in preference to a Buddhist one, it is probably more

[75] Cf. Dundas (1991, 176): 'it is probably more appropriate to view South Indian kingship as an institution which transcended conceptual boundaries such as Jainism or Hinduism.'

[76] For example Elizabeth Cecil (2022, especially 156, 177) points to the existence of 'irenic Śaivism' as manifest in the art of sixth-century Daśapura, which she connects on the basis of inscriptions to the Naigama ministerial family and distinguishes from the militant Śaivism of their Aulikara sovereigns.

[77] On this connection, Natasja Bosma (2024, 27) observes that Śivagupta Bālārjuna of the Pāṇḍava dynasty of Dakṣiṇa Kosala reigned for nearly sixty years in peace and prosperity, but the *praśasti* in his copperplate grants is strikingly short in comparison to that in the grants of his militant predecessor Tīvaradeva. She remarks, '[a]pparently, peace and prosperity are no breeding ground for legends, whereas war and strife are.'

accurate to speak of an organically evolving royal rhetoric to which the Buddhists were less responsive than other denominations including the Śaivas.[78]

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[78] On this last point, see also Sanderson (2009, 253) and Taylor (2020, 487).

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From rambling talkers to senseless doctrines: early Tamil Śaiva critiques of Buddhism

Renato Dávalos*
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris)

As Śaivism gained ground in Tamil-speaking areas in the second half of the first millennium, Buddhism, once a prominent and vocal presence, began to lose influence within the religious landscape.[1] In these early

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[1] It is widely accepted that the Buddhist presence in the region underwent a significant decline during the seventh and eighth centuries (Sastri 1955, 635; Champakalakshmi 1998, 89). This can be attributed to the fact that 'after circa 600, Brahmanism and Hinduism monopolised Pallava attention. […] From the mid-seventh century onwards Tantric Śaivism of the Śaiva Siddhānta branch became a kind of state religion of the Pallavas' (Francis 2014, 193–194). Certainly, the most important Buddhist site during Cōḻa times was Nāgapaṭṭiṇam. The Leiden Plates (*Epigraphia Indica* 22.34–35), dating to the reign of king Rājendra Cōḻa I, may be an illustration of sporadic grants made to Buddhists and Jains. Moreover, the Leiden Plates reflect the continuity of Tamil Buddhism within broader Buddhist networks in South and Southeast Asia, as they register a substantial donation to a Śrīvijaya king to allow him to establish a *paḷḷiccantam* (tax-exempt land endowment for a monastery) and a *vihāra* at Nāgapaṭṭiṇam. In the context of Pallava grants, it is noteworthy that 'no inscription referring to a Buddhist donation or even mentioning the presence of a Buddhist community dated in the regnal year of a Pallava sovereign has so far been found' (Gillet 2013, 107). However, two significant works have systematically documented the extant material and epigraphic evidence of Buddhists in South India. The seminal work by Ramachandran (1954) offers a detailed description of the Nāgapaṭṭiṇam bronzes, most of which are found in the Madras Museum, while

stages, Tamil Śaiva (Tamil: Caiva) poets distinguished their increasingly dominant communities by vilifying Buddhists on the basis of their bodily presence. Within the extensive body of literature organised in the *Tirumuṟai* canonical collection,[2] the saint Campantar stands out as the sole, consistently outspoken detractor of Buddhism in early Caiva literature. The earliest hagiographies of the tradition dealt with the lives of Campantar, Appar, and Cuntarar (three of the four founders of the Caiva tradition who, along with Māṇikkavācakar, are collectively known as the *nālvar*, 'The Four').[3] Such hagiographical accounts already begin to show

Dayalan's work (2017) provides a comprehensive survey of Buddhist remains across South India.

[2] The *Tirumuṟai* represents the definitive collection of Tamil Caiva poetry, encompassing a total of twelve works composed by 'saint-poets' between approximately the seventh and twelfth centuries. The collection as we know it is said to have been gathered by Nampi Āṇṭar Nampi. The traditional account is narrated in the *Tirumuṟaikaṇṭa Purāṇam*, ascribed to Umāpati Civācāriyar (ca. fourteenth century), a prominent figure in Tamil Śaivism. The text has been translated by Pechilis 2001. The first three books of the *Tirumuṟai* are attributed to the saint Campantar, the next three to Appar, and the seventh to Cuntarar. Therefore, this subgroup of seven works is also traditionally referred to as the *Tēvāram*. The eighth book of the *Tirumuṟai* is composed of two works by another pivotal figure in the history of Tamil Śaivism, Māṇikkavācakar. These are the *Tirukkōvaiyār* and the *Tiruvācakam*. The ninth book also contains two works, which themselves represent a compilation of poems by numerous authors: the *Tiruvicaippā* and the *Tiruppaḷḷāṇṭu*. The tenth book is the *Tirumantiram* by Tirumūlar; the eleventh is another collection of poems by numerous authors, including the female saint Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, and the twelfth book is the hagiography of the sixty-three saints of the tradition, the *Tiruttoṇṭar Purāṇam*, also known as the *Periya Purāṇam*.

[3] Tirunāvukkaracar, more commonly known as Appar, is believed to have been the earliest of the *nālvar*s (Rangaswamy 1958, 33), having lived around the sixth century. Campantar (ca. seventh century) is arguably the most important figure of the four, and a detailed discussion of his contributions will be presented subsequently in this article. Cuntarar probably lived around the end of seventh or the beginning of the eighth century (Zvelebil 1995, 192–193) and is known to have composed the first hagiography recounting the lives of sixty-three Tamil saints, discussed later. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that he lived after them. However, Māṇikkavācakar (ca. ninth century), the other founding figure of Tamil Śaivism, was not included, which has led many authors to conclude that he lived after Cuntarar. The question thus arises as to how we are to explain the fact that Cēkkiḻār composed the *Periya Purāṇam* centuries after Māṇikkavācakar (twelfth century), yet he did not include this saint in his work, particularly in view of the fact that there is epigraphical evidence (as early as the tenth century) which already mentions his hymns. The question remains open.

a shift from a confrontation with the social and bodily presence of the Buddhists to a more doctrinal and intellectual approach. A few centuries later, one of the fourteen works of the *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiraṅkaḷ*[4] offers a more comprehensive examination of Buddhist doctrines. The tone in this work remains derisive and confrontational even as the focus of the polemic was reshaped.

This article aims to illustrate, in chronological order, the manner in which the Caivas engaged with the Buddhists, initially focusing on calumnies towards the visible, bodily presence of their opponents, gradually changed over time to a more intellectual confrontation with their doctrines. This chronological and ideological shift is indicative of the intellectual development within Tamil Caivism, a progression that became increasingly evident after the composition of the first theological and philosophical works from the twelfth century onward. However, the central feature of the discourse remained the polemical vein itself, despite the transition in which religious superiority was articulated.

The first part of this study will offer an exploration of Campantar's scornful attacks on Buddhist ideas, while also attempting to examine possible references to Buddhists in Māṇikkavācakar's oeuvre. The subsequent section will provide a brief examination of the *Periya Purāṇam* to ascertain its status as one of the earliest explorations of Buddhist thought from a Caiva perspective. This is followed by an analysis of a section of *Parapakkam* of Umāpati Civācāriyar's *Civañāṉa Cittiyār*, which deals specifically with different Buddhist schools. The final text under consideration is the most recent in this selection, being the earliest account of Māṇikkavācakar's life: the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam* of Kaṭavuḷ Māmuṉivar.

[4] If the *Tirumuṟai* constitutes the canon of Tamil Śaiva literature, then the fourteen works that comprise the *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiraṅkaḷ* (Skt. *Meykaṇṭa Śāstra*) are the philosophical foundation of the tradition. These works were named after *Meykaṇṭatēvar,* author of the seminal work *Civañāṉa Pōtam*, and were composed between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.

1. *The rambling talkers*

Campantar is arguably the most influential figure in the history of Caiva devotional literature. Prior to becoming prominent in Cēkkiḻār's *Periya Purāṇam*, a brief portrayal of this saint first appears in a hymn composed by Cuntarar (ca. eighth century), in which a line of the hymn is dedicated to each of the sixty-three Caiva saints, better known as the *nāyaṉmār*. This rather brief collective hagiography is also included as part of the seventh book of the *Tēvāram*, also known as the *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*. The line dedicated to Campantar[5] merely states that he 'worshipped nothing but the feet of the One crowned with beautiful *koṉṟai* flowers' (*Tēvāram* 7.39.5: *naṟkoṉṟaiyāṉ aṭi alāl pēṉā*).[6] The assertion may appear to be of limited relevance. However, the emphasis on the exclusive nature of his devotion becomes clear when considered alongside a later work by Nampi Āṇṭar Nampi (ca. twelfth century), the *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiruvantāti*. The *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiruvantāti* offers an early insight into a significant aspect of the saint's narrative and literary works, i.e. an explicit reference to his debates and ultimate victory against the Jains.[7] At this point, there is no mention of the Buddhists. As far as the saint's life is concerned, it was not until the *Periya Purāṇam* that Buddhism was addressed.

As mentioned before, the first three books of the *Tēvāram* pertain to the hymns by Campantar. A substantial majority of the 385 hymns attributed to him typically feature a verse (most often the tenth) that is directed against Jains and/or Buddhists. Due to the consistency of the patterns and formulas employed in these criticisms, a preliminary categorisation may be feasible.[8]

[5] The *patikam* consists of the usual ten verses plus one, each of them eight lines long; its refrain, 'I serve/ I am the slave' (*aṭiyēṉ*), appears at the end of each line.

[6] Unless mentioned otherwise, all translations are mine.

[7] *tiruñāṉacampanta mūrtti nāyaṉār / vaiyam makiḻayām vāḻa amaṇar valitolaiya / aiyaṉ pirama purattaraṟ kammeṉ kutalaic cevvāy / paiya miḻaṟṟum paruvattup pāṭap paruppatattiṉ taiyal aruḷpeṟ ṟaṇaṇeṉpar ñāṉacam pantaṇaiyē* (33); '[…] So, at a tender age, he [Campantar] was enabled to sing in a lisping voice beautiful songs of praise to the Lord of Biramapuram. Thereby the power of the Jains was broken, we were saved, and the world rejoiced.' (McGlashan 2009, 298)

[8] It is not my aim to give a detailed list of every instance in which Campantar refers to Buddhists, since such a list would be the subject of a separate work. I hope, however, that the reader will find the examples given below to be sufficient for the argument I propose.

First and foremost, the epithets that Campantar uses for Buddhists are descriptive of their status as members of a particular religious community or, in some cases, reference the social practices of these communities. Other mentions refer to them simply as *puttar* ('Buddhists'), *cākkiyar* ('members of the *śākya* lineage'), as well as *tērār* ('members of the *sthaviras*'),[9] merely identifying them as members of a certain community. Other ways of referring to them include denominations of the Buddhists' aspect and attire, such as *tuvarāṭaiyar* ('wearing the red ochre cloth'), *viritukilār* ('wearing large robes'), or even *cīvarattār* ('wearing the monastic robe').[10] Allusions are also made to the trees associated with their worship in the word *pōtiyār* ('devotees of the *bodhi* tree').[11] Such designations are frequently accompanied by a variety of pejorative terms.[12] Campantar contends that Buddhists either subscribe to a body of false teachings or disseminate them via defamatory rhetoric.[13] They are ignorant, dull, or mad,[14] and, as one might expect from these identifications, they follow the wrong path.[15]

[9] It is not possible to establish whether the designation referred to a specific community within the *sthāviranikāya,* or if these terms were used as generic titles for Buddhists. If so, an intriguing example might be 2.118.10, where Campantar uses both terms probably to designate two different communities: *puttar tērar poṟi il camaṇarkaḷum* […].

[10] Some instances of *cīvarāttār* within the *Tēvāram*: 1.58.10; 1.106.8; 2.105.10; 2.40.10; 3.50.7; 3.59.10.

[11] Some instances within the *Tēvāram*: 1.16.10; 1.107.10; 2.12.10; 2.48.10; 3.15.10; 3.75.10.

[12] Words such as *poyyar/poyyavar* ('liars'), *kuṇṭar* ('slanderers'), *pēykaḷ* ('demons'), *pittar* ('madmen'), and many others, are found throughout Campantar's works. Such epithets appear to have a purely defamatory character, as they do not provide any information about the alleged practices they were involved in or the way they carried themselves as individuals or social groups. For a more comprehensive list of the names and usages of Buddhists' epithets in the hymns of Campantar, see Vēluppiḷḷai 2002b, 462–476.

[13] Some instances within the *Tēvāram*: *puṟaṅkūṟu/puṟaṇurai* (1.32.10; 1.40.10; 1.47.10; 1.107.10; 2.57.10), *pēcā vaṇṇam* (1.25.10), *mey pērkkum* (1.31.10), *kuṇṭar* (1.41.10; 2.14.10; 3.20.10), *pōḻam palapēci* (1.45.11), *kuṉṟiya aṟuvurai kuṟā vaṇṇam* (1.113.9), *peccu payaṉ illai* (2.15.10).

[14] Some instances within the *Tēvāram*: *aṟiyātu* (3.114.10), *matiyillikaḷ* (3.77.10), *puṉmai naviṟṟa* (2.42.10), *pittar* (1.51.10; 2.13.10; 2.28.10), *poruttam il* (3.5.10).

[15] Some instances within the *Tēvāram*: *kuṟṟam neṟiyār* (1.23.10), *pāvikaḷ* (2.15.10), *pēy* (2.80.10), *neṟi ayalātaṉ kūṟuvar* (2.106.10), *ivai neṟi illai* (1.119.10; 3.41.10).

Almost one-third of all references to Buddhists and/or Jains pertain to their dietary practices.[16] In these instances, the focus is predominantly on the identification of Buddhists wandering with a begging bowl (*maṇṭai*) in their hands, some hymns even specifying that the food provided in these vessels was gruel (*kañci maṇṭaiyār*).[17] Campantar distinguished between the dietary practices of Buddhists and Jains, noting that Buddhist monks consumed their meals before noon, while Jain monks were forbidden to eat after sunset. Numerous hymns provide evidence of these customs, mentioning even that Jains ate while standing up, in contrast to Buddhist monks, who ate sitting down.[18] These are, of course, means to recognise the objects of his attacks.

In sum, Campantar presents a defamatory account of Buddhist religious practice that makes no reference to its doctrines, but rather emphasises the discrepancies between the conduct of the Caiva followers and that of his counterparts. The frequent use of derogatory terms establishes a clear boundary between the two communities, delineating distinctions based on perceived aspects of lifestyle, including diet, dress codes, and forms of worship. Despite their pervasiveness, the criticism remains largely repetitive and reveals a narrow range of tropes employed against Buddhists. The reasons for this may reflect the social and religious dynamics of the time, but further work is necessary to explore this in greater detail.

Campantar's critiques are certainly the most persistent and confrontational among those of the *nālvar* (that is, Campantar, Appar, Cuntarar, and Māṇikkavācakar), while the other three saint poets exhibit a notably more reserved stance on Jains and Buddhists.[19] Nevertheless,

[16] For the instances of dietary habits, I have utilised the table given in Ulrich (2007, 246).

[17] Some instances within the *Tēvāram*: 2.59.10; 2.84.10; 3.49.10; 3.89.10.

[18] These patterns have already been summarised in Vēluppiḷḷai 2002b, 463.

[19] As for the books of the *Tēvāram* that were composed by Appar (fourth to sixth), I have been able to identify only six hymns that refer to Buddhists: 5.48, 6.22, 6.47, 6.85, and 6.86. Cuntarar appears to have composed three hymns, namely 7.82, 7.30, and 7.57, where he explicitly mentions Buddhists, and on such occasions the allusions appear in the tenth verse as well, probably following Campantar's style. I was also able to find three verses in the ninth book of the *Tirumuṟai.* Two of them come from the *Tiruvicaippā*: verse 17 (2.6) of Mālikaittēvar and verse 257 (2.4) of Puruṭōttama Nampi. The other one comes from

the *magnum opus* of Māṇikkavācakar, the *Tiruvācakam* could be considered an exception, though this depends significantly on the weight assigned to later hagiographical works. Following traditional accounts,[20] the Christian missionary George Pope identified two hymns in the *Tiruvācakam* that were directed towards Buddhism. Pope (1900, 231) suggested that Māṇikkavācakar composed them, or at least was motivated to do so, as a result of his interactions with Buddhists.

The first of these two hymns is the *Aṭaikkalappattu* ('Decade of the Refuge'). Pope asserts that it was 'founded upon the Buddhist formula which required the devotee to utter nine times the word *saraṇam*' (Pope 1900, 231).[21] The refrain 'Lord, I am your slave, I seek refuge in you'[22] is repeated throughout the hymn, and its content led Pope to hypothesise a parallel connection with the Buddhist formula. Nevertheless, the refrain seems to paraphrase a hymn by Appar: 'Our Father, I, your slave, seek refuge in you.'[23] While it could be argued that Appar's refrain was itself a borrowing from Buddhism that Māṇikkavācakar later emulated, there is no evidence in the hymn—besides the unclear association of taking refuge (*aṭaikkalam*)—to suggest that there was any Buddhist influence in this particular hymn.

Where is the Buddhist connection, then? Pope's interpretation of the hymn follows closely the story narrated in chapter six of the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam*, which is a long narrative section recounting the story of the composition of the *Tiruccāḻal*, 'Hymn of the Sacred [Game] of *cāḻal*.' According to this *Purāṇam*, the hymn recounts the

the *Tiruppaḷḷāṇṭu* verse 300 (12) by Cēntaṉār. In essence, the hymns do not seem to offer new insights that are not already present in the hymns of Campantar. This is, nevertheless, a first observation of texts that have yet to receive any scholarly attention.

[20] This was further confirmed by Cutler: 'Commentators have identified two, not necessarily mutually exclusive, sources of inspiration for the poem's format. Some commentators have proposed that a debating game, in which the players express their arguments in song, is the model for *Tiruccāḻal*' (1995, 146). No source is provided for these commentaries.

[21] The Pāli formula for one of the Triple Gem (*tiratana*) is expressed as *buddhaṁ saraṇam gacchāmi*, 'I go to the Buddha as a refuge/I take refuge in the Buddha.'

[22] *Tiruvācakam* 24.2–10: *uṭaiyāy aṭiyēṉ uṉ aṭaikkalamē*; *Tiruvācakam* 24.1: *aṭiyēṉ uṭaiyāy uṉ aṭaikkalamē.*

[23] *Tēvāram* 4.96.3: *attā aṭiyēṉ aṭaikkalam kaṇṭāy.*

polemic exchange between Śaivas and Buddhists, but I will deal with this topic in the last section.

There are two epigraphic attestations of the recitation of the *Tiruccāḻal*. The only surviving inscription[24] comes from the temple of Grāmārdhanātha at Elavāṉacūr and records a festival where the hymn was sung during the procession of the Lord.[25] Notably, there is no reference to any reenactment of the dispute between the two religions. In fact, the only two hymns of the *Tiruvācakam* for which there is epigraphic evidence (the other one being the hymn *Tiruvempāvai*) seem to pertain to the 'game songs' mostly inspired by maidens' games.[26]

Each of the verses of the *Tiruccāḻal* is divided into two parts. The first two lines are, almost always, an objection against the Caiva path; the next two lines, an answer to it. The *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam* states that the *Tiruccāḻal* was, in fact, a discussion between a Buddhist monk and the mute daughter of a king, but a closer examination of the poem itself reveals no indication of any Buddhist concept, practice, or formula. Even though all verses preserve the structure of two lines for the objection

[24] ARIE 1940–1941/B/157 also mentions an endowment of land for singing the *tiruccāḻal*, but we were able to confirm *in situ* that the inscription is lost, as it has been painted over and only a few letters are readable. The inscription is identified in the DHARMA Project catalog (https://dharmalekha.info/catalog) under INSTamilNadu00043.

[25] This inscription appears in *South Indian Inscriptions* (22.165), where it is dated to the seventeenth year of king Vikramacōḻa. It records an endowment for singing the *Tiruccāḻal* in a procession. The relevant section reads: <2>*kōyilil tiruppaḷḷi aṟai āḷuṭaiyāḷ tirunāyaṟṟuk kiḻamai tōṟum puṟampē eḻuntaruḷit tiruccāḻal kēṭṭaruḷi amutu ce[y]taruḷi* […]. The inscription is also available in the DHARMA Project catalog as INStfaSIIv22p0i0165.

[26] According to the modern version of the text, the hymns that are part of this 'female songs section' are the following: *Tiruvempāvai* ('Our Holy Lady'), *Tiruvammāṉai* ('The Sacred Game of Ammaṉai'), *Tiruppoṉcuṇṇam* ('The Sacred Golden Dust'), *Tirukkōttumpi* ('The Sacred King of Bees'), *Tiruttelḷēṇam*' ('The Sacred Drum *Telḷēṇam*), *Tiruccāḻal* ('The Sacred Game of Questions and Answers'), *Tiruppūvalli* ('The Sacred Garland of Lilies'), *Tiruvuntiyār* ('The Sacred Game of Unti'), *Tiruttōṇṇōkkam* ('The Sacred Game of Aiming at the Shoulder'), *Tiruppoṇūcal* ('The Sacred Golden Swing'), *Aṉṉaippattu* ('The Sacred Ten Hymns of the Mother'), *Kuyilppattu* ('The Sacred Ten Hymns of the Kuyil Bird'), *Tiruttacāṅkam* ('The Sacred Ten Sections'), and *Tiruppaḷḷi eḻucci* ('The Sacred Awakening'). For an introduction to this subset of poems, see Dávalos (forthcoming). For a selection of hymns in translation, see Cutler 1995.

(supposedly given by the Buddhist monk) and two for the answer (given by the princess), the tone is closer to that of a devotee who is yet to be convinced rather than of an actual religious rival.[27] The end of the second line, which should correspond to the objection of the Buddhist monk, concludes with the exclamation *ēṭi*, 'my friend'[28] in the second person, suggesting a tone of familiarity or closeness between the interlocutors.

In addition to the *Aṭaikkalappattu*, there is another hymn that the tradition associates with a dispute between Māṇikkavācakar and other religious schools. However, none of its stanzas contain any clear indication that such a dispute actually took place. Conversely, the *Tiruttōṇṇōkkam* ('The Sacred Game of Aiming at the Shoulder') includes a vague reference to Buddhists and other philosophical schools,[29] but nothing more substantial.

The reasons for Māṇikkavācakar's relative silence on the matter remain unclear. It seems reasonable to suggest that, even if the author was actually in contact with other religions, his hymns were not influenced by disputes with other schools of thought. To find other references to Buddhists within the *Tirumuṟai*, one may need to turn to the *Periya Purāṇam*, the earliest comprehensive hagiographical source on the *nāyaṉmār*.

According to its estimated date of composition (ca. 1135, following Zvelebil 1995, 626), the *Periya Purāṇam* (PP) remains the most authoritative source for the traditional stories of the *nāyaṉmār*.[30] It compiles the two already mentioned earlier hagiographical sources (the

[27] See, for example: *eṉṉappaṉ empirāṉ ellārkkun tāṉ icaṉ / tuṉṉampey kōvaṇamāka koḷḷum atu eṉ ēṭī / maṉṉukalai tuṉṉuporuṇ maṟaināṉkē vāṇacaraṭāt / taṉṉaiyē kōvaṇamāc cāttiṇaṉ kāṇ cāḻalō* / 'My dear, you call him—my father, our Lord, everyone's God / but why does he wrap a tattered rag around his loins? / The string he ties around his waist / is the essence of the arts / and that rag is the four Vedas / Don't you see? / *Cāḻalō*' (*Tiruccāḻal 2* in Cutler 1995, 150).

[28] In *Tēvāram* 6.45 Appar also uses the vocative form of *ēṭaṉ,* that is *ēṭī*. *Madras Tamil Lexicon* (henceforth MTL), s.v., *ēṭaṉ*, *ēṭā*: 'An exclamation addressed familiarly to a female friend or to a woman of lower status than "one who addresses her" ' (University of Madras 1924). However, the text that is the base for this entry is exactly this section of the *Tiruvācakam*.

[29] *Tiruvācakam* 15.6.1: *puttaṉ mutalāya pullaṟiviṟ palcamayam.*

[30] With the exception of Māṇikkavācakar, which is not mentioned in any hagiographical account extant until the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam*.

Tiruttoṇṭattokai and the *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiruvantāti*) whilst also drawing upon oral traditions.[31] Two stories are particularly relevant here. It is unsurprising that the hagiography of Campantar contains one of the only two references to Buddhists in the *Periya Purāṇam*,[32] given the strong presence of Jains and Buddhists in Campantar's hymns.

In the account of Campantar's life, we are told how the saint came to Naḷḷāṟu[33] after defeating the Jains,[34] and found that he had to argue with the 'base and ignorant *cākkiyars*' (PP 1803.1: *pul aṟivil cākkiyarkaḷ aṟintār*). A certain monk, Putta Nanti, approached the Caiva saint, only to be struck down by a lightning bolt summoned by Campantar through a curse. Thereafter, another monk by the name of Cāri Puttaṉ (Skt. Śāriputra) accepted the invitation to engage in a debate on the topic of the nature of liberation (*mutti*).

The debate was initiated by Cāri Puttaṉ, who asserted that his leader had attained liberation, which he defined as the annihilation of the five [aggregates]:[35] form (*uru*), sensation of pain and pleasure (*vētaṉai*),

[31] I have argued elsewhere that, at the time of Cēkkiḻār, many of the stories of the *nāyaṉmār* saints not found in the two preceding hagiographies had already been codified, as evidenced by their presence in the two earliest texts of the *Meykaṇṭa Cātiraṅkaḷ* (dated to ca. 1148 and 1178, respectively), both composed around the same time as the *Periya Purāṇam* (Dávalos 2023, 23–41). The observation that a high level of codification is evident in other texts from the mid-twelfth century, the absence of any other hagiographical source from that period, and the significant expansion of the *Periya Purāṇam* in comparison to its two predecessors, collectively suggest that oral traditions played a substantial role in the transmission of these narratives.

[32] The full story can be found in PP 2800–2857.

[33] The saint himself dedicated three hymns to the place: 1.49, 2.33, 3.87; possibly also 1.7.

[34] This is the well-known story of the impalement of the Jains, for which see Monius 2020.

[35] The five *khandha*s (Skt. *skandha*) are a prominent feature in the the Pāli canon, where they are identified as *rūpa* (form), *vedanā* (feeling/sensation), *saññā* (idea), *saṅkhāra* (volition), and *viññāna* (primary awareness). They are also widely featured in other Buddhist scriptures, including those composed in Sanskrit and Prakrits, which are contemporaneous with the Pāli texts. The author of the *Periya Purāṇam* seems to be familiar with such a list, even as he seems to have exchanged *saññā* (idea) for *ceykai* (action). For a comprehensive account of the interpretation of each *khandha* in the *Nikāya* and early *Abhidhamma* literatures, see Gethin 1986 and Vetter 2000.

actions (*ceykai*), volition (*kuṟippu*), and knowledge (*ñāṉam*) (2814).[36] Campantar then asked how a deity devoid of faculties could possibly perceive worship or temples constructed in its honour (2815–2818). After some debate, in which the monk was unable to challenge any of Campantar's arguments, the saint proceeded to inquire about the possibility for a god, who has achieved ultimate wisdom, to lack any of the aggregates at the same time;[37] with that, the conversation takes a turn towards epistemology.

In response, Cāri Puttaṉ distinguished between general and particular forms of knowledge. In this context, the forest represents general knowledge, while individual trees represent particulars. Similarly, a collection of wood can be a general entity, whereas a single log represents a particular entity:

> But when you set it alight, the flames will consume the whole lot without distinction. In the same way, our primaeval god has knowledge of all things, both general and specific.
>
> (McGlashan 2006, 247)

To this, the saint responded that fire has a form, yet knowledge does not, rendering the analogy invalid. This would imply that entities with a form cannot be combined with entities without a form. Fire burns only in the present time while the Buddha is said to know the past, the future, and the present (PP 2821). If this is so, the analogy would only be valid for present phenomena, and it would be in contradiction with the Buddha's omniscience. As expected, the narrative ends with the Buddhists embracing Caiva religion.

The second account that Cēkkiḻār relates is that of Cākkiyar,[38] the *nāyaṉār* who renounced Buddhism and embraced Caivism. Born into

[36] The complete phrase reads thus: PP 2814.3–6: *nāṭṭukiṉṟa mutti tāṉ āvatu eṉṟār / niṉṟavuru vētaṉaiyē kuṟippuc ceykai nēr / niṉṟa ñāṉam ena nikaḻnta aintum.*

[37] The complete phrase in PP 2818.3–4 reads: *aṉāṉ / appaṭi akkantattuḷ aṟivum keṭṭāl / ammutti uṭaṉ iṉpam aṉaiyātu eṉṟār.*

[38] First narrated in *Tēvāram* 7.39.6 (*Tiruttoṇṭatokai*). Relevant for our purposes is not only the name, but also the fact that this saint threw stones on a daily basis as part of his expression of love for his god: *vārkoṇṭa vaṉamulaiyāḷ umaipaṅkaṉkaḻalē maṟavātu kal eṟinta cākkiyaṟkum aṭiyēṉ.* The later hagiography, *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiruvantāti*, adds further details to the story: 'Cākkiyaṉ of Caṅkamaṅka wore the stiff robes of a Buddhist. He

a *vēḷāḷa* family from Tiruccamaṅkai, the saint travelled to Kāñci, where he became a *cākkiyar*. He quickly realised, after studying the traditional texts, that these teachings were not leading him to the truth. Upon recognising that the four elements (*poruḷ*)[39] constituting reality were action, the agent, the fruit of it [i.e. of the action] and the bestower [of results] (PP 3640.1: *ceyviṉaiyum ceyvāṉum ataṉ payaṉum koṭuppāṉum*), he distanced himself from the 'lying Buddhists' and committed himself to the path of devotion.[40] Even though conversion did not prompt the devotee to abandon his saffron robes, it did result in a different timing of his meals, which were now consumed after proper worship of the *liṅga*. In the fervour of worshipping a *liṅga*, the saint hurled a stone at it, which then became an integral part of his daily worship ritual.

The two accounts contained in the *Periya Purāṇam* illustrate disparate approaches with regard to Buddhism. On the one hand, Campantar's debate with the *cākkiyar*s may be seen as an early attempt to address Buddhist doctrines in a more direct manner. Although it is relatively succinct, it is possible to see a shift in the attacks that address once again the physical presence and social attitudes of the Buddhists, but that also include doctrinal elements, albeit in a fairly superficial way. On the other hand, Cākkiyar's story of disillusionment with Buddhism reflects a different type of victory over its practitioners that primarily focuses on aspects of worship and social practices.

used to throw stones at the glittering golden image of the Lord Ēkampaṉ of the mighty shoulders, who bore the impression of the breasts of Pārvati (sic), the daughter of the king of the great Himalaya mountain range. So finally he won immortal fame and entered Siva's (sic) realm' (McGlashan 2009, 298). The *Periya Purāṇam* dedicates barely seventeen verses to this *nāyaṉār* (3636–3653).

[39] Rangaswamy (1958, 1007) sees a parallel between these four elements and the Truths of the Noble Ones of Buddhism. The doctrinal reference to which it is alluding is not entirely clear. However, it is noteworthy to mention that there is usually a hierarchisation of these four elements. Śiva often appears as the supreme agent and ultimate cause of action. This means that the action, the agent, and the fruit of action are ultimately Śiva himself. For a list of instances referring to this, see Sanderson (1992, 288 fn. 29).

[40] The whole phrase in PP 3642.2–4 reads thus: *pollā vēṭac cākkiyarē ākip pullā ākuvār / allāl kaṇṭar tamakku inta akilam ellām āḷ eṉṉa / vallār ivar av vēṭattai māṟṟātu aṉpiṉ viḻiniṟpār.*

2. *The senseless doctrines*

From the early Caiva literature of the *Tēvāram* to the theological literature of the *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiraṅkaḷ* works, a comprehensive overview of Buddhist thought took several centuries to mature. Aruṇanti Civācāriyar (thirteenth century) is credited with the composition of the fourth text of the *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiraṅkaḷ*, the *Civañāṉa Cittiyār* (CÑC). Meykaṇṭa Tēvar was not only the teacher of Aruṇanti, but is also regarded as the most authoritative figure in the Caiva Cittānta theological tradition[41] and the author of the foundational *Civañāṉa Pōtam*. Aruṇanti is said to have composed the *Civañāṉa Cittiyār* in honour of his teacher, Meykaṇṭa Tēvar,[42] and his text is divided into two sections: the *Parapakkam*, a lengthy refutation of fourteen systems of philosophy outside the Caiva religion and the *Cupakkam*, a meticulous commentary (*vaḻinūl*) on the *Civañāṉa Pōtam*.

Out of the fourteen schools that are dealt in the , four of them are Buddhist: Cauttirāntika (Sautrāntika), Yōkācāra (Yogācāra), Māttiyamikka (Madhyamika), and Vaipāṭika (Vaibhāṣika). Seventy verses (64–134) are devoted to the Cauttirāntikas and barely eight to the remaining Buddhist schools (135–142). In the case of the Cauttirāntika section, the discussion is divided into three parts. The first one outlines the tenets of Cauttirāntika thought. For the second section, Aruṇanti assumes the role of the Cauttirāntikas and poses some of their criticisms to the Caiva points of view. The concluding part, then, provides a rebuttal of the tenets of Cauttirāntika thought from the Caiva perspective. Thus, the first part of the discussion begins in a familiar tone to us:

[41] As early as the sixteenth century, the introduction (*ciṟappu pāyiram*) in honour of Maraiñāṉa Campantar already recognised Meykaṇṭa Tēvar as a central figure within the Caiva Cittānta (Trento 2021, 106–107).

[42] As Aruṇanti mentioned in the introductory section (*maṅkala-vāḻttu*) of CÑC 10: (…) *eṅ kurunātaṉ koṇṭu / tītakala vemakkaḷitta ñāṉa nūlait / tērnturaippaṉ civañāṉa citti yeṉṟē*; 'My teacher, who came along such lineage offered me this impeccable, faultless, and erudite composition. Following that path, I submit [offer my work] as the *Civañāṉa Cittiyār* (sic)' (Balasubramanian 2013, 119). Meykaṇṭa Tēvar, Aruṇanti Civācāriyar, Maraiñāṉa Campantar, and Umāpati Civācāriyar are also known as the *cantāṉa kuravar* ('teachers of the tradition').

> Those who recite daily the *dharma* (*aṟam*)—which is not the path prescribed in the Vedas—practice the five-fold virtues,[43] cover their bodies, and [worship] the big bodhi trees, they are among the four schools of Buddhism. The Cauttirāntikaṉ [adhere] to the principle of not having a caste. They say the following.[44]
>
> (Vēluppiḷḷai 2002a, 786)

Aruṇanti presents, in these first verses dedicated to Buddhists (CŃC 66–75), an overview of Sautrāntika thought. The examination begins with an explanation of the two ways of acquiring knowledge (*pramāṇa* in Sanskrit; *aḷavai* here): direct perception (*kāṭci*; Skt. *pratyakṣa*) and inference (*māṉam*; Skt. *anumāna*).[45] They involve the object of knowledge (*ñēyam*; Skt. *jñeya*) and knowledge/consciousness itself (*ñāṉam*; Skt. *jñāna*). The objects of knowledge can be further divided into four categories:[46] a) material form (*uru*; Skt. *rūpa*), b) immaterial form (*aruvam*; Skt. *arūpya*), c) liberation (*vīṭu*; Skt. *mokṣa*), and d) belief (*vaḻakku*). These four categories are each further subdivided into two, making a total of eight categories. To begin with, material form is twofold: elements

[43] Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, s.v., *pañca-śīla*: 'The five are (1) to abstain from killing living creatures (usually interpreted to mean not killing human beings); (2) to abstain from taking what is not given; (3) to abstain from engaging in sexual misconduct; (4) to abstain from lying (commonly defined as not to lie about the possession of high states of attainment or superhuman powers); and (5) to abstain from consuming intoxicants that cause heedlessness (*pramāda*).'

[44] CŃC 64: *nītiyār vēta nūli ṉeṟiyalā vaṟaṅka ṇāḻu / mōtiyō raintu cīla muṭaiyarā yuṭala mūṭip / pōti nīṇ marattiṉ mēvum puttarnāl variṉum vaittuc / cātitā ṉilāta koḷkaic cauttirān tikaṉmuṉ cāṟṟum.*

[45] Balasubramanian (2013, 158) rightly recognised *māṉam* as an abbreviated form of *anumāna* ('inference'): see MTL, s.v. *māṉam*. Even when *anumāna* is not indicated, there are other occurrences where the prefix is removed but the meaning (with the prefix) stands. The other examples in the entry are *pramāna, abhimāna, avamāna*, and *vimāna.* The commentary also favours this reading.

[46] At the risk of over-generalising, Abhidhamma thought considers materiality to be divided into twenty-eight types of *dhamma*s, which exist independently but are inseparable from the others. They are roughly divided into primary and secondary elements. The primary elements (*mahābhūta*) include earth, water, fire and wind. On the other hand, the secondary elements (*upādārūpa*) are the qualities of such objects: form, smell, taste and colour. These two categories of elements are what the senses perceive. Now, the multiplicity of elements in the world is to be explained by the capability or intensity (*sāmatthiya*) in which a given element is present in a particular object (Ronkin 2005, 56).

(*pūtarūpam;* Skt. *bhūtarūpa,* also known as *mahābhūta*) and the qualities of the elements (*upātāṉa-rūpam;* Skt. *upādā-rūpa*).[47] Formlessness, in turn, comprises two categories: the mind (*cittam*) and karma (*kaṉmam*; Skt. *karman*). Liberation is classified into liberation from faults (*kuṟṟa-vīṭu*) and the other liberation (*maṟṟa-vītu*), i.e. liberation from the five *kanta*s. Finally, beliefs (*vaḻakku*) can be either true (*uḷḷatu*) or false (*illatu*) and they can be further subdivided into three: accumulation (*tokai*), sequence (*tōṭarcci*), and destruction (*mikutt-urai*), making them six in total. According to Aruṇanti, these tenets constitute the principles of the Cauttirāntika doctrine.

Now, the author offers a refutation of Caiva thought according to the Cauttirāntika point of view he just delineated. The opening statement addresses the impermanence (*nittam aṉṟē*, Skt. *anitya*) of 1) space (*vāṉam*), 2) the soul/self (*āṉmā;* Skt. *ātman*), 3) the three times, and 4) a divinity (*iṟai*) beyond comprehension. According to the Buddhist view, these four entities are impermanent for the following reasons:

1 Space lacks any form, so it cannot support material elements (CÑC 76).

2 The soul is not the knower because it lacks intrinsic consciousness and cannot bear knowledge (CÑC 77–81). Its inability to know also stems out of its incompatibility with the body, which would render it subject to a beginning and an end.

3 If creation (*tōṟṟuvittu*, Skt. *sṛṣṭi*), maintenance (*aḻittu*, Skt.*sthiti*), and destruction (*pōkku*, Skt. *pralaya*) constitute the threefold nature of time, they become intertwined with the objects. Therefore, when objects cease to exist, time would also come to an end (CÑC 82).

4 The existence of God is disproven because it would entail either that the world preexisted God or that God created the world out of nothing (CÑC 83–89). It is likewise inconceivable that a genuine deity would have created crea-

[47] Both types are enlisted in v. 68. *Pūtarūpam* consists of earth, water, fire, and wind, while *upātāṉarūpam* is hardness, smell, taste and colour.

> tures such as beasts of prey,[48] or would have fashioned his creation as a mere game, for that would make Him a child (CÑC 87.1–2: *paṭaittu peṟṟatu viḷaiyāṭ ṭeṉṉiṟ /ciṟumaḷa viṟaiya tākum*). The notion of a formless God is similarly untenable, as it would require a creator to establish such a form (CÑC 88.1: *uruvoṭu niṉṟā ṉeṉṉi ṉuruvamuṉ paṭaittār vēṇṭum*). Moreover, this deity would be devoid of any inference (and therefore any knowledge) due to the absence of sensory perception (CÑC 89.4: *karutiṭa vuruvam vēṇṭu milliayēṟ karuta liṉṟē*). It is even a nonsensical paradox to believe that one can know the eternal God through scriptures, yet that through God one can know the scriptures (CÑC 90).

Afterwards, and still assuming the perspective of the Cauttirāntika, Aruṇanti presents a defence of meat-eating by arguing that living beings exist for the benefit of other beings (CÑC 91.4: *maṟṟuḷa yōṉi kaṭkup payaṉeṉa vaḷaṅku maṉṟē*). According to Cauttirāntikas, this would render the consumption of animals that were killed by others as not sinful (CÑC 92.1–2: […] *koṉṟavai koṇṭu nāḷun / tiṉṟiṭa lāku maṇṇō ṭottiṭuñ cetta vellām*). Furthermore, the Cauttirāntika states that the bliss

[48] 'It is crazy to bow down […] to a God capable of creating—out of nothing and because of his compassion—beings such as lions and tigers': CÑC 86.2–4: *kollari yuḻuvai nākaṅ kūṟṟamuṅkoṇṭu tōṟṟa / vallavaṉ* […] / *pittaraip paṇinti ṭāyē* […].

of liberation is the complete destruction of the five *kanta*s; on the other hand, *camāti* (Skt. *samādhi*)[49] is achieved by a series of observances.[50]

Thus far the Cauttirāntika position has been outlined. In response, the Caiva Cittānta position is articulated and an objection is raised to the concept of momentariness, which also serves as the basis for the Caiva critique. The initial critique directed towards Buddhists asserts the implausibility of the Buddha's omniscience. According to this position, he could have not known everything beforehand since knowledge changes with time (CÑC 95–96). Moreover, it is implausible to conceive that the Buddha preached about liberation if he had already attained it, since this would be akin to a deceased individual returning to this life (CÑC 97–98).

Aruṇanti identifies fundamental contradictions within this Buddhist system. One such example can be seen in the following extract: 'Do not preach to me now about the *tarumam* (Skt. *dharma*) of one who killed his mother' (CÑC 99.4: *tāyaik koṉṟāṉ ṟarumattai yiṉṟeṉakkuc cāṟṟi ṭēlē*). This is a twist to the well-known story of the Buddha's mother, Māyā, who actually died a few days after giving birth to him. Nonetheless, the

[49] Even though I follow the commentary and version by Vēluppiḷḷai, it is worth noting that the edition of Balasubramanian inverts the order of verses 93 and 94. The order of both might bear some theological relevance, since they describe *samādhi* and *mukti.* Is it possible to consider *samādhi* superior to liberation, or is it the other way around? Would that actually depend on how the concepts are ordered within the text? If one were to follow the Buddhist tradition, *camāti* would be the last concept of the eightfold path (*āriyāṭṭhaṅgikamagga*), but how to interpret then the fact that the eightfold path is also mentioned here*?* An earlier Caiva Cittānta text*,* the *Tirukkaḷiṟṟuppāṭiyār,* assumed an esoteric meaning of the concept. Verse 34 of the *Tirukkaḷiṟṟuppāṭiyār* reads: 'It is said that if one strives to understand and destroy dependency, *tiyāṉam* (Skt. *dhyāna*) arises only through realising such dependency. Proper *camāti* (Skt. *samādhi*) arises when one acts in order to destroy attachment. Thus, attachment to action—which causes affliction—will not happen'; *cārpuṇarntu cārpu keṭavoḻukiṉ eṉṟamaiyāṟ / cārpuṇartal tāṉē tiyāṉamumām - cārpu / keṭavoḻukiṉ nalla camātiyumām kētap / paṭavaruva tillaiviṉaip paṟṟu* (Dávalos 2023). The first line is actually a quotation from *Tirukkuraḷ* 359: *cārpuṇarntu cārpu keṭavoḻukiṉ maṟṟaḻittuc / cārtarā cārtaru nōy.* It is evident that a complex intertextuality is in operation; however, aside from the fact that these are texts lacking critical editions, it seems reasonable to assume that *camāti* was a concept already cemented in the tradition, and the order of the verses may reflect such a hierarchy.

[50] 'Getting rid of destructive feelings such as desire, perfecting virtuous deeds, controlling the senses that lead to [temptation], taming both pleasure and pain, observing the eightfold path in a blameless and unflawed life, destroying all evil, and following the [right] conduct with knowledge will ensure the final release' (Balasubramanian 2013, 179).

Caiva theologian distorts the Buddha's story to foster the idea that he did not follow what he preached (CÑC 100–101).

Aruṇanti then ponders the possibility of discerning reality if everything is a continuous succession of events (CÑC 101.2: *maruvivaruñ cantāṉa vaḻiyi leṉṉil*), as the Buddhists propose. The criticism moves to attack the idea of worshipping a deity that lacks any discernible lineage (CÑC 102) and the worshipping of a meat-lover deity who eats flesh before sunrise and neglects to wash his face (CÑC 103.4: […] *kaṇ kaḻuvātē yutippataṉmuṉ pulālō ṭuṇpāṉō rūṉpiriya ṉuraittatoru nūlē*), and whose treatises are deceptive (*poynnūl*) (104). At this point in the text, we are reminded once again of the conventional rhetoric against Buddhists, which is intertwined with an emphasis on the subject of ritual purity (Skt. *prāyaścitta*). As also occurred in early Caiva texts, the mannerisms of the Buddhists are viewed as 'foolish' (CÑC 105.4: *matikēṭuṉ vaḻakkē*) and true concepts such as heaven and hell can only be comprehended through the lens of the *ākamas* (Skt. *āgama*s), which Buddhists do not acknowledge as *piramāṇam* (Skt. *pramāṇa*) (CÑC 106).

Afterwards, the theologian covers the key Buddhist doctrine of impermanence (*anittam*; Skt. *anitya*), which is opposed to the Caiva belief that only the body perishes (CÑC 107.4: *ipporuḻuk kanittamilai yeṉṟoṉṟaik kāṭṭā yeṉiṟṟōṉṟum poruṇiṉṟiṅ kiṟuti yāmē*). Aruṇanti argues that Buddhists and Jains espouse a view of causality that is analogous to the germination of a seed: All manifestations of life are said to emerge from the destruction of previous forms with the production of the seedling only occurring subsequent to the destruction of the seed. Consequently, the theory of impermanence is rendered invalid, as entities undergo various transformations and ultimately decay (CÑC 108). Similarly, it is untenable to think that bodies have the form of nothing or that they grow out of formless intelligence, since this intelligence would have needed a beginning (CÑC 109). Moreover, the concept of creation out of nothing is not valid, and any effect (in this case, matter) is produced by a cause (CÑC 110.3: *oṉṟiloṉṟaṅ kilāmaiyiṉā lutiyākā raṇampeṟ ṟutippatukā riyamatuvu muḻḷatākum*), as is evident in the case of the seed giving rise to the tree. Consequently, matter cannot be derived from opposing sets of elements, since their inherent nature is to oppose each other. This

underscores the ambiguity between elements and their qualities,[51] thereby challenging the conventional notion of objects being created from the eight categories (*cuttāṭṭaka*),[52] that is, the combination of the elements that constitute the *mahābhūta* and the *upādārūpa*.

Aruṇanti turns now to the idea of consciousness as necessarily eternal because otherwise an old intelligence would have to be destroyed at each moment in time to make way for a new one. This is due to the incompatibility of the two forms of intelligence, which renders the emergence of a new intelligence from nothingness an impossibility (CÑC 113).

The subsequent topic will centre on the self as an aggregate (the aforementioned theory of *tokai vaḻakku*). Irrespective of whether it is perceived as a sequence[53] that arises from a cause, an effect, or both, consciousness cannot be understood as an enduring entity (CÑC 114) and its so-called everlasting quality will be challenged in the next verses (CÑC 115–117). The 'Buddhist should know' (*tērā tērē*) that consciousness is the subject and other entities are the objects, not the other way around (CÑC 115.3–4 *iṉṟic / cintāmuṉ piṉṉākip piṉmuṉ ṉākit tirintuvarun tirivaṟintu tērā tērē*).

The idea of time as an entity that is continuously destroyed and produced is next scrutinised (CÑC 116.1: *orukālat tuṇarvuketṭā meṉinu-*

[51] Between *mahābhūta* and *upādārūpa*. An argument against the two-fold nature of form (*uruvam*) mentioned in v. 68 (and again here in vv. 111–112) is one that the reader might remember already from Campantar's hagiography in the *Periya Purāṇam*.

[52] All matter other than the four elements is called *bhautika* or 'that which is composed of the four elements.' Although the five sense organs and five sense objects are composed of atoms (*paramāṇu*), *bhautika* matter is not directly constituted of atoms of the elements. Rather, the elements and *bhautika* matter are each formed from different atoms. All of the basic types of *bhautika* matter necessary for the formation of 'molecules' (forms, smells, tastes, and tangible objects) must arise simultaneously and be accompanied by the elements in various combinations (Hirakawa 1997, 151). See also The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, 2014, s.v., *bhautika*. These categories were already described as *upātāṉavuru* in v. 68 and are again scrutinised in 117.3–4: […] *uṭaluṇarvuk kupātāṉa meṉṉiṉ / uṇarvutaliṉ iṭaiyaṟā tutikka vēṇṭum* […]: 'If you say that the body is the material cause for consciousness, then consciousness must be arising in the body without interruption' (Balasubramanian 2013, 203).

[53] Already stated in CÑC 71.

tippī ṟoṉṟām).[54] It cannot be the case that, according to the Cauttirāntika, action and consciousness are reciprocally causal (CÑC 118.1: *viṉaiyuṇarvu tarumviṉaiyai yuṇarvutaru meṉṟum viḷampiṉṉī*). According to him, action and consciousness are distinct and cannot produce each other. Action lacks intelligence or memory and the theory of impermanence does not allow the two things to coexist (CÑC 118). In a similar manner, Aruṇanti proposes the idea that since bodies are merely an effect, their cause can be categorised into three: primary (*mutal*), instrumental (*tuṇai*), and efficient (*nimittam*) (CÑC 119).

According to our author, knowledge requires, in addition to primary awareness (*viññāṉam,* Skt. *vijñāna*),[55] an independent agent that is aware of knowledge, (CÑC 120.4: […] *uṇarvuporu ḷuṇarvatuvē ṟuṇṭē*),[56] which can be understood as the soul that perceives the body, the senses and the mind. Aruṇanti addresses the Buddhists saying: 'You should know that the soul is that which says 'I know' (CÑC 122.3: […] *yāṉaṟintē ṉeṉṟa tetuvatukā ṇuyiruṇarval* […]). The soul is capable of articulating statements due to the organs of sense (*intiriya*; Skt. *indriya*) and the knowledge derived from the mind (*cittam*) (CÑC 123). If the soul is considered to be an entity that exists independently of both the organs of sense and the mind, then it must be eternal. This notion is meticulously defended (CÑC 123–128), with the author reminding the audience how loathed the position of the Buddhists is (CÑC 126.4: […] *veṟittiṭuvar niṉṉuṭaiya poruḷē*). The retort extends to other matters, including the existence of space and its relationship with ritual (CÑC 127) and the necessity of a cause for the existence of the world (CÑC 128).

The soul manifests in other forms of life, given that they experience life and death, regardless of whether beings possess senses or motion, as in the case of trees (CÑC 129–130). Hence, these beings devoid of motion or senses are regarded as lower forms of life and, therefore, impure. This raises

[54] A very close idea appears in the first line of the next verse (CÑC 117.1): *uṇarvukā raṇamuṇarvuk keṉṉiṉ nittamuṇarvuk kuṇṭākiniṉ ṟuṇarvaiyutippiyātiṅ.*

[55] Reference to v. 66: 'In the *Nikāyas,* […] *viññāṇa* as cognitive awareness occurs in six modes: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental cognitive awareness, based on the concomitance of their respective sense faculties and their appropriate sense objects' (Ronkin 2005, 39).

[56] Balasubramanian has a slightly different version: […] *uṇarvuporuḷ uṇarpavaṉ vēṟu uṇṭē.*

the question of how it is possible for Buddhists to offer flesh to their god, which is what the author directly asks his counterpart: 'Buddhist, do you offer flesh to your god?' (CÑC 131.1–3: *puttā* […] *pulāl kaṭavuṭ kiṭāyō*). If liberation was defined as the cessation of the *kanta*s (*kantavīṭu*),[57] then consciousness, as it reaches heaven, will cease to exist (CÑC 132.2: *aruṅkatiyi ṉaṇaiyumuṇar viṉṟām*). And if there is no consciousness, then to whom would the bliss of liberation belong? (*ārkkumutti yiṉpam*). The section on Cauttirāntikas ends with an account on the nature of Aṟan (Hara) and liberation.

The other three schools of Buddhism are examined in much less detail. The author now points his attention to the 'ignorant' Yogācāra school regarding their views of the world as akin to a dream[58] (CÑC 135.3: *ātalāṟ kaṇavē pōlum cakam*), and how the sole reality is merely consciousness, the source of all phenomena. However, the Yogācārin has indicated that 'subliminal impressions' (*vataṉai*; Skt. *vāsanā*) exist in addition to consciousness,[59] yet appear to be identical. In a single, concise stroke passage, this notion is disproven: If consciousness encounters objects, then impressions will repeatedly draw consciousness towards such objects (CÑC 136). As dreams contain elements from reality, the world cannot be a dream. And if matter and consciousness are united, they will resemble a crystal, taking on the colour of the reflected object (CÑC 137).

[57] Reference to v. 69.

[58] The commentary has the alternative reading of the verse: *kātalāṟ poruḷi ṉōṭu kalantapi ṉeḻuṅka ruttām.* I follow the edition of Balasubramanian and Vēluppiḷḷai.

According to Westerhoff, 'The central thesis of Yogācāra philosophy is that what appears to be external reality is actually only the ideas, images, and creations of the mind, outside of which no corresponding object exists. The universe is a mental universe. All physical objects are fictions, unreal even conventionally, and similar to a dream or mirage in which all we seem to outwardly perceive has been inwardly produced' (Westerhoff 2018, 80).

However, it must be noted that the Yogācāra school comprises various currents, and it would be misleading to think that this should be considered its invariable essence. While it is true that some Yogācārins might be seen as closer to an idealistic point of view, others adopt positions that differ significantly from this characterisation.

[59] Probably referring to the theory of *ālayavijñāna* (store-house consciousness). The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, 2014, s.v., *ālayavijñāna*: 'A foundational form of consciousness, itself ethically neutral, where all the seeds (*bīja*) of all deeds done in the past reside, and from which they fructify in the form of experience.'

This will imply that consciousness and impressions cannot be the same thing.

Then the 'faulty' words (*navaitaru moḻi*) of the Mādhyamakas state that the body is just an aggregate of the senses.[60] However, their defendants will argue that matter and its attributes (*avayavi*) are two entities that coalesce to form an object: 'The object (i.e. the body) exists, as does consciousness' (CÑC 139.4: *poruḷum uṇṭu uṇarvum uṇṭē*). Objects of the world (*cakam poruḷkaḷ*) emerge when they are united with knowledge (*ñāṉam*). Aruṇanti replies again in a single verse that objects are external while knowledge is internal. The two cannot merge, reiterating the ambiguity of combining entities that possess form with those that lack form. This brief summary of ideas ends at this point, allowing the author to proceed with his rebuttal of the other external schools of Caivism.

The minimal and overgeneralised treatment of the three schools suggests that they were either less relevant to the author or to his tradition in general or were less thoroughly studied. Aruṇanti makes only two references to the *Piṭaka*s (CÑC 65.3: *tolpiṭa kaṅka ḷāṉa;* CÑC 102.2: *piṉṉāka piṭakanūl*), yet no specific text is mentioned. In the case of the Cauttirāntikas, the attacks could be considered deep and engaging, at least from a Caiva philosopher examining the teachings of 'external schools' (*puṟaccamayam*). Moreover, Aruṇanti's work is the only text of the *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiraṅkaḷ* that engages with other schools of thought outside Caivism.[61]

[60] Which would also fall into the category of *tokaiyuṇmai vaḻakku* that is mentioned to be part of the Cauttirāntika system in v. 70.

[61] One might also add to the list the *Caṅkaṟpa Nirākaraṇam* (Skt. *Saṅkalpa-nirākaraṇa*), the only dated text out of the fourteen *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiraṅkaḷ* (1313), which is the only one to deal with other 'outer schools' (*puṟaccamayaṅkaḷ*). The text employs the four-fold doctrinal classification system, which is based on proximity to the Śaiva system as set out in the Caiva Cittānta. This system categorises doctrines as outermost (*puṟappuṟaccamayam*), outer (*puṟaccamayam*), inner (*akappuṟaccamayam*), and innermost (*akaccamayam*). Six schools are associated with each of the four categories, resulting in a total of twenty-four schools of thought. Umāpati Civācāriyar, author of the *Caṅkaṟpa,* focuses on nine of them: Māyāvāta (Skt. Māyāvāda—outer school), Aikkiyavāta (Skt. Aikyavāda—inner system), Pāṭāṇavāta (Skt. Pāṣāṇavāda—innermost), Pētavāta (Skt., Bhedavāda—innermost), Civacamavāta (Skt. Śivasamavāda—innermost), Caṅkirāntavāta (Skt. Saṁkrāntavāda—innermost), Īcuvaravavikāravāta (Skt. Īśvarāvikāravāda—innermost), Nimittakāraṇapariṇāmavātam

While the *Periya Purāṇam* primarily focuses on the lives of the other three prominent *nāyaṉmār* (Campantar, Appar, and Cuntarar), its silence regarding the life of Māṇikkavācakar raises significant questions regarding both the initial impact of his works and the historicity of his figure.[62] The earliest extant hagiography (ca. fifteenth century)[63] is the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam* (TVāP.), composed by a certain Kaṭavuḷ Māmuṉivar. The title makes reference to Vātavūr, the birthplace of Māṇikkavācakar. This chapter situates the composition of the *tirucāḻal* hymn, offering insights into the interpretation that Pope adopted. It thus devotes an entire chapter (*carukkam*) to the debate between the princess and the Buddhist monk, entitled *Puttaraivātilveṉṟacarukkam* ('The Victorious disputation against the Buddhists').

The story begins[64] with the saint repeatedly singing *Tiruvampalam* ('Golden Hall'), which captures the attention of Buddhists, including the king of Īḻam. The saint proceeds to elucidate the significance of the city of Puliyūr (Chidambaram) (TVāP 1–14). The Buddhists, their

(Skt. Nimittakāraṇa Pariṇāmavāda—outermost), and Caivavāta. While not all of them are easily identifiable with historical philosophical schools, Dhavamony (1971, 289–290) has offered a summarised mapping of their positions. However, Umāpāti did not seem to tackle any of the Buddhist schools.

[62] Swamy (1972, 118–120) traced the earliest installation of an image dedicated to Mānikkavācakar, under the name Vātavūrār, to the twelfth century in a temple at Tiruvalañjuḻi. Another inscription from Vaḻuvūr, possibly from the twelfth century, also mentions the consecration of the image of Tiruvātavūr-nāyaṉār (TN00164). Swamy has questioned whether this image actually refers to the Tamil saint since the earliest consecration of images of the other three Tamil Śaiva saints took place some 140 years earlier. However, the author hastily concludes that Māṇikkavācakar 'must have lived between the first quarter of the eleventh to that of the twelfth century' (Swamy 1972, 127). Although a thorough examination of the available epigraphic evidence relating to Māṇikkavācakar is still a task to be undertaken, the scholarly consensus has established that the saint poet lived around the ninth century.

[63] Most probably the earlier strata of the version of the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* by Parañcōti (sixteenth century) was older than the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam* itself (Zvelebil 1995, 691–692). To my knowledge, no scholarly work has been done on the matter. Besides this important hagiographical source, other texts that deal with the life of Māṇikkavācakar are the *Tirupperuntuṟai Purāṇam* by Cuntaraliṅka Muṉivar in the seventeenth century (Zvelebil 1995, 190) and the *Tiruvuttarakōcamaṅkai Purāṇam* by Mācilāmaṇi Campantar in the sixteenth (Zvelebil 1995, 393).

[64] I have used the two complete translations of this chapter that exist: (Chitty 1846; Schomerus 1925). Pope also provides a summary of the chapter (Pope 1900, lxvii–lxxii).

king, and his mute daughter arrive in Chidambaram, where they receive a rather unfriendly reception from the local servants of the temple. A Buddhist guru attempts to illustrate how, according to the three *Piṭaka*s, the Buddha is the sole deity that exists (TVāP 14.3–4: *tēṟum piṭaka muṉṟumurai ceyyun talaiva ṉallātu / vēṟuṅkaṭavuḷoṉṟuvatōveṉṟē puttaṉ vekuṇṭuraippāṉ*). The Buddhist monk, though ignorant of the truth (TVāP 24.2: *meyyuṇarvil puttaṇai*), confronts the Brahmins, who are rendered speechless. Civaṉ appears in their dreams and informs them that the saint will ultimately prevail over the Buddhist, instructing them to seek him out.

The dispute starts with the saint inquiring about the purpose of the Buddhist's presence. The monk replies that his Lord has engaged in continuous reading of the *Piṭaka* books over the course of numerous lives. He further asserts that his Lord had been reborn in many wombs and has the capacity to remove the four sins: murder, theft, lies and even drunkenness (TVāP 49).[65] A final remark on circumstances surrounding his arrival under the shade of the bodhi tree brings the first turn of the Buddhist to a close. He then elaborates that what is called liberation (*mutti*) is the total annihilation of the five *kanta*s that are inherent in the womb: form, sensation, volition, imagination and discernment (TVāP 50.1–2: *uruvam vētaṇai kuṟippup / pāvaṇai yuṭaṇviñ ñāṇam pañcakan taṅkaḷ*).

The saint moves on to challenge the theory of momentariness without devoting significant attention to Buddhist doctrine. Once sensation emerges, it is gone in an instant (TVāP 52.2: *maruviya uṇarvu āki kaṇattil maṟaitiṭum*). This is also the case with the impossibility of a god who eliminates ignorance and has been reborn numerous times. Vātavūrār further elaborates on this inconsistency (TVāP 54), highlighting the contradiction between a god that was reborn as a predator and the prohibition of killing.[66] The Caiva ascetic questions the false doctrine

[65] It is interesting to note the exclusion of sexual misconduct, the third precept from the otherwise well-known list of five precepts (*pañcaśīlā*). Pope (1900, lxviii) notes the omission, but the reason behind it remains unclear.

[66] 'Du sagst, euer Gott verbiete, / Auf Mord bedacht zu sein. / Als nun im Verlauf der vielen Verschiedenen Existenzen / Dein Herr auf Erden weilte, / Hat er da wohl als Löwe, / Wenn Heißhunger ihn überkam, / Gras und Kräuter gegessen, / Dieser dein großer Herr, /

(*karavu nūḷ*) by asking where the form of divinity can be found if form disappears along with the other aggregates (TVāP 55.1–2: *kantamain tuṭaṉē kūṭi / uruvamu maḻiyu meṉṟā yuṉṉiṟaik kuruva meṅkē*). The saint poet doubts whether it is possible for the Buddha to have killed each of his twenty-one mothers[67] without it being considered a sin (TVāP 57). The monk's lying doctrines (*poymmai nūlil*) claim that the primary distinction between bodies (*uruvu*) and souls (*uyir*) is their composition of different mixtures of the four elements (*pūtam*) (TVāP 58).[68]

The guru has not grasped the concept that upon the decay of the body, the soul is separated from it. Kaṭavuḷ Māmuṉivar criticises that the master regards space/ether (*vāṉam*) as non-existent, given the necessity of a medium to contain the elements (TVāP 60), and that the practice of prayers is usually directed to the north (TVāP 61): 'These matters you claim to occur on this earth are only fit for the ignorant, the insane, the deranged, and the charlatans' (TVāP 61.3.4: *puṭaviyi laṟivi lārum pittarum poymai yōrum / uṭaṉika ḻavaiyiṟ kūṟi ṉōkkunī*). The next point of contention is the Buddhist assertion that trees lack souls, despite their growth and development of branches, which is comparable to the growth and development of living beings with bodies (TVāP 62). According to his false doctrine (*poymai nūl*), then, this would be inconsistent with the consumption of the meat of an animal that has been killed (since the animal has a soul and this would be sinful) (TVāP 63).

Der Herr des Bōdhibaums?' (Schomerus 1925, 273). Risking further distortion inherent in a double translation, I have left the German translation untranslated. I have already pointed out a similar passage in verse 86 of the *Civañāṉa Cittiyār*.

[67] It is worth pointing out that the author here refers to the story of the Buddha's mother dying seven days after he was born. As pointed out to me by Roberto García (personal communication), the author may be misunderstanding the canonical Buddhist sources, as there is no standard list of 'twenty-one births.' In *jātaka* literature, the number varies significantly, with lists of ten (as in the *Mahānipāta*) or thirty-five (as in the *Cariyāpiṭaka*). A more accurate list might be that of the twenty-eight births, which is prevalent in later Theravāda literature. However, the lists do not refer to the births of Buddha Śākyamuni, but rather to twenty-eight past Buddhas. The number also varies in other less recent sources, such as the *Buddhavaṁsa*, which lists twenty-five Buddhas. In earlier texts, the number of seven Buddhas is more common. The number twenty-one may have been derived from the list contained in the *Mahāsaṁghika*.

[68] The author defines (TVāP 60.3) these four elements as wind (*kāl*), earth (*nilam*), water (*puṉal*), and fire (*tī*).

The primary Buddhist tenet is presented in the next verse, wherein two types of liberation are subjected to scrutiny: on the one hand, men well-versed in the *ākama*s assert that liberation entails 'the destruction of the body while its cause continues to exist' (TVāP 64.1: *kāraṇa niṟka veṉṟuṅ kāriyaṅ keṭutal vīṭeṉṟu*).[69] For the Buddhist, on the other hand, liberation is 'the destruction of what perishes [i.e. the body] along with the whole soul' (TVāP 64.3: *pūraṇa vuyiruñ cērap poṉṟutaṉ mutti yeṉṟu*). This marks the conclusion of the initial phase of the disputation, as it is now the turn of the monk to request that Vātavūrār elucidate the tenets of his doctrine. In response, the saint provides further clarifications about Śaiva doctrine but is asked to offer a more detailed answer one more time.

Māṇikkavācakar provides a lengthy response, though in a notably distinct tone from the beginning of their discussion. The discourse is delivered with great fervour as the speaker emphasises a number of elements of his religion, including the form of Civaṉ as the dancer of Tillai, his female half; the ashes on his body; his string of beads; and others (TVāP 67–81). The Caiva devotee even turns to the Goddess (Sarasvatī) and admonishes her,[70] requesting that she abandons the mouths of the Buddhists, rendering them mute (TVāP 81.2–3: *maintarmaṭa vārtamatu vākkiṟaivi nīpē / intavakai poymmoḻi yiyampuvate ṉeṉṟē*). Subsequently, the monarch requests the saint to reverse the procedure for his dumb daughter. Māṇikkavācakar instructs the princess to approach the guru and respond to the questions posed by the ignorant man in a knowledgeable and erudite manner: 'The devotee sang the essence of the hymns by the bearer of truth, which is the game *cāḻal* for young girls.' (TVāP 86.3–4*: maṟṟu maṅkaiyar cāḻa lāmviḷai yāṭa lāka makiḻcciyāl / uṟṟa taṉporu ṭaṉṉai vācaka māka vuṇmaiya rōtiṉār*).

The structure of the debate in the purāṇic encounter of Māṇikkavācakar and the Buddhist monk illustrates Kaṭavuḷ Māmuṉivar's attempt to tackle philosophical ideas, while also revealing significant gaps in the author's knowledge of Buddhist doctrines. The *Tiruvātavūrār*

[69] The commentary glosses it thus: *kāraṇam ākiya āṇmā niṟka eññāṉṟum kāriya poruḷ ākiya carīram keṭutalē mutti eṉṟu*; 'Liberation is the destruction of the body. The body is the agent of the effect that always stands with the soul, which is its cause.'

[70] Not only does he scold her, but it is as if he is also shaming her as he reminds her of how she lost her nose in Dakṣa's sacrifice.

Purāṇam seems to address doctrinal matters with ideas that appear to be somewhat constrained in scope and lacking in depth. This is particularly evident when compared to the earlier polemics contained in the *Civañāṉa Cittiyār*, characterised by a greater degree of sophistication and even interest. The critical discourse on tangible Buddhist practices, as evidenced in texts predating the two aforementioned ones, has largely disappeared. This is evidenced by the near-total absence of any mention of dietary restrictions, times of meals, or distinctive modes of dress. However, the portrayal of Buddhists as deceitful and illogical, with their doctrines being misconstrued as inherently flawed, remains.

Although both texts indicate a discernible inclination towards the examination of Buddhist philosophical and theological concepts, the critiques contained in the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam* appear to be much more superficial and hasty than the ones in the *Civañāṉa Cittiyār*. Nevertheless, they reveal a shift in anti-Buddhist polemics away from an emphasis on specific social or religious practices and towards a more abstract, albeit limited, engagement with doctrines.

3. *Concluding remarks*

This article has sought to examine the evolution of the initial encounters between Caivas and Buddhists in South India, emphasising the transition from hostility towards the bodily presence to a more sophisticated intellectual engagement. In the initial stages of these encounters, the focus of Caiva authors was on the bodily presence of the opponents, with particular attention paid to their dress, rituals, and costumes. As Tamil Caivism became established throughout Tamil-speaking areas, this discourse appears to have matured, particularly in the writings of Aruṇanti. These ideas could have permeated other textual traditions, such as the one represented by the TVāP.

Despite the evident transition towards theological discourse, the Caiva texts we discussed retain a harsh polemical tone, characterised by misrepresentation or diatribe. This seems to indicate a strategy designed to establish Buddhist inferiority in the context of the rising Caiva religion. For instance, in contrast to Campantar's employment of pejorative terminology and his own hagiography of misencounters with Buddhists, other

stories such as Cākkiyar *nāyaṉar* based the superiority of his new religion on devotional aspects, yet still maintaining the confrontational stance.

As has been demonstrated in the *Civañāṉa Cittiyār* and the *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam*, the engagement with Buddhist ideas would become increasingly rigorous. Nevertheless, on numerous occasions, the discussion was also limited to the framework of misrepresentation. The intricate interplay between derogatory and intellectual language that emerged with the institutionalisation of the Caiva groups represents a potential chronological development. However, this hypothesis can only be substantiated through studies of historical and textual sources, which are yet to be conducted.

List of abbreviations

ARIE *Annual report on South Indian epigraphy*
CÑC *Civañāṉa Cittiyār*
MTL *Madras Tamil Lexicon*
PP *Periya Purāṇam*
SII *South Indian Inscriptions*
TvāP *Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam*

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Addendum—On mending cracks and splits: further remarks on khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra and the Śivadharma's encounter with Buddhism

Florinda De Simini
L'Orientale University of Naples

In her contribution to this volume, Schmiedchen brings the focus, among other things, to the 'provisions for repairs' formula of the Bhauma-Kara grants, that is *khaṇḍa-sphuṭitādy-abhisaṁskārārtham*, 'for restoring [those parts of a building] such as the cracked and split ones.' This is an expression that is commonly attested in the epigraphic corpus of the Bhauma-Karas that she examines, and of which several variants exist in early and medieval South Asian grants. Referring to a famous study by von Hinüber (2013), Schmiedchen lists this among other expressions pertaining to the field of *maṭha*-administration that have demonstrably originated in a Buddhist context, before their use spread quite ubiquitously to grants of other religious institutions. This trajectory replicates one of the general trends of South Asian medieval religious history, which is the growth of public support for organised Brahmanical religions focussed on the foundation of places of worship and monastic institutions. As recent research has shown and continues to evidence, early Śivadharma literature tells us this story from a Śaiva viewpoint. For the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the *Śivadharmottara*, whose composition we tend to date to the sixth–seventh century,[1] strive to secure lay sponsorship

[1] For a discussion on the dating of the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, see Bisschop 2018, 9ff.

for the building of *āyatana*s and *āśrama*s, for the composition and protection of scriptural manuscripts, as well as for the support of a group of professionals devoted to the *śivajñāna* and the *śivayoga*.[2] The composition of our texts thus reflects the preoccupations of a community that was actively trying to secure patronage at a time in history when organised Śaivism was growing exponentially; and it was doing so, as many articles in our book point out also on the basis of previous research, in areas that already attested to the rich presence of other deeply institutionalised religions, among which Buddhism was prominent.

Tracing possible links with competing traditions is therefore a crucial point in our knowledge of the Śivadharma and the type of Śaivism it portrays, as it would add depth to our understanding of the texts and historicise their composition and spread. However, it is at the same time a rather elusive point, its elusiveness resting on the absence of any explicit or unequivocal references to a religious other both in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and in the *Śivadharmottara*. Moreover, while it is proven that the Śivadharma texts were reusing materials from the Dharmaśāstra and the *Mahābhārata*,[3] no large textual borrowings from or to Buddhist texts have been identified, nor should perhaps be expected, as we noted in the introduction.

In my first overall assessment of the Śivadharma (De Simini 2016a), I suggested that a possible common thread between this tradition and Buddhism could have been identified in the institutionalised cult of the book, which is firstly attested and made popular in Buddhist literature, and which becomes a dominant, almost defining theme for the Śivadharma, especially in the *Śivadharmottara* (De Simini 2016a, 2ff). While this suggestion was mainly a working hypothesis, meant to put forward a possible direction to look at, we now have the opportunity to rethink the topic of the Śivadharma's encounter with Buddhism, and see if

[2] These aspects have already been highlighted in some of my previous publications, such as De Simini (2016a, 2022). Alexis Sanderson (2019) has further emphasised the 'public' dimension of these texts, with special reference to the *Śivadharmottara*.

[3] As exemplary cases, see the reuse of Dharmaśāstra in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* (Bisschop, Kafle and Lubin 2021) and the *Śivadharmottara* (De Simini 2022), which also reuses some crucial doctrines from the *Bhagavadgītā*. Generative links with the Dharmaśāstra and the *Mahābhārata* are also provable for the texts of the Nepalese corpus, as per De Simini and Mirnig 2017, Kafle 2021, and Kiss 2021.

we can add a few more thoughts to corroborate the hypothesis that the two traditions have, in fact, met, and that the Śivadharma might have derived inspiration from Buddhist institutions and practice. I suggest that this can be done exactly through the case-study of the 'provisions for repairs' formula: following Schmiedchen's insight and von Hinüber's pivotal study, the technical language of *maṭha-* and temple-administration can be examined as a means for tracing interactions between organised religious groups. For the Śivadharma texts have indeed something to say on the topic of repairing buildings, which is specifically tied to the patronage of religious groups and the grants provided for the maintenance of their cultic or residential structures—one of the main priorities of the authors of the Śivadharma.

Our reconstruction must take as its starting point the study that von Hinüber devoted in 2013 to the expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskaraṇa* and its variants, highlighting its ties to early Buddhist literature and inscriptions, and thus to the administrative language of Buddhist chancelleries, even in contexts in which kings were publicly supporting Śaivism. In this regard, von Hinüber argues that there are cases, such as that of the corpus of Maitraka inscriptions, in which the use of *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskaraṇa* can demonstrably be connected to the activity of Buddhist chancellors under the rulership of Śaiva kings. In his examination, he focuses on the twenty-five Maitraka grants devoted to the Buddhist *saṅgha*, issued between 530 CE and 680 CE, and further limits his scope to those specific cases in which a non-Buddhist ruler finances a Buddhist institution. He observes that the 'neatly Buddhist formula' *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskaraṇārtham*, with the variants *°saṁskaraṇāya* or *°saṁskārāya*, is only attested under Śīlāditya I (595–612 CE) and Dhruvasena II (625–643 CE), where he can prove the activity of Buddhist chancellors.[4] At the same time, he observes that, since the expression is used in early epigraphy also in non-Buddhist contexts, 'it

[4] Before the reign of these kings, the expression is always used in what von Hinüber considers a 'hybrid' form due to the use of extra words, such as in *vihārasya ca khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-patita-viśīrṇṇa-pratisaṁskāraṇārttham* in an inscription of Dhruvasena I, dated 537 CE; or the replacement of *khaṇḍa°* with *bhagna°*, such as in *bhagna-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskāraṇārttham*, attested in a Dhruvasena I inscription dated 538 CE (von Hinüber 2013, 371–372); in both cases, also note the use of *°pratisaṁskāraṇa* with long *ā*, a form attested in 'Buddhist Sanskrit,' as noted below.

is impossible to reverse the argument and to conclude that wherever the expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭitapratisaṁskāraṇa* is used, Buddhism must be involved' (von Hinüber 2013, 374). Note that the form °*pratisaṁskāraṇa*, with a long *ā*, is sometimes attested in inscriptions and texts alike, and can be considered a form of 'Buddhist Sanskrit' (see Edgerton 1953, s.v.) Early Buddhist literature knew of the 'provisions for repairs' formula either as *khaṇḍa-phulla-paṭisaṁkharaṇa* in Pāli,[5] or as *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskaraṇa* and *khaṇḍa-sphuṭa-pratisaṁskāra* in Sanskrit texts, such as the *Divyāvadāna* or the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*.[6] A very telling instance from the latter is the one that von Hinüber identifies in the *Cīvaravastu* from the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins,[7] where he suggests correcting the reading *khaṇḍachuṭṭaṁ pratisaṁskartavyam* of the first edition into *khaṇḍaphuṭṭam pratisaṁskartavyam* (von Hinüber 2013, 368, fn9). His emendation reintroduces the repairs of building into the picture, highlighting how the maintenance of buildings and the copying of manuscripts equally fell into the range of those activities for which a religious institution had to depend on external financial support.

Exactly this point of the *Cīvaravastu*, where the text prescribes what the *saṅgha* can finance through inheritance proceeds, was the object of a tentative parallel reading that I proposed between this Buddhist text and the prescriptions of *Śivadharmottara*'s chapter two on the use of manuscripts of Śaiva scriptures (De Simini 2016a, 94ff). The fact that both texts portray early religious communities dealing with the copying and preservation of manuscripts of their own scriptures, and exhibit some

[5] For the expression *khaṇḍa-phulla-paṭisaṁkharaṇa* in Pāli literature and inscriptions, see Silk 2008, 75ff.

[6] The *Divyāvadāna* presents several instances of *khaṇḍa-sphuṭa-pratisaṁskaraṇa* or °*pratisaṁskāra* in a text that is also available in the *Carmavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* from Gilgit (on the relationships between the two texts, see Hiraoka 1998) and that recounts a story highlighting the importance of the direct intervention of lay devotees in the management of a Buddhist stupa. This is the narrative of the wealthy merchant Śroṇa Koṭikarṇa (the *Koṭikarṇāvadāna*), and the use of the expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭa-pratisaṁskāra* occurs in the passage in which the Buddha recounts the story of Śroṇa Koṭikarṇa's past life, to illustrate the good deeds that had earned him the achievement of arhantship in this life. This consisted exactly in the renovation of a stupa that had been built by king Kṛkin for Kāśyapa, but that was going to ruin because the ministries of the king's son had stopped collecting the tax meant for its repairs.

[7] Dutt 1942, 143 = GM III.143.3–14 = NAI 1.7 (Gilgit), fol. 274v.

lexical connections, makes it possible to draw some parallels between the two works even in the absence of direct historical links. Also the *Śivadharmottara* is very explicit in calling for lay supporters to build new buildings for Śiva and the Śivayogins in connection to the activities of copying, teaching, worship and preservation of Śaiva scriptures. In its chapter two, on the 'gift of knowledge,' the manuscripts of Śaiva scriptures, their ritual uses and magic powers, were employed as a strategy both to attract kings to the Śaiva religion and to have them and other wealthy donors build grand and small buildings for the different needs of the community of Śaiva initiates. However, and despite the details that *Śivadharmottara* chapter two provides on the structure and functions of the *śivāśrama*, no references are made here to financing the repairs of buildings.

The situation changes once we turn our attention to the earlier *Śivadharmaśāstra*. This text, besides dealing extensively with topics such as *liṅga*-worship, the *mahāśānti* mantra and the *vrata*s of the Śivabhaktas,[8] also gives in a more concise form some of the teachings on which the *Śivadharmottara* will expand. One of these is the ritual donation of manuscripts, to which the *Śivadharmaśāstra* refers in chapter twelve almost in passing, but also the construction of buildings for Śaiva worship, which is one of the main topics of *Śivadharmaśāstra* chapter four. Here the *Śivadharmaśāstra* shows several points of convergence with the *Śivadharmottara*, as its starting point is the ideal Śaiva recipient of gifts (4.1–14), which is also the main subject of *Śivadharmottara*'s chapter four (De Simini 2022). Furthermore, the prescriptions of *Śivadharmaśāstra*'s chapter four on donations and provisions to a monastery as acts of devotion by laypeople (4.15–52) align with those of the more extended chapter two of the *Śivadharmottara*. In both cases, such prescriptions reveal details of historical relevance, such as those on the construction materials or the structure of a building, as well as its

[8] On these topics in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* see Bisschop 2018, Mirnig 2019, Bisschop, Kafle and Kiss 2025.

decoration, maintenance, and the religious practices they should host. In this context, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* also gives the following prescriptions:[9]

> *kārayec citraśāstrajñair yatnāc citraṁ śivālaye* |
> *rudrāvatārakrīḍādyaiḥ prayogair āgamoditaiḥ* || 49 ||
> *yāvat sa rudrarūpāṇi surūpāṇy atra lekhayet* |
> *tāvad yugasahasrāṇi rudraloke mahīyate* || 50 ||
> *khaṇḍasphuṭitasaṁskāraṁ yaḥ kuryāt tu śivālaye* |
> *ārāmāvasathādyeṣu labhate maulikaṁ phalam* || 51 ||
>
> One should entrust experts in the pictorial arts with the decoration of a Śaiva temple, by employing themes such as the adventures of the descents of Rudra upon earth and similar stories[10] taught in the scriptures. As many beautiful images of Rudra as he paints there, for that many thousands of *yuga*s he shall enjoy bliss in the Rudraloka. Furthermore, someone who repairs the split and torn parts in a Śaiva temple, in [its] gardens, buildings, and the like, will attain the highest reward.

The compound *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* used here by the *Śivadharmaśāstra* is a close variant of those examined by von Hinüber, and is identical or almost identical to those attested in early medieval inscriptions. As it is, this attestation might be the earliest non-Buddhist literary occurrence of the 'provisions for repairs' formula, the first one in a text to show the fully Sanskritised form °*sphuṭita*°, followed by °*saṁskāra* without the prefix *prati*°—a choice that in this context might even have been simply dictated by the need to adapt the compound to the *anuṣṭubh* metre.

The expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* is technical enough to presuppose that its use, especially in a context such as that of chapter

[9] The following text has been reconstructed on the basis of the manuscript noted in the edition as N^{K}_{82}, corresponding to National Archives of Kathmandu 1–1075/ NGMPP B 7/3 = A 1082/2, dated to NS 290 (1169-70 CE).

[10] The expression *rudrāvatārakrīḍādyaiś* is found in *Sarvajñānottara* 23.10c to describe the decoration of a *japālaya* (23.9), which is a temporary construction in which the practitioner should practice *mantra*-recitation. The compound *rudrāvatārakrīḍā* is also frequently attested in the *Śivarahasya* to describe a type of decorations in a building. For instance, in 15.23 *rudrāvatārakrīḍā*s are said to decorate a *gopura*; in *Śivarahasya* 31.9 we find, again with reference to the embellishment of a *gopura*, the compound *rudrāvatāracarita*, probably a synonym of *rudrāvatārakrīḍā*.

four of the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, reveals awareness of the administrative jargon, which the authors of our work might have derived from other texts or from inscriptions. Given the attestations of the 'provisions for repairs' formula, this is thus one of the points in the text that lends itself to an examination vis-à-vis epigraphical documents, which offer a firmer chronology and more secure localisation. This attempt must come with some caveats, as the use of a single expression is not sufficient evidence of a contact with the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, just like one cannot entirely rule out the possibility that parallel developments happen in different contexts without a generative link. Moreover, even if von Hinüber rightly warns against establishing a straightforward connection between the use of this expression and the influence of Buddhist environments, it is still worth considering whether this specific attestation of *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* has anything to do with the same Buddhist traditions that promoted the 'cult of the book,' which the *Śivadharmottara* reframed as a more Brahmanical 'gift of knowledge.'

If we restrict our focus to the epigraphic production of the fifth to the early seventh century, which is the period in which Śaivism grows as an organised religion and the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the *Śivadharmottara* are composed, we can observe the emergence and crystallisation of the 'provisions for repairs' formula in the exact same form attested in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* in specific cultural contexts. As it turns out, the early history of our formula follows recognisable patterns that speak of the intentionality in the use of a certain administrative language, as well as of its conservatism. For instance, Gupta grants uniformly use the expression *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra*°, often followed by °*karaṇāya*. The use of the more archaic *phuṭṭa* instead of *sphuṭita* sets these attestations in line with those found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda canon and other early Buddhist texts, as mentioned above. This 'provisions for repairs' formula is solely attested in Gupta grants from Eastern India, and is used for institutions of various affiliations, such as Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist, Jaina and Ājīvika. Its earliest direct attestations are in the grants discovered at Baigram and Jagadispur (East Bengal), both dated 128 Gupta Era (henceforth: GE)—corresponding to *c.* 447-448 CE, during the reign of Kumāragupta I.[11]

[11] The Baigram grant was made in favour of the temple of Govindasvāmin, to which the 'provisions for repairs' formula is addressed. It was first published by Basak 1931–

However, an 'indirect' attestation found in a copperplate issued by *mahārāja* Vainyagupta in 184 GE (*c.* 503-504 CE), which reports the text of the grant of a certain *mahārāja-maheśvara* Nāthacandra in favour of the Ājīvikas, might enable us to date the earliest epigraphic occurrence of *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāraṇa* (with long *ā*, as in 'Buddhist Sanskrit') to 409-410 CE, i.e. under the reign of Candragupta II. [12] The latest inscrip-

1932; a revised edition is available on Dharmalekha at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/DHARMA_INSBengalCharters00049. See pl. 1, l. 7: *bhagavato govindasvāmino deva-kule khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra-karaṇāya*. The Jagadispur charter records a petition made by local officers and householders from Gulmagandhikā, who made an endowment in favour of Jaina monasteries and a Saura temple in the same area. It was published by Sircar 1969–1970; a revised edition is available on Dharmalekha at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSBengalCharters00034. The relevant expression is at l. 11 of pl. 1r and is preceded by a compound exhorting the practice of *bali*, *caru* and *sattra* (pl. 1r, ll. 10–11): *bali-caru-sa*[*ttra*]- [l. 11]-*pravarttaṇāya khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra-karaṇāya*.

From eastern Bengal also comes a recently discovered copperplate inscription dated 198 GE (*c.* 517-518 CE), which records a donation in favour of monasteries at Śiṣīpuñja, Madhyamasṛgālikā and Grāmakūṭagohālī, again connected to the Jain community. The grant depicts anonymous officials enjoining local householders to execute a donation in favour of monasteries in the above-mentioned locations, for the maintenance of the buildings and their repairs, for the worship, and for the welfare of the ascetics. This copperplate was first published by Griffiths 2018. Its text is also available at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/DHARMA_INSBengalCharters00055. The expression *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra* is here attested twice, at l. 10 of pl. 1r, and at ll. 19–20 of pl. 1v, in both cases within a longer compound (pl. 1v, ll. 19–20): *cānyādyapiṇḍa-pānipātrikādi-bhojya-khaṇḍa-*[l. 20]*phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskārādyartthaṁ*.

[12] Two copperplate grants issued under *mahārāja* Vainyagupta were discovered in present-day Bangladesh and are dated 184 GE (*c.* 503-504 CE) and 188 GE (*c.* 507-508 CE). Both of them attest the use of *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra*. Vainyagupta's copperplate of 184 GE is a recent discovery, published by Furui 2016, and records a grant in favour of the Ājīvikas; Vainyagupta's copperplate of 188 GE (the 'Gunaighar copperplate'), recording a grant in favour of Buddhists, is published in Bhattacharyya 1930, and its text is also available at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSBengalCharters00001.

In the grant of 184 GE Vainyagupta approves a grant made in the year 91 by *mahārāja-maheśvara* Nāthacandra in favour of the Ājīvikas residing at the shrine of Maṇibhadra at Jayanāṭana. From line 10 onwards, Vainyagupta's copperplate allegedly cites 'literally' (*yathākṣaraiva*) the grant of Nāthacandra, from a copperplate that 'was given as a gift by a previous king' (*pūrvvarāja-datti-datta*°). It is in this quoted passage, which is supposed to reproduce an earlier text dating to *c.* 409-410 CE, that we find the expression *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisa*[*ṁ*]*skāraṇāya* at line 13, referring to the repairs of the Maṇibhadra

tion dated to the Gupta Era that attests the use of the expression *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra-karaṇāya* is the grant issued under a Gupta king whose name is not extant—and whom the editors of the CII take to be Viṣṇugupta—dated to the year 224 (*c.* 542-543 CE).[13] This records the purchase of land to make provisions for the maintenance and repair of the temple Śvetavarāhasvāmin, as well as for supplying materials for ritual and daily worship. Gupta grants thus never update their choice of terminology in the case of the 'provisions for repairs' formula, even though other areas of South Asia knew of slightly different versions of it.

An early example are the so called 'Sanjeli Charters' from Gujarat, three copper-plates that are dateable between the tail end of the fifth century and the onset of the sixth, and which attest the formula in the form *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskāraṇa*.[14] This reflects, on one hand, the Sanskritisation of *phuṭṭa* into *sphuṭita*, but on the other the use of a long

shrine as one of the scopes of the donation made to the *saṁgha* of the Ājīvikas. See Pl. 1r, ll. 12–13 (note that I quote these lines from the edition in Furui 2016, 660; hence, I do not apply here the Dharma Project orthographical conventions): *jayanātaṇe bhagavatas caturmmukhamūrtter mmaṇibhadrasya nāthameṭayatanaṁ kāritan tasya bhagavataḥ s*[*uma*]*nogandhadhūpava* [l. 13]*licarusattrapravarttanāya tannivāsyājīva-kabadantasaṁghasya ca tasyāyanasya khaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisa*[*ṁ*]*skārakaraṇāya*.

[13] This is the 'Damodarpur Copperplate Inscription of Viṣṇugupta,' published in Bhandarkar 1981 (CII 3, revised edition), 360ff. The earliest edition is in Basak 1919–1920; its text is available at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00056.

[14] The 'Sanjeli Charters' are published in Ramesh 1973–1974. A revised edition of the texts is available on Dharmalekha: the 'charter of the merchant', dated to year 3, at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00103; the grant of Mahārāja Bhūta, dated to year 6, at the following link: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00104; and the grant of Mahārāja Mātṛdāsa, son of Bhūta, dated to year 19, at the following link: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00105. These revised texts are published in Balogh 2020, accompanied by a translation and commentary by Bakker.

The earliest of these three copper-plates is dated to year 3 of the *paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja* Toramāṇa; the remaining two are attributed to a king Bhūta and to his son Mātṛdāsa, respectively, probably feudatories of Toramāṇa, and are dated to the years 6 and 19. The editors of the texts agree that these years, too, should refer to Toramāṇa's chronology; since we know that he is defeated by Prakāśadharman of Daśapura in 515 CE, and his reign spanned about 19 years, then the beginning of his rulership (and his chronology) would fall in *c.* 495-496 CE (for the reconstruction of Toramāṇa's chronology on the basis of epigraphical evidence, see Bakker's considerations in Balogh 2020, 337).

ā in *pratisaṁskāraṇa*, as reported in Maitraka grants, which are attested in a close geographical area. All three charters record donations in favour of Vaiṣṇava institutions, and here the 'provisions for repairs' formula is found at the end of long compounds that list other activities and materials that have to be financed through the donation.[15]

While these two corpora show consistency in their approach to this terminology, a further small epigraphic corpus dated to the Gupta Era and associated with the so-called 'Mahārājas of Uccakalpa' exhibits the shift from °*phuṭṭa*° to °*sphuṭita*°. This corpus consists of copperplates found in Khoh and Sohawal, in modern-day Madhya Pradesh, issued under *mahārāja* Jayanātha and his son Śarvanātha. The expression *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra* is used since the Khoh copperplate inscription of Jayanātha, dated 177 GE (*c.* 496-497 CE), recording the grant of a village as an *agrahāra* so that the Brahmins can provide for the rituals and maintenance of a temple of Bhagavat.[16] Followed by °*karaṇāya*, the formula is then attested in all the grants of Śarvanātha dated between 191 GE (*c.*

[15] The earliest charter has it in the compound: [l. 3] *bali-caru-satra-dhūpa-gandha-puṣpa-dīpa-taila-khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskāraṇopayogyaṁ*, while the charter of year 6 reads: [l. 3] *bali-caru-gandha-dhūpa-mālya-dīpa-taila-cchādya-lepya-khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-* [l. 4]*pratisaṁskāraṇāya*. Charter of year 19 does not include the expression in a compound.

Out of these three grants, very similar to each other in scope and language, the earliest is the most notable, as it was promoted by 'foreign traders' (*vaideśavāṇijakāḥ*) who have converged on Vadrapālī 'from all the four quarters'—meaning, as we read in the text, mostly from other towns of the Gangetic plain, such as Kanyakubja and Mathurā—along with local merchants.

[16] The text is published, with translation and commentary, by Fleet 1888, 121–125; it is also available on Dharmalekha at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00083. In this case, the 'provisions for repairs' formula is in composition with other aims of the donation—just like in the Sanjeli grants, but with a different formulation—in the instrumental case, as it denotes the way through which the beneficiaries of the grant can accrue their own merits: [Pl. 1, l. 9] *ebhiś cāttra pratiṣṭhāpitaka-bhagavat-pādānāṁ puttra-prapauttra-tat-puttrātikrameṇa khaṇḍa-*[l. 10]*-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra-vali-caru-sattra-pravarttanādy-anuṣṭhānena ca sva-puṇyābhivṛddhiḥ* [l. 11] *karttavyā*. Note that here and in other grants of this corpus we do not find an explicit reference to a building such as a shrine, but only the honorific mention of the god (here *bhagavat-pādānāṁ*) for whom all the actions must be performed.

510-511 CE) and 197 GE (*c.* 516-517 CE).[17] However, one of Śarvanātha's later grants from Khoh, dated 214 GE (*c.* 533-534 CE), uses the Sanskritised form *sphuṭita* in the expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskaraṇāya*—which is, ultimately, the same expression used in the Maitraka grants examined by von Hinüber.[18] In this document, Śarvanātha commands the transfer of a grant of two villages from Pulindabhaṭa to Kumārasvāmin, for the worship of the local goddess Piṣṭapurikā at a temple that he had caused to be built in Mānapura, and for the repairs of such temple.[19]

Two aspects must be considered that could have had an impact on this update in the technical terminology of the grant. One is that, while Śarvanātha's earlier grants were all composed and distributed by the same officials, in the grant of 214 GE these were replaced by the following generation of administrators.[20] The other is that the use of °*sphuṭita*° is

[17] The earliest of such grants, dated 191 GE (*c.* 510-511 CE), was found in Sohawal; here, the king makes a grant of an *agrahāra* with the aim of providing for ritual activities as well as repairs of a temple of Kārttikeya that he himself had established. An edition of the Sohawal grant of Śarvanātha can be found in Halder 1927–1928, 127–131. The text is also available on Dharmalekha at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00089. See pl. 1, ll. 13–14: *sva-puṇyābhivṛddhaye sva-pratiṣṭhāpitaka-bhagavata-*[l. 14]*-svāmi-kārttikeya-svāmi-pādānāṁ khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra-karaṇāya* [l. 15] *vali-caru-sattra-gandha-dhūpa-dīpa-taila-pravarttanāya cātisṛṣṭaḥ*.

The Khoh copperplate inscription of Śarvanātha dated 193 GE records the grant of a village for the purpose of the maintenance of buildings and the performance of rituals at a temple of Bhagavan and one of Āditya. It is published and translated by Fleet 1888, 125–129, and available on at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00084. As for the second inscription I refer to in the text (Fleet 1888, 129–132, online at https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00086), note that this is technically a fragment with no date, due to the loss of the second plate. However, as noted by Balogh, following Fleet, another fragment missing the first plate (edited in Fleet 1888, 133–134) seems to be the exact continuation of that; this plate bears the date of 197 GE (See Balogh's notes at the following URL: https://siddham.network/inscription/in00087/?section=metadata). Despite this, Fleet prefers to treat them as two separate inscriptions, due to technical and material differences in the plates and in the script (Fleet 1888, 132, fn3). The Khoh fragmentary inscription records a grant made to finance rituals and repairs concerning the local goddess Piṣṭapurikā.

[18] Edition and translation of this text are in Fleet 1888, 135–139; a revised version of the text is online at: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00088.

[19] Pl. 1, l. 11: *tenāpi mānapure kāritaka-deva-kul*(*e*) *bhagavatyāḥ piṣṭhapurikā-devyāḥ pūjā-ni*[l. 12]*mittaṁ khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-pratisaṁskaraṇāya ca*.

[20] The grants dated to 191, 193 and 197 GE were all written (*likhitam*) by the *mahāsāndhivigrahika* Manoratha, the son of Varāhadinna and grandson of an *āmātya*

already attested in a slightly earlier grant (dated 209 GE, *c.* 528-529 CE) found in the same area and ascribed to the Parivrājaka king Saṁkṣobha, recording the donation of a village for the purpose of financing rituals and *sattra*s, as well as the repairs at the temple of the goddess Piṣṭapurī,[21] most likely corresponding to the Piṣṭapurikā mentioned in Śarvanātha's fragmentary grant (possibly dated 197 GE) and in his 214 GE grant. The documented relationship existing between the two families of *mahārāja*s, who coexisted in the same territory[22] and sponsored the worship of the same local gods, makes a direct influence between the language of the two chancelleries very likely. However, Saṁkṣobha's inscription exhibits a further lexical change that is not reflected in Śarvanātha's Khoh grant, namely the use of *saṁskāra* instead of *pratisaṁskāra*. This makes his grant of 209 GE one of the earliest attestations—not the earliest, as we will see shortly—of *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* as found in chapter four of the *Śivadharmaśāstra*.

named Phalgudatta. Manoratha was also the brother of Gulla, the *sāndhivigrahika* who had written Jayanātha's grant of 174 GE. The *dūtaka* of all three earlier grants of Śarvanātha was the *mahābalādhikṛta* Śivagupta, a *kṣatriya*. Śarvanātha's grant of 214 GE was written by Manorātha's son, the *sāndhivigrahika* Nātha, while the *dūtaka* was Dhṛtisvāmika.

[21] Text and translation of Saṁkṣobha's inscription dated 209 GE are in Fleet 1888, 112–116. The text is also available on Dharmalekha at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00081. The relevant section is at ll. 13–14 of the second plate: [l. 13] *bhagavatyāḥ piṣṭapuryāḥ kāritaka-deva-kule vali-caru-satropayo* [l. 14]*gārthaḥ khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskārārthañ ca*. The grant was written (*likhitam*) by Īśvaradāsa, whose name is not accompanied by any other titles, but whose lineage is given up to his grandfather.

[22] This connection is substantiated by the 'Bhumara stone pillar inscription,' a 'boundary-pillar' (*vala-yaṣṭhi*) set up by a certain Śivadāsa in a territory that, as per the text of the inscription, lies in the kingdom of both *mahārāja* Hastin of the Parivrājakas, 'worshipping the feet of Mahādeva,' (*mahādeva-pādānuddhyāta-mahārāja-hasti-rājye*) and of *mahārāja* Śarvanātha of the Uccakalpas (Fleet 1888, 110–112; the text is also available on Dharmalekha at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham00080). As Fleet further observes, the presence of this stone inscription roughly in the same area where the copperplates were found proves beyond doubt that these kings did in fact belong to that area of present-day Madhya Pradesh—which, at the time these inscriptions were first edited, corresponded to the Nagod/Nagaudh state (Fleet 1888, 111). Fleet also remarks (1888, 112) that the seal of the Khoh grant of Saṁkṣobha dated to 209 GE resembles those of the Uccakalpa kings.

Inscriptions from Nepal also follow a similar pattern, gradually leading us to the form attested in the *Śivadharmaśāstra*: while the expression *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra*°, referring to buildings or *liṅga*s, is consistently used until the first half of the sixth century,[23] after a significant temporal gap in the attestations, grants issued under the reign of Jiṣṇugupta (first half of the seventh century) and the Licchavi king Śivadeva (late seventh–early eighth century) use *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra*.[24] All attestations of the latter occur in inscriptions connected

[23] The earliest attestation of *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra* in Licchavi epigraphy is found in the very damaged 'Sitapaila Stone Inscription,' (text in Regmi 1983a, 24, and Vajracharya 1973, 132; translation in Regmi 1983b, 12), dated to Saṁvat 435 (513 CE), under the kingdom of Vasantadeva, recording a grant of land in favour of the king's sister, Jayasundarī. Two more attestations from sixth-century Nepal are on *śivaliṅga* bases: one is the 'Bhasmeśvara *śivaliṅga*' from Paśupatinath, dated Saṁvat 455 (533 CE), published in Regmi 1983a, 31–32, and Vajracharya 1973, 155, translated in Regmi 1983b, 21, while the other one is the 'Paśupati *śivaliṅga* base of Ābhirī,' dated to Saṁvat 462 (540 CE), published in Regmi 1983a, 33–34 (who erroneously gives the date as 402 in the introduction to the text), and Vajracharya 1973, 170, translated in Regmi 1983b, 23. In both cases, the expression *khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra* is used, along with other compounds referring to *pūjā*, with reference to the repairs (and worship) of the *liṅga*s, and not of buildings. The 'Bhasmeśvara *śivaliṅga*' inscription mentions five *liṅga*s installed by the *pratihāra* Dhruvasaṅgha Vārta, who made a grant for the worship of the *liṅga*s and for the repair of their thorn and split parts—[l. 2] *kāraṇa-pūjā-nimittaṁ khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskāra-nimittañ ca*. In the other grant, Ābhirī Gominī, wife of the son of Paramābhimāni, records the installation of a *liṅga* named Anuparameśvara, after her deceased husband, and the donation of land for the daily worship and for repairs of the *liṅga*: [l. 3] *ābhyaṅga-snapan-ārccana-gandha-dhūpa-bali-nivedan-ādi-pravarttan-ārttthaṁ khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁ*[l. 4]*skārārtthaṁ ca*. For both inscriptions, see also Mirnig 2016, 323–326 and 347–348.

[24] Examples from late seventh-century Nepal are the 'Pillar inscription of Caṇḍeśvara,' from the reign of Jiṣṇugupta, recording a donation to members of a congregation of Pāśupata *ācārya*s with the aim of providing for repairs of the Chatra-Caṇḍeśvara shrine (note that the expression used here is *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-samādhanārtham*, at ll. 13–14; see Regmi 1983a, 101–102, and Vajracharya 1973, 413; translation in Regmi 1983b, 62–63. A transcript of the Sanskrit text is also online at the URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham02065). Further examples are two inscriptions from the reign of Śivadeva, such as the 'Lagantol inscription,' establishing an *agrahāra* again in favour of a congregation of Pāśupatas (see line 8: *tad-deva-kula-khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra-kāraṇāya* in Regmi 1983a, 132, Vajracharya 1973, 514, or online at the URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/DHARMA_INSSiddham02083; translation in Regmi 1983b, 82); and the 'Balambu stone inscription,' recording the grant of a village to finance the rituals and repairs of the shrine of Paśupati (see line 8: *deva-kulasya khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-*

to Pāśupata communities, in an area where we know from manuscript attestations that the Śivadharma must have been introduced at an early time, certainly before the ninth century CE (see De Simini 2016b).

The earliest epigraphic attestations of the 'provisions for repairs' formula in the exact wording of the *Śivadharmaśāstra* can be traced to two fifth-century inscriptions. The earliest of the two comes from a Buddhist context, but corresponds only partially to our formula. I refer here to the expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-śīrṇṇa-saṁskārādi*, attested in a grant from Tummalagudem, present-day Andhra Pradesh, dated to the thirty-seventh regnal year of the Viṣṇukundin king Govindavarman I (*c.* 425–450 CE).[25] The word °*śīrṇṇa*° ('dilapidated') used in inscriptions as *viśīrṇṇa* with reference to buildings since at least the time of the Kushan emperor Huviṣka,[26] aligns this attestation with similar ones found in the Maitraka grants.[27]

Roughly at the same time as Govindavarman's grant, the expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* is attested in a document of the fifth-century 'kings of Śarabhapura,' from Dakṣiṇa Kosala (present-day Chattisgarh)[28] and, later, in those of the Pāṇḍavas, who overtook control of Dakṣiṇa Kosala at the beginning of the sixth century.[29] The earliest case is that of the incomplete 'Rawan Charter,'[30] attributed to the kingdom of *mahārāja* Narendra from Śarabhapura. According to Bakker (1994), he might have

saṁ[l. 9]*skāra-kāraṇa-pūjādikam*, in Regmi 1983a, 137, Vajracharya 1973, 530, and online at the URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/DHARMA_INSSiddham02082; translation in Regmi 1983b, 60).

[25] On this inscription, see Griffiths and Tournier 2017, EIAD 174: http://hisoma.huma-num.fr/exist/apps/EIAD/works/EIAD0174.xml?&odd=teipublisher.odd, and Tournier 2018.

[26] See von Hinüber 2013, 369, referring to Lüders 1961, 138ff.

[27] See, for instance, the already mentioned case of the expression *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-patita-viśīrṇṇa-pratisaṁskāraṇārtthaṁ*, attested in a grant of Dhruvasena I, dated to 537 CE; or *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-viśīrṇṇa-pratisaṁskāraṇārtthaṁ* attested in a grant by Guhasena, dated to 550 CE (von Hinüber 2013, 371–372).

[28] Śarabhapura may be identified with Malhār, Bilaspur district, Chattisgarh (Bosma 2018, 10–13).

[29] The chronology of the so-called Śarabhapurīyas, just like that of the Pāṇḍavas, has been a matter of debate, since they only date their documents to regnal years and offer very few external references. In this article, I follow the reconstruction offered by Bosma (2018).

[30] This copper-plate is published in Shastri 1995, 2.12–13. A revised text is also online at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSSiddham01006.

reigned towards the end of the kingdom of Kumāragupta I (*c.* 415–454 CE). In this inscription, the 'provisions for repairs' formula is part of a longer compound, along with words expressing other activities to be financed through this donation, such as the practice of *bali*, *caru* and *sattra*, which are often associated with the repairs of buildings among the scopes of a donation both in contemporary and in later grants (see some examples from the Gupta and the Sañjeli grants cited above). The religious institution to which the grant is given is the shrine of Śrīdharasvāmin, a testimony to the Vaiṣṇava faith of the Śarabhapurīya kings, possibly on the model of their Gupta overlords. Most of the other charters of the Śarabhapurīyas are addressed to Vedic Brahmins, while an increase of donations to religious institutions is recorded under the Pāṇḍavas.

These took power at the beginning of the sixth century, and their historical evidence attest, especially under the long kingdom of Śivagupta Balārjuna (c. 590–650 CE), a growing support for the Śaiva religion, both in the form of the kings' public affiliation and in the number of grants made to Śaiva institutions and teachers. Pāṇḍava grants to religious institutions keep attesting the use of *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra*, as evidenced in the Philadelphia Museum plates of Nannarāja I (c. 537 CE),[31] as well as in five more grants of Śivagupta Balārjuna,[32] a king

[31] This is a copper-plate dated to the year 7 of Nannarāja I, recently discovered at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and published by Ali and Zhang (2022). The text is also available at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSDaksinaKosala00024. The king professes his adherence to the Śaiva religion by using the title *paramamāheśvara*, but this specific grant is not addressed to a religious institution, as the beneficiary is the *mahaṛṣi* Vaiśampāyana, a *koṣṭhaka* who receives the grant of a village for the usual formulaic scopes, namely the practice of repair works, *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* (pl. 2v ll. 3–4): *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁ*[l. 4]*skāra-karaṇa-bali-caru-sattra-pravarttanāya ca*.

[32] The relevant grants are: the Sirpur Plates dated to year 46 (see a revised edition of the text at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSDaksinaKosala00039), where Śivagupta grants a village on the occasion of the installation of the Dayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple within the *maṭhikā* of Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka, in order to finance future repairs, maintain and protect the staff associated with the temple, sponsor *pūjā* to Hara and increase the merits of the king and his parents (Pl. 2r–2v): *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskārā*[l. 7]*rthaṁ tadupayogi-parikara-pratipālanārthaṁ hara-pūjā-*[Pl. 2v, l. 1]*saṁgītaka-pravarttanārthaṁ ca mātā-pitror ātmanaś ca puṇyābhivṛddha*[l. 2]*ye*. Furthermore, the undated Sirpur Plates (see a revised edition of the text at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSDaksinaKosala00044) record the donation of a village on petition of the queen Ammadevī to the temple of Ammeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka

whose name is associated with the foundation of the important Śaiva complex of Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka in Sirpur (Śrīpura), that he and his queens kept expanding through a monastery and several other shrines (Bosma 2018, 75ff). The imposing epigraphic evidence of this site, jointly to its archaeological record and iconographic program, witnesses the co-existence, *in situ*, of Śaiva Siddhānta[33] officiants along with several

that she had erected. The donation was meant to finance the usual activities (Pl. 2v): *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskārārthaṁ bali-caru-saṁgītaka-dhūpa-pūjā*-[l. 2]-*pravarttanāya sammārjjanopalepanārthañ ca mātā-pitror ātmanaś ca*|- [l. 3] *puṇyābhivṛddhaye*. Note that here the text also mentions *sammārjana* and *upalepana*, the 'scrubbing' and 'anointing' (of icons); the *Śivadharmaśāstra* mentions them together in chapter two with reference to the cult of the *liṅga* and the foundation of a *śivālaya*: *yat puṇyaṁ sthāpite liṅge kṛte yac ca śivālaye | saṁmārjane ca yat puṇyaṁ yat puṇyam upalepane* || 2.2 ||. Another grant that the king makes on petition, again undated, is the one recorded in the Malhār Plates (Sastri 1995, 2. 138–140; https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSDaksinaKosala00050). Here the petitioner is Śivanandin, who makes a grant to the temple of Kapāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka that he himself had established, to provide for repairs, *bali*, and *caru* (Pl. 2r, ll. 5–6): *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra-karaṇāya bali-caru*-[l. 6]*pravarttanāya*.

Two more grants from the time of this king attesting to the use of the *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* formula are discussed in the following footnote.

[33] For the prevalence of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition in Dakṣiṇa Kosala and the identification of local lineages of teachers, see Bosma 2018, 77ff and 88ff. One of the several inscriptions attesting to the presence of Śaiva Siddhānta teachers and the royal support granted to them are the Sirpur Plates, dated to year 55, recording the donation of a village on the occasion of the installation of the temple Ammeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka, on petition of the queen Ammādevī, to *ācārya* Astraśiva, pupil of Vyāpaśiva and *sthānaguru* of the Bāleśvara complex. Half of the profits from the donated village have to be used for the repair works and the *pūjā*, while another half constitutes the *gurudakṣiṇā* aimed at supporting 'teaching and feeding students and students of students' (Pl. 2r-2v): *śrībāle* [l. 5] *śvarabhaṭṭāraka-pratibaddhāmeśvarabhaṭṭāraka-pratiṣṭākāle devakula*-[l. 6]*khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāraṇa-pūjādi-pravarttanārtham arddhena*| *apa*[l. 7]*rārddhenāpi gurudakṣiṇāyāṁ śrī-bhagavad-vyāpaśivācāryya-pāda-śi*[pl. 2v l. 1]*ṣya-śrīmad-astraśivācāryya-sthānagurubhyaḥ śiṣya-praśiṣyāṇāṁ vyākhyānātra*-[l. 2]*sattra-pravarttanāya*. Note here the use of the odd °*saṁskāraṇa*° in place of °*saṁskaraṇa*°. For this grant, see Bosma 2013, as well as the text at the URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSDaksinaKosala00043.

branches of the Pāśupata tradition,[34] in a territory that is at the same time dotted with the presence of Buddhist institutions.[35]

The study of an individual expression, while it can be an important piece of a broader picture, can do little *per se* towards building an argument, and so it will be with our *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra*. Its distribution in epigraphy suggests us to be careful in putting forward any direct Buddhist connections past the mid-fifth century, but also points at other factors to consider, such as its geographical and chronological dissemination. As we noticed, the Sanskritisation of *phuṭṭa* into *sphuṭita*, or the use of *saṁskāra* with or without a prefix, are dictated both by a gradual update of the language, and by the choice of the chancelleries, which tended to prefer consistency over modernisation. The development and spread of *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* should thus be studied in the broader context of the formation and transmission of administrative language in South Asian grants, across different courts and chancelleries. For what concerns our possible Śivadharma connection, which is the reason that prompted this *excursus* into the history of a compound, what we can observe is that the effort of connecting our texts to the reality of South Asian polities can indeed be a fruitful way to point to possible research directions, if paired with the right amount of caution. In the present case, we cannot fail to observe that both the seventh–eighth

[34] As for the Pāśupata branches that were active in the region, epigraphic evidence seems to point to the presence of a lineage of the Somasiddhānta tradition (see Bakker 2000, and Bosma 2018, 84), as well as of the Kuru branch of Pāśupata Śaivism (Bosma 2018, 66–67). Evidence of the latter might be found in the Lodhiā Plates, dated to year 57. The text of these plates can be found in Shastri 1995, 2.128–133, as well as online at the following URL: https://dharmalekha.info/texts/INSDaksinaKosala00046. The Lodhiā Plates record the donation of a village in favour of Īśāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka, to finance the temple's repairs (Pl. 2r, l. 6: *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskārārthaṁ*), worship through dance and music, as well as the usual *bali*, *caru* and *sattra*. This donation was made on petition of Śūlapāṇi, pupil of the *ācārya* Pramatha, who is described as a 'constant wanderer' (*capalagocarin*) descending from the *tapovana* of the Dvaitavana forest. For the arguments connecting these and other local ascetics to the Kuru branch, which according to the tradition originated from the fourth disciple of Lakulīśa, born in the Kuru country, see Bosma 2018, 66–67 and 73–74.

[35] The presence of Buddhism in the area and the continued monarchical support to this religion is well attested in archaeological and epigraphical evidence, as shown in Bosma 2018, 91ff.

century Nepalese grants, as well as the grants of Śivagupta, both attesting *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra* in the same wording as the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, come from environments in which the Śivadharma has either certainly circulated (as in the case of Nepal, though we do not know how much earlier than the ninth century this happened), or is coherent with the local religious landscape, as in the case of the Pāṇḍava kingdom of Dakṣiṇa Kosala—where, just like in the case of Nepal, Buddhism was a strong presence. While it would be a mistake to build an argument solely on the basis of this, it would be equally misleading not to consider and assess this further piece of evidence in a more general discussion on the localisation of our texts in South Asia, and on the identification of the religious communities of which they were expressions.

One final consideration on this point should be reserved for the anonymous Sanskrit commentary on the *Śivadharmaśāstra*. Its remarks on stanzas 4.49–51 are very brief, but still convey a piece of information that can be relevant for a historical discussion, since we can crosscheck it with the epigraphical data:[36]

> *citranirmāṇaphalam āha* ***kārayed*** *iti dvābhyāṁ* | *jīrṇoddhāre phalam āha* ***khaṇḍeti*** | ***maulikaṁ*** [em.; *maulakam* Ms] *ālayādinirmāṇanimittaṁ* ***phalam*** *ity arthaḥ* |
>
> With the two stanzas beginning with *kārayet* (4.49–50), he teaches the merit of setting up the decorations. With the stanza starting with *khaṇḍa*, he teaches the reward of restoring what is old. The highest reward is due to the construction of the temple and so on—this is the meaning.

The commentator glosses *khaṇḍasphuṭitasaṁskāraṁ* with *jīrṇoddhāra*, an expression that is similarly found in texts and inscriptions alike, with the meaning of 'removing what is old' and damaged to replace it (as per *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* 2, s.v.). As pointed out by Czerniak-Drożdżowicz (2014, 54–55), the topic of *jīrṇoddhāra* is widespread in Pāñcarātra literature, where the term is used not just in its literal sense of 'removing'

[36] My reading is based on the commentary *ad loc.* transmitted in a manuscript in Malayalam script in the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library, Trivandrum, accession number 12766.

the old and damaged objects or parts of the temple, but also in a more extensive meaning of 'repairing' these damages. In this sense, the term is thus almost a synonym of *khaṇḍasphuṭitasaṁskāraṁ*, coherently with the interpretation of our commentator.

As far as epigraphy is concerned, von Hinüber (2013, 372, fn 23) observes that this 'combination is found in later South Indian inscriptions,' and proceeds to refer to a few epigraphical examples of the compound *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-jīrṇoddhāra*. The attestations he refers to are chronologically coherent, being dated from the twelfth to the thirteenth century, but also geographically close, as they are all from central Deccan (present-day Maharashtra and Karnataka). I mention this for it seems to me that one could bring more evidence to corroborate the hypothesis that the expression *jīrṇoddhāra* (compounded or not with *khaṇḍasphuṭita*°) may be less ubiquitous than the many variations of *khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-saṁskāra*, and more connected to a specific regional area. For instance, a search through the epigraphic materials that the DHARMA Project has so far made available shows that the expression *jīrṇoddhāra* (with the orthography *jīrṇṇōddhāra*) is in fact standard in Kannada inscriptions from Medieval and Modern Karnataka addressing religious institutions of different affiliations, and as such is overwhelmingly attested in *Epigraphia Carnatica*. In this body of texts, it can be used as an independent compound, often in the dative case (and thus *jīrṇṇōddhārakke* or *jīrṇṇōddhārakkam*), but it also occurs as one member of a longer compound, in which case it is often preceded exactly by *khaṇḍasphuṭita*°. As a purely indicative example, a search for *jīrṇṇōddhāra* yields 19 occurrences in volume 5 of *Epigraphia Carnatica* (Rice 1902a and b), 34 in volume 7 (Rice 1902c), and 17 in volume 8 (Rice 1904). The expression is likewise widely attested in other volumes of the series. The occurrences in the three volumes that I have examined more closely are mostly dated to the twelfth century, with some being as early as the beginning of the eleventh century (EC 7, Shikarpur Taluk no. 125, dated to 1019 CE, where the expression is available both as an independent noun and in composition with *khaṇḍasphuṭita*°), while others date up to the seventeenth century (see EC 5, Belur Taluk no. 128, dated to 1638 CE). As for the religious affiliation of the grants, at a first overview all three main organised religions of the area seem to have made equal use of the expression, with

attestations both in Jaina, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava grants—proving, also in this case, that boundaries are indeed very blurred.

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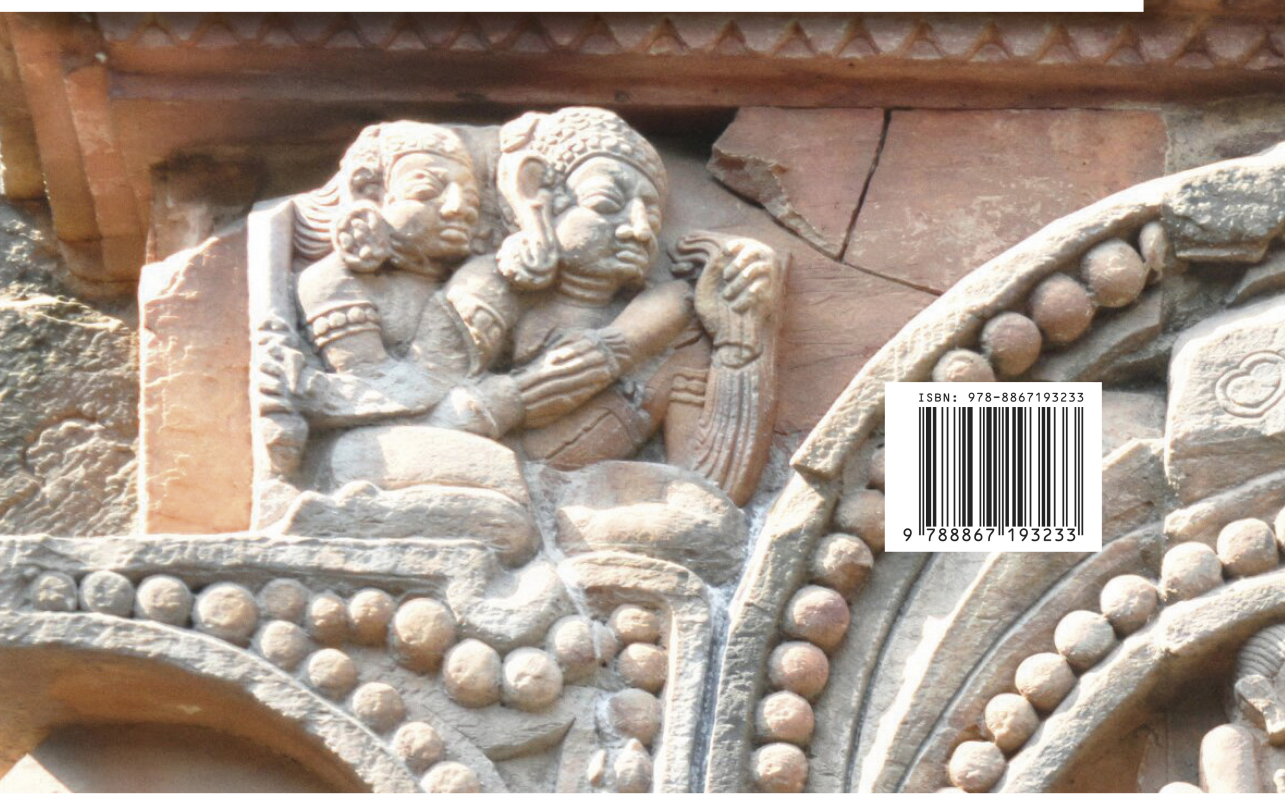
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