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Monuments of Hope, Gloom, and Glory

In the Age of the Hunnic Wars

50 years that changed India (484 – 534)

Acknowledgements

A photograph taken in Gouda in 1906 shows Jantje Gonda at the age of one, or thereabouts (Plate 1). The photo had been given to me by Annette Bieringa-Gonda, a niece of Jan Gonda, on the occasion in 1997 when I gave the inaugural address of the Gonda Chair, a professorship to which I had been elected a year earlier. The Gonda Chair had been endowed to the University of Groningen by the J. Gonda Fund Foundation, which administers Gonda's bequest to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences since 1992. I am therefore deeply indebted to Jan Gonda. To present the 24th J. Gonda Lecture I consider a privilege and great honour.

In addition to this honorary obligation, I owe a large immaterial debt to Jan Gonda, the professor. I am his *praśiṣya*, grand-pupil, through his pupil Jacob Ensink. One of the books that was essential reading in my student days was his *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism. A Comparison*, which appeared in 1970 as a compilation of the Jordan Lectures that Jan Gonda had presented at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1969.

Jan Gonda was one of the first scholars who systematically compared both religions. Today, 46 years later, our knowledge of both religions has increased, but Gonda's approach has little lost of its value. As a tribute to my *paramaguru* I have chosen this subject for the present occasion: the relationship of Visnuism and Sivaism, and their rivalry, explored in the light of the period of fifty years that changed India.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The End of the Gupta Empire

In the middle of the rainy season of the Gupta Year 191, July 510, the cremation of Goparāja took place. Goparāja had been killed in a heroic battle at Eran, where he had fought alongside ‘the bravest man on earth’, Bhānugupta, whose prowess was said to equal that of Pṛthā’s son Arjuna. The gloom of the dramatic events was intensified by the horrific death of ‘his devoted, attached, beloved and beautiful wife, who accompanied Goparāja onto the funeral pyre’.¹ A memorial monument was erected at the site (Plate 2).

Like the first battle of Eran, in which the local governor Mātrviṣṇu had lost his life, this second battle must have been between the new major power of north-west India, Toramāṇa, and what remained of the Gupta Empire in eastern Malwa. These two battles of the First Hunnic War were fought in the Betwā Valley; at stake was the access to the Empire’s western capital Vidiśā and the metropolis Ujjain, 200 km further to the west. The events of 510 meant the virtual end of the Gupta Empire. How did things get to this stage?

2 The First Hunnic War

2.1 Kidarites and Alchons in the North-West

A Hunnic people, called by Priscus Οὔνοι Κιδάριται,² had its power base in Bactria (Tokharistan) in the first half of the fifth century. These people, led by king Kidara and others, had earlier spread their power south of the Hindukush and had conquered Gandhāra,³ where a branch, referred to by the Chinese *Book of Wei* (*Weishu*) as the ‘Lesser Yuezhi’, had its capital in Fu-lou-sha (Puruṣapura = Peshawar) under Kidara’s son.⁴ In the wake of this resuffle of regional power, other Hunnic people moved eastwards, settling initially in the Kabul-

Kapisa region,⁵ before gradually replacing the Kidarites in Gandhāra and West Panjab in the first half of the 5th century. They referred to themselves as Αλχανο, Alchons.⁶ This movement of Hunnic people forced the young Skandagupta to make a stand in around AD 455, at a moment in world history when Attila had been held off at the Catalaunian Plains in northern France (451) and had died in the arms of his young bride (453), and the Sasanian King Yazdagird II was engaged in a war with the Kidarites in Bactria (456).⁷ The Gupta king referred to his adversaries as ‘Mleccha’ in his *Junāgarh Rock Inscription* (v. 4) and ‘Hūṇa’ in the *Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription* (v. 8).⁸

To judge by their collective mintage, the Alchons were organized in a sort of confederacy, a quadrumvirate of kings, of whom Khiṅgila seems to have been the *primus inter pares*.⁹ A picture of such a quadrumvirate is provided by the famous silver bowl from Swat in the British Museum,¹⁰ showing a male bust on the central medallion, surrounded by four royal hunters (one apparently identical to the central bust). We will return to the iconography of this wonderful piece later in this lecture (Plates 3 & 4).

Alchon power increased and changed in character in the second half of the fifth century. A recently acquired new source sheds more light on this development.

The *Schøyen Copper Scroll* mentions four rulers, Khīṅgīla, Javūkha, and Mehama, all known from coinage, while the fourth of the earlier quadrumvirate, Lakhāna, is replaced by Toramāṇa. Only the latter bears the title Devarāja in the scroll, a royal title uncommon to Sanskrit epigraphy.¹¹ It indicates a further Indianization of the title of Khiṅgila found on his coins: Devaṣāhi.¹² I think this correspondence is significant as it may express the foremost position of first Khiṅgila, then Toramāṇa.¹³

The date of the scroll, Year 68, corresponds, if referring to the Kanīṣka Era, to AD 495/96.¹⁴ Shortly thereafter Toramāṇa seized absolute power, as proven by the nearly contemporaneous *Kurā Stone Inscription*, found in Kurā/Khwera in the Salt Range. In this record

he assumed the Indian titles Rājādhirāja Mahārāja, combined with the Central Asian title of Ṣāh(i) Jaūḥkha (proto-Turkish: Yabǵu?).¹⁵ Khwera is 50 km to the south of the town of Tālagang, a place in West Panjab that possibly corresponds to the Tālagāna mentioned in the scroll.¹⁶ Both the inscribed stone and scroll evince the assimilation of the Alchon rulers to their Indian environment, since both record in perfect Sanskrit their patronage of Buddhist Vihāras and Stūpas in the Panjab and Kashmir (Śārdīysa, modern Śārada).¹⁷

2.2 Toramāṇa

In the closing years of the fifth century, after his power had been consolidated in the North-west, Toramāṇa embarked on territorial expansion—maybe not so much driven by the ferocious nature that is often ascribed to the Huns, than by his being mindful of the Indian ‘Treatise on Polity’ (*Arthaśāstra*), according to which ‘a good ruler should wish to conquer’.¹⁸ The former alleged nature may have contributed to his success, though. Eventually this led to the funereal monument of Goparāja with which we opened our lecture, but it is possible to reconstruct a few preceding stages of what I would like to call the First Hunnic War.

In the first year of his reign as Rājādhirāja, the Alchon king entered the Gaṅgā–Yamunā Doāb, conquered Mathurā, crossed the Yamunā near Kalpi (Kālapriyanātha) and marched south into the Betwā Valley in order to attack the western territories of the Gupta Empire.¹⁹ The two powers clashed on the plains around Eran or Airikiṇa, the ‘Refreshing Fields’, which are criss-crossed by the Betwā and Bina Rivers (Plate 27).

On the south banks of the Bina, the building of a religious complex dedicated to Viṣṇu, the Empire’s tutelary deity, had begun under Budhagupta (Plates 5 & 6). Here Mahārāja Mātrviṣṇu and his younger brother Dhanyaviṣṇu, two local feudatories, had erected a twin temple guarded by a 13 m-high pillar,²⁰ the ‘Column of Janārdana’ (i.e. Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa) (Plate 7).²¹ It supported the image of Janārdana’s emblem (*ketu*), Garuḍa, corresponding with the imperial standard—pride

and glory of the Gupta Dynasty (Plate 8).

Under the eye of the Imperial Eagle the first battle of Eran was fought, and lost. Dhanyaviṣṇu survived the dramatic events and was given a choice: accept the sovereignty of the Alchon king or die. He chose the former. The glory of the Empire was gone, but hope survived.

This hope was embodied in the c. 3.5 m high, theriomorphic image of Varāha, which Dhanyaviṣṇu was allowed to complete in the first year of Toramāṇa's reign (Plate 9).²² The monument bears testimony to his trust in God, a god who, to quote the *Mahābhārata*, 'at times when the whole cosmos had burst into lamentation—heaven, atmosphere and earth—and not a single god or human being stood firm, took the earth upon his tusk and lifted her up a thousand *yojanas*'.²³ Toramāṇa, who was well-disposed towards the Vaiṣṇava faith, may have thought it appropriate to the occasion.

From all we know of Toramāṇa, he set himself the task not to bring the Gupta Empire down, but to bring it under his control. To this end, now the western territories were pacified, the Alchon king launched an attack on the heart of the Empire. We have only archaeology to tell us the story, but this story is unambiguous. Excavations at the ancient city of Kauśāmbī reveal that the latest levels of occupation witnessed destruction on an unparalleled scale. The culprit left his business card, discovered in the excavations of the Ghoṣitārāma: a seal of that monastery restruck with the letters *To Ra Ma Na* (Plate 10).²⁴ The excavations also showed that Kauśāmbī never recovered from the sack.²⁵

Toramāṇa's ambition

I have now made two bold claims: first, that Toramāṇa was well-disposed towards the Vaiṣṇava faith; second, that his aim was not to destroy but to take over the Empire and turn it to his own advantage. Evidence comes in the form of coinage.

A significant but underestimated fact is that Toramāṇa was the first Alchon king who omitted his tribal affiliation *Alchano*. Secondly, he is the first who clearly imitates his Gupta predecessors in his copper, silver and gold coins.²⁶ With regard to the latter, Pankaj Tandon

has argued in a recent article that dinars reading *prakāśāditya* on the reverse are to be ascribed to Toramāṇa (Plate 11). Tandon restored conclusively the legend on the obverse of these coins: ‘The Lord of the Earth, Toramāṇa, having conquered the earth, wins heaven’,²⁷ which tallies with his silver coins copied from a Skandagupta prototype in the collection of the British Museum (Plate 12).²⁸

The assimilated Hun not only wished no longer to be reminded of his tribal background, on his *Prakāśāditya* dinars the *Garuḍa* standard replaces the *Alchon* symbol or *tamga*.²⁹ Tandon notes that this ‘is actually a departure from Gupta practice’, since ‘Gupta coins of the Horseman type or Lion-slayer type never show a *Garuḍa* banner’.³⁰ Although we do not know where exactly Gupta mints were in operation at the time, the fact alone that Toramāṇa was able to have his *Prakāśāditya* coins minted and issued proves his firm grip on important parts of the Gupta territories and administration. In brief, it was of great importance to Toramāṇa to present himself as a worthy successor to the imperial throne, including its *Vaiṣṇava* ideology, and, as far as our sources allow us to say, he seems to have been rather successful. The traditional image of a marauding, barbaric, Central-Asian horseman is a product of propaganda and must be relinquished.³¹

A fundamentally positive attitude towards Indian culture becomes manifest from all the numismatic and epigraphic sources of Toramāṇa that we possess. It is also evident from the testimonies of his conquest of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

In order to control the western trade route from Mathurā to the Arabian Sea, Toramāṇa led an expedition in his second or third year to Rajasthan and Gujarat, through *Madhyamikā* (*Nagarī*) and *Daśapura* (*Mandasor*), toward *Bharukaccha* (*Broach*) on the Gulf of Cambay. On this route lay the important trade centre of *Vadrapālī*, in all likelihood the modern town of *Sanjeli* in North Gujarat, where three copper plates were found in a field.³² *Sanjeli*’s unique physical geography, being set within a series of natural fortifications in the form of low, rocky mountains, made it a strategic caravanserai on the road to the coast.

Testifying to his strategic and organisational talents, Toramāṇa succeeded in installing a governor named Bhūta in Vadrāpālī—a thousand kilometers south of his homeland in the Panjab.

The first Sanjeli Plate records that, ‘in the third year of the reign of the supreme lord Mahārājādhirāja, the illustrious Toramāṇa, thanks to whose grace Mahārāja Bhūta is holding the governorship’, a group of merchants agreed to donate a ‘twentieth’ (*viṃśopakāṇaka*), levied on loads of cotton, salt and molasses, to the Temple of Jayasvāmin, Lord of Victory, erected by the mother of king Bhūta.³³ Once again a Viṣṇu temple sanctioned by the Alchon king.

2.3 A Period of Gloom

This positive view, however, was not shared by those who had been conquered, tortured, whose family members had been transported or cruelly executed, and who had been robbed of everything that made life worthwhile. For them the Mleccha king and his horsemen meant terror and a direct threat to civilisation.

The kingdom of Daśapura, whose rulers had been feudatories of the Guptas during most of the fifth century, bore the full brunt of the Alchon onslaught. Concomittant with the decline of their overlords, the dynasty of the Early Aulikaras quitted the scene. Before another branch of the family, known as the Later Aulikaras, came to the fore, Daśapura seems to have been ruled by the family of the Māṇavāyaṇis. We possess two inscriptions of Mahārāja Gauri of this dynasty. In the first one, the *Choṭī Sādrī Inscription*, dated to the Mālava-Era year 547 (AD 491), Gauri testified to his devotion to the Goddess, without any reference to an overlord.³⁴

The Guptas had obviously vanished from the stage, whereas Toramāṇa had not yet come onto it.

The situation is significantly different in his later *Mandasor Fragmentary Inscription*. This inscription opens with a *maṅgala* verse dedicated to ‘the Rider of Garutmat’, i.e. Viṣṇu.³⁵ This is followed by a reference to the reigning king Ādityavardhana in a locative absolute construction, who is said to rule Daśapura after having slain

his enemy in battle.³⁶ Syntactically it is nearly impossible to identify Ādityavardhana with Gauri, whose pedigree follows. The obvious interpretation of both inscriptions in tandem is that, between the *Choṭī Sādrī Inscription* and the *Mandasor Fragmentary Inscription*, Daśapura had been conquered by Ādityavardhana, and as a result Gauri had lost his independence. This may explain why he stopped using the Mālava (Vikrama) Era and does not refer to his own devotion to the Goddess. The problem is, who is this Ādityavardhana; a figure-head of Toramāṇa or that king himself? In view of the element Āditya in his name, reminding us of Prakāśāditya, and the dedication to the ‘Rider of Garutmat’, reminding us of the Garuḍadvaja on the same dinars, an identification of Ādityavardhana with Toramāṇa cannot be excluded.³⁷ The matter cannot be settled here; what is clear is that Daśapura went through hard times. Gauri’s vacillations between hope and gloom may be heard from his words that express his wish that the tank, which he had excavated on the outskirts of the town in order to increase the merit of his deceased mother, may bring happiness to all living beings when they drink its water.³⁸

Happiness was in high demand at the turn of the century. All of the kingdoms that had made up the Gupta Empire were in disarray. It is one thing to aspire to imperial status, quite another to bring stability and prosperity. As to the latter, it was obvious that the Alchon conqueror had failed.

The monuments of Devanī Morī and Śāmalājī

That times were changing in a momentous way may be best illustrated by the archaeological remains of two sites in Western Malwa, about 175 km south-west of Daśapura (Mandasor), Śāmalājī and adjacent Devanī Morī in North Gujarat.

Of these two sites Devanī Morī is the most ancient one, preserving the remains of a Buddhist monastery and a Mahāstūpa. The oldest parts of the excavated Stūpa may date to Kṣatrapa times, the fourth century,³⁹ but, as argued by Joanna Williams, the accomplished terracotta images of the Buddha, showing influence of the mature Gupta style of Mathurā, belong to the first decades of the fifth century, when

Candragupta II had broken Śaka power (Plate 13).⁴⁰ The artists who made these images were far removed from the sentiments of gloom that we find at the end of the fifth and early sixth century. The images belong to a happier period in Indian history.

At a distance of 2 kilometers north of Devanī Morī, on the northern banks of the Meshvo River (now Meshvo Reservoir), and less than a century later in time, we find an archaeological site whose remains are of a very different character.⁴¹ Amongst the earliest finds from this area are four demonic figures, one of which deserves our special attention (Plate 14).⁴² However we label this figure—Yakṣa, Piśāca, Rākṣasa, Gaṇa—the basic emotion that underlies this image seems to be fear, and this fear relates to foreigners.

I am basing this interpretation on the peculiar headgear of the figure. It consists of a bun and fanning ponytail combined with a diadem with two triangular side ornaments studded with jewels, recalling the mural crown of the Sasanian kings with korymbos. This headgear was imitated by Hunnic kings, as the drachm of the Sasanian king Wahram V (AD 420–438) and a dinar of an anonymous Hunnic king of Sindh may illustrate (Plates 15 & 16).⁴³

A silver plate in the British Museum, showing a king hunting lions, is identified as the Sasanian king Wahram V by his crown, the korymbos is set on a crescent (Plate 17).⁴⁴ The way in which the king bends forward to deliver a blow to the lion which is rearing up on its hind legs closely resembles the horse-rider lion-slayer coin of Prakāśāditya, as observed by Pankaj Tandon; it reinforces his assignment of these coins to an Alchon rather than a Gupta king.⁴⁵ The silver plate is relevant to us for one more reason. In addition to the korymbos crown, the image has another tantalizing correspondence with the Gaṇa figure of Śāmalājī, viz. the way the king clasps a lion cub in his left hand, which resembles the way in which the Gaṇa's right hand holds what seems to be a human figure (Plates 18 & 19). We can almost hear him shriek!⁴⁶

The Sasanian silver plate has a Hunnic counterpart in the famous silver bowl from Swat, which we have already briefly mentioned (Plates

3 & 4).⁴⁷ The four hunters who may represent a quadrumvirate, wear different crowns: one has an elongated skull ('Turmschädel'), which we encounter on Alchon coins, but two others wear crowns similar to the Sasanian korymbos diadem and its Kidarite imitations (Plate 20).⁴⁸ If we discount the crescent, we can recognize the headgear of the demonic Gaṇa of Śāmalājī.

Despite the iconographic features that point to the Sasanians of Iran and their Hunnic intermediaries, the figures of Śāmalājī stand firmly within an Indian tradition. This is evinced in particular by one of the other Gaṇas, the squatting one, who has a third eye. This places these four images within the World of Śiva and aligns them to the other finds in Śāmalājī. We are on the eve of the Śaiva turn.

2.4 A Buddhist Vision of the Kali Age

That this new departure in Indian culture was born out of pain is also manifest in some Mahāyāna texts. The tenth chapter of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, one of the later additions, assigns the beginning of the Kali Age to this period.⁴⁹ It runs in the translation of Vincent Eltschinger:

[There will be] the Mauryas, the Nandas and the Guptas, and then the *mlecchas* [will be] the vilest among rulers. At the end of the *mlecchas*, [there will be] an armed conflagration (*śastrasaṃkṣobha*), and at the end of the warfare (*śastrānte*), the Kaliyuga [will open up]. And at the end of the Kaliyuga, the Good Law will no longer be cultivated by people.⁵⁰

Eltschinger's (*op. cit.* 82, 90) suggestion that the *mlecchas* are the Hūṇas is plausible. He connects this text with another 'extremely suggestive passage' in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (265, 4–8), in which the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara prophesises:

O Maheśvara, you will be [active] when the Kaliyuga arrives. Born as the foremost of the gods in the realm of suffering beings, you will be the creator and the agent [of the world]. (tr. Eltschinger 2014, 84)

The Buddhist text goes even so far as to present a *nirukti* of the word *liṅga*, quoting, as shown by Peter Bisschop, the *Śivadharmasāstra*.⁵¹ Eltschinger concludes: ‘From this period Śaivism is the most dangerous religio-political challenge to Buddhism’,⁵² and it is Saivism par excellence, in a Buddhist vision of time that emerges around AD 500, that becomes associated with the Kaliyuga, believed to have arrived along with ‘the vilest among rulers’, the Huns.⁵³

The cruel grin of the Gaṇa of Śāmalājī (Plate 14) and the tranquil smile of the Buddha of Devanī Morī (Plate 13), two images so close in space and time, express, better than words could do, that a new reality had taken shape. This is what the author of chapter 10 of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* perceived.

2.5 Hope Regained

Kali Age or not, resistance was growing and rallied round a branch of the Aulikaras that claimed sovereignty in the second decade of the sixth century. Thanks to the *Rīsthal Inscription* of the Mālava Year 572 (AD 515), we know that King Prakāśadharman restored order in Daśapura. In this he was helped by the powerful merchant clan of the Naigamas, whose foremost members functioned as *rājasthānīya* or viceroys to the Later Aulikaras.⁵⁴ A spirit of resilience not only speaks from the inscription, but also from the monuments left behind by the new rulers of Daśapura.

This resilience drew its inspiration from religion. The sixth-century Aulikara rulers gave up Vaisnavism, the state religion of their former overlords and ancestors, and embraced a vibrant and militant Saivism, which, in the form of the Pāśupata movement, had spread from the land between the Narmadā and Mahī Rivers to the north, where it had become well established and organized in a network of temples and *mathas* all over Gujarat and Rajasthan.⁵⁵

The Pāśupata Weapon

The Pāśupata form of Saivism had started off as a movement of ascetics, whose ultimate goal was ‘release from suffering’ (*duḥkhānta*), but when this evolved into a broader movement, priests and teachers

(*ācāryas*) set up in temples, supported by large sections of the population, the *laukikas*. This type of organisation was copied from the heterodox religions, in particular Buddhism, but it had something to offer that Buddhism had not, or at least had less of: it provided ritual and practical means to attain worldly ends, such as power. This was exactly what the Aulikaras needed.

The hero Arjuna, who, by the grace of Śīva, had obtained supernatural powers to defeat apparently invincible enemies, became a paragon. The *Mahābhārata* tells how the great war was won by the Pāṇḍavas, after Arjuna, through courage, discipline, and devotion to Mahādeva, had obtained the Pāśupata *astra*, the ultimate weapon.⁵⁶ This legend struck a chord in the Aulikara court and gave it a powerful ideology. We possess two pieces of proof thereof: the remains of a Mahādeva Temple and its Entrance Gate (*torāṇa*) in Madhyamikā (Plate 21),⁵⁷ and the *Kirātārjunīya* composed by Bhāravi, who resided at the court of Prakāśadharman's successor, Yaśodharman, alias Viṣṇuvardhana.⁵⁸

The ancient city of Madhyamikā (Nagarī), c. 100 km to the north of Daśapura, was the second town of the kingdom. A stone found among the débris in Chittorgarh records the foundation of a temple dedicated to Śīva in Madhyamikā, 10 km north of the fort.⁵⁹ Its construction was commissioned by a member of the Naigama family whose name is lost, but who was probably the cousin of Bhagavaddoṣa, who held the office of viceroy (*rājasthānīya*) under Prakāśadharman.⁶⁰ The Entrance Gate of this Mahādeva Temple is preserved in Nagarī, and it tells, as Peter Bisschop and myself have argued in a recent article, the story of how the Pāśupata weapon, called Brahmaśiras, 'Head of Brahmā', was won.⁶¹

The ideology mentioned above, which connects this monument with the *Kirātārjunīya* composed at the same court a decade or so later, may be best illustrated by the panel in which Arjuna and the Kirāta, who is none other than Śīva in disguise, argue about who shot the boar (Plate 22). Arjuna speaks in Bhāravi's epic poem:

'Give way to nobody', this maxim the great seer has taught me;
the beast that was after my death has been killed by me; for to

stand by one's maxims is the ornament of the good.⁶²

Arjuna's quest for the divine Pāśupata Weapon is mythical in nature and as such conveys a general, timeless truth. As all myths, however, it may serve as a template for human action and its depiction in art may function as historical allegory, not unlike the mythical wars of the Lapiths against the Centaurs on the famous metopes from the Parthenon in the British Museum that at the same time represent the historical struggle of the Athenians against the Persians (Plate 23).⁶³

It is appealing to read the architrave as such a metaphor and to speculate on its connection with the Aulikara viceroy who commissioned it. The educated contemporary may have seen in its iconographic programme evidence of his governor or king embracing the Śaiva religion and obtaining irresistible power as a result (Plate 24). Ordinary visitors may have seen only the template, the myth, an ambiguity inherent in Indian plastic art in general.⁶⁴

2.6 Prakāśadharman's Victory over Toramāṇa

This instance shows how the Śaiva religion acquired a momentum that turned it into a cultural force. A wide-spread popular religion since long, Saivism, when it came to be invigorated by the Pāśupata school, was embraced by the political elite to support its ideology of power. The Vaiṣṇava religion could no longer serve this aim. It had become discredited and, perhaps more importantly, it could not offer what specifically Saivism could: Śiva's incarnation as a brahmin, later known as Lakulīśa, had brought within reach of the ordinary man the ability to acquire superhuman powers (*siddhi*) and divine weapons, through a teaching that was transmitted within lineages of human gurus or *ācāryas*, who, in the proper ritual setting, claimed and were believed to personify the Lord himself. On this religion the Aulikaras pinned their hope.

This hope, I would like to argue, is expressed especially by the size of the monuments: not only the gateway architrave in Madhyamikā, but also the contemporaneous colossal stele of Śiva Śūlapāṇi in Daśapura.⁶⁵ This stele may have been the main image installed

by Bhagavaddoṣa at the command of King Prakāśadharman in the Prakāśeśvara Temple, which in the *Rīsthal Inscription* is said to be ‘a symbol (*lakṣman*) of rising India, Bhāratavarṣa’ (Plates 25 & 26).⁶⁶ With a height of c. 3 m, the image equals its Vaiṣṇava counterpart, the Varāha of Eran erected by Dhanyaviṣṇu in the first year of Toramāṇa’s conquest which, in a similar vein, had been referred to as ‘the pillar of the universe’.⁶⁷

The events of 515, described in the *Rīsthal Inscription*, were evidently seen by its authors as a turning point in the history of Bhārata-varṣa, and rightly so. The inscription records that Prakāśadharman,

Had nullified by battle the title ‘Overlord’ (*adhirāja*) of the Hū-ṇa captain (*adhīpa*), (though it) had been firmly established on earth up to king Toramāṇa, whose footstool had glittered with the sparkling jewels in the crowns of kings (that had bowed at his feet).⁶⁸

The inscription concludes with a hopeful wish: ‘May both monuments erected by Bhagavaddoṣa in Daśapura, the Prakāśeśvara Temple and the adjacent beautiful Vibhīṣaṇa Tank (*saras*), continue to block the path of evil and spread glory, as long as the wind blows!’⁶⁹ Thus ended the First Hunnic War.

3 The Second Hunnic War

3.1 Mihirakula

Unfortunately, the wind was not blowing in the hoped-for direction. The Second Hunnic War broke out after Toramāṇa’s son Mihirakula had succeeded his father not long after 515 and had consolidated his power in West Panjab. Numismatic evidence seems to indicate that Mihirakula was the head of a federation of Alchon chiefs and of a lesser stature than his father.⁷⁰ The Chinese monk Songyun met the ‘King of the Huns’ in his army camp on the banks of the Jhelum River (Vitastā) in 520.⁷¹ The meeting was unpleasant and the Buddhist monk described the king (*tegin*) as having a wicked and cruel nature, as someone who had committed many massacres.⁷²

Mihirakula invaded Bhāratavarṣa along the same route that was earlier followed by his father in the campaign of his first year. We deduce this from the only inscription of Mihirakula that we know, the one which was found between the Chambal and Betwā Rivers, ‘built into the wall in the porch of a temple of the Sun in the fortress of Gwalior’.⁷³

Obviously Mihirakula controlled a broad corridor from his home base in the northern Panjab to Eastern Malwa, a corridor in which Gwalior Hill served as one of his garrisoned strongholds. This corridor bordered in the south-west on the Aulikara kingdom of Yaśodharman and in the north-east on the territories of the Maukharis, who had already annexed parts of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Plain by this time (Plate 27).⁷⁴

Mihirakula’s conversion to Saivism

This inscription is concerned with the establishment of a Sun temple on top of the Gopagiri (Gwalior Hill) by Mātṛceṭa, and it provides some highly significant information about Mihirakula. The king did not bear imperial titles and his position as ‘lord of the earth’ and ‘foremost among kings’ is clearly less exalted than that of his father. The inscription is dated in his regnal year 15, that is c. AD 530 and runs (v. 3):

[Toramāṇa], who had raised his family to fame, had a son of unequalled prowess, a lord of the earth (*patiḥ pṛthvyāḥ*), whose name was Mihirakula, and who, (though) unbent, [was bending to] Paśupati.⁷⁵

Having seen the success of the rulers of Daśapura against his father, and understanding the spirit of the age, the Alchon king had embraced Saivism and insisted that his devotion to Paśupati was officially declared in his records. The Śaiva turn was complete.⁷⁶

Mihirakula’s conversion did not remain unnoticed. In a unique example of intertextuality in Sanskrit epigraphy, his adversary, Prakāśadharman’s son Yaśodharman, put him in his place:

By that King Mihirakula, whose head had never been forced to bow in humility by anyone save Sthāṇu (i.e. Paśupati/Śiva), and the embrace of whose arms gave the Himālaya Mountain the illusion of being ‘impregnable’, even by him the feet of this (Yaśodharman) were humbly worshipped with an offering of flowers (fallen from) his crest, when the strength of (Yaśodharman)’s arms bent that (Hūṇa) monarch’s head painfully down into deference.⁷⁷

3.2 Yaśodharman’s Victory

We possess little concrete information about how this Second Hunnic War went. There was no longer an Empire to face the enemy. Successor states, like that of the Aulikaras in Daśapura in the west and the Maukharis in Kanyakubja (Kanauj) in the east, struggled on their own. In my *The World of the Skandapurāṇa* I have argued that the *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman* contains a clue as to how victory over the Alchon king was obtained.⁷⁸

The Aulikara king led what seems to have been a coalition of Indian kings against their common ‘northern enemy’, the Hūṇas.⁷⁹ The ‘eastern kings’, to whom the inscription refers, the ones who were won over by ‘peaceful means’, most likely were the Maukharis of Kanauj.⁸⁰ The two powers may have come together somewhere in the Betwā Valley, since the inscription describes how Yaśodharman’s army crossed the Vindhya Mountains.⁸¹ In this valley, in all likelihood, the decisive battle was fought (Plate 27).

After victory had been obtained around 532, emotions were running high. In his *Sondhni Pillar Inscription* the Aulikara king of Daśapura declared himself emperor, *samrāj*, and boasted of his achievements: He had rescued the earth from ‘kings of the present (Kali) age of blatant haughtiness who lacked any love for the good, whose delusion made them violate the path of proper conduct and who were cruel due to a total lack of decency’—he Yaśodharman, ‘who now reigns over countries that were not (even) controlled by the Gupta emperors,

[...] and countries that the command of the Hūṇa captains had not reached, though it had affected many a royal crown'.⁸²

In the midst of the jubilations it was decided in Daśapura to erect a monument of glory, and it should be big.

3.3 A Monument of Glory in Sondhni

Yaśodharman's two victory columns (*raṇastambhas*) are found near a village known as Sondhni (Plates 28 & 29), at 2.7 km south-east of Mandasor Fort,⁸³ at a site that lies 2 km east of Khilchipura, where the tall post was found that is now in the Fort (Plate 30).⁸⁴ Khilchipura and Sondhni are situated on either side of the present road and railway line, a track that may roughly correspond to the ancient road that connected Ujjayanī (Ujjain) with Daśapura (Plate 31). As has been observed by Peter Bisschop, when we visited the site in early 2016, two identical columns containing the same inscription on one and the same site make little sense. Both columns are made of sandstone and therefore must have come from elsewhere.⁸⁵ One of the columns may have been meant for another location—Khilchipura maybe?—but this plan was not executed for reasons unknown.

Each pillar is about 13.5 m high.⁸⁶ The finished column, however, must have been significantly higher, since the statue that stood on the summit is missing (Plate 32). In a recent lecture Elizabeth Cecil plausibly suggested that this statue may have been that of the Bull (*ukṣāṇa*), said to mark Śūlapāṇi's emblem (*ketu*) in the *maṅgala* verse of the inscription.⁸⁷ The original height will have exceeded that of the Pillar of Budhagupta in Eran, which supported, as we have seen, Janārdana's emblem, the Eagle Garuḍa (Plate 8).⁸⁸ In front of the pillars stand two colossal, 2.5 m high *dvārapālas*, which formed the lower parts of two gigantic gateposts (Plate 33). These and other finds at Sondhni resemble the structures found on the banks of the Bina in many respects, though they are on the whole bigger in size.⁸⁹ I would not be surprised if a comparative study of both sites revealed that the Sondhni architect had had a very good look at Eran.

The victory monument was meant to broadcast the glories of Yaśodharman, designed to write the virtues of the king on the disk of the moon, so that it may be known that he was ‘of noble birth, of behaviour, charming and purifying of sin, and the abode of Dharma’.⁹⁰

The Naigama brothers: Dharmadoṣa and Nirdoṣa

The *Mandasor Stone Inscription* of Yaśodharman/Viṣṇuvardhana, dated to 532, is earlier than the Sondhni monuments, as the following argument will make clear.

The inscription records the excavation of a well in Daśapura to commemorate the early death of the incumbent Naigama viceroy Abhayadatta.⁹¹ The well had been commissioned by the nephew of the deceased, Dakṣa, alias Nirdoṣa, the younger brother of Dharmadoṣa. Dharmadoṣa succeeded his uncle to the office of *rājasthānīya* to Yaśodharman. The inscription of 532 therefore puts on record the beginning of the official careers of Dharmadoṣa and Nirdoṣa.

The pillars at Sondhni were made when these two brothers were in office. This seems to follow from a previously unnoticed graffito on the upper part of the capital of the column that lies on the ground (Plate 34). It reads: *sadharmah nirdoṣah*. This text can be interpreted in more than one way.

A prima facie reading takes it as a qualification of the Aulikara king, who was, as we saw, the embodiment of virtue and without reproach. There is no *saṃdhi*, so we may read it as two sentences, referring to two persons: Sadharma and Nirdoṣa. Nirdoṣa is the name of the younger brother of the *rājasthānīya* Dharmadoṣa. If we ignore the absence of *saṃdhi*, the meaning could be Nirdoṣa ‘who is possessed of Dharma’, or ‘Nirdoṣa together with Dharma’, namely Dharmadoṣa. I think this ambiguity is intentional, a prank on the part of the two high officials, not meant to be read by anyone but the moon.⁹² History decided otherwise. But which history?

The engraver of the *Mandasor Stone Inscription* of 532, Govinda, also inscribed these two pillars. The latter may therefore be not that much later, one or two years, datable to a time when Yaśodharman’s

victory festivities had subsided and had given way to plans for a monument of glory. Was this monument ever completed? Was the vaunted glory nothing more than ordinary hubris? The end of the House of the Later Aulikaras seems to have come very abruptly indeed. Was Daśapura struck by another calamity at the pinnacle of its power? An earthquake maybe?⁹³ We will not know, unless new sources are discovered. But what we do know is, that India emerged substantially changed after fifty years of war. A few of these transformations may be summarized to conclude.

4 Fifty Years that Changed India

The most obvious change that took place during the fifty years that we have surveyed was the dissolution of the Gupta Empire and the rise of autonomous, regional states in Northern India. Examples that we have met are the Aulikara kingdom of Daśapura and the Maukhari kingdom of Kanyakubja, but this list could easily be extended to the Maitrakas of Valabhī, the Kalacuris of Māhiṣmatī, the Vardhanas of Sthāneśvara, etc. Since their independence had to be reconfirmed time and again, this new constellation was in a constant state of flux; the disappearance of the Daśapura Kingdom is a case in point.

As a corollary to the division into regions we find the decline of the major political and commercial centres of the fallen empire. We have seen that Kauśāmbī lay in ruins and we surmise that Ujjain had undergone a similar fate. Vidiśā lost its prominence, and so did Mathurā. These old cities were eclipsed by new urban centres such as Sthāneśvara, Valabhī, Śrīpura and Kanyakubja.

Just as far-reaching was that all of the royal dynasties of these successor states, including the Alchon Mihirakula, confessed Saivism. The fall of the Empire had discredited Vaisnavism, especially in the Empire's former territories. In addition to this political factor, one religious innovation in particular contributed to this development: the access Saivism offered to mundane benefits and supermundane power. This was effected through lineages of human agents who personified

god. It gave the Śaiva officials a distinctive edge over their Vaiṣṇava counterparts.⁹⁴

Consequently, for religions like Vaisnavism and Buddhism it became more difficult to find patronage. As a result the major religious innovations of the sixth century took place within the Śaiva fold.

Finally, and most difficult to define, there was a change of atmosphere, of spirit. In what exactly does this altered spirit consist?

At risk of slipping into unwarranted generalizations, I venture the hypothesis that it may have to do with a waning of natural confidence or optimism, and a resort to and entrenchment in ritualism as a means to cope with each and every eventuality or setback in life. This tendency offered opportunities to wonderworkers of all sorts, astrologers, augurs, priests, gurus, yogis, holy men, etc. I am not saying that this is all new and did not exist in Gupta times, but it seems to me that ritualization of religion and society increasingly determined human conduct in all walks of life. In the arts it becomes visible, for instance, in the fixation of iconographic idiom, in religion in the standardization of the liturgy, and in society on the whole in the belief in and pervasive use of incantations, Mantras, narrowly prescribed for each and every occasion.

We cannot blame the Huns for this. It is an orthogenetic evolution of Indian culture, accelerated in the fifty years under discussion. The Hunnic invasions acted as a catalyst of change.

It would be interesting to compare this period with another one in which Indian culture was under pressure, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and to identify a different set of monuments of hope, gloom and glory. I have some thoughts about that, but it is a subject for another lecture.⁹⁵

Appendix 2

TIMELINE

50 years that changed India (484 – 534)

- 484** *Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Budhagupta, Gupta Year 165.* Suraśmicandra ruling as Gupta viceroy from Yamunā to Narmadā. Column and twin temple erected by Mahārāja Mātṛviṣṇu and his younger brother Dhanyaviṣṇu in Eran (Betwā Valley).
- 491** *Choṭī Sādrī Inscription of Gauri, Mālava Year 547.* Date falls in January AD 491. Mahārāja Gauri of the Māṇavāyaṇi-kula built a great temple for the Devī near the village of Choṭī Sādrī between Mandasor and Chittorgarh (East Rajasthan).
- c. 495 Death of the Gupta Emperor Budhagupta.
- 495/96** *Schøyen Copper Scroll, Year 68.* Year 68 (Kaniṣka Era) corresponds to AD 495/96. Gandhāra – West Panjab. The scroll features four Alchon (Αλχωνο) kings, among whom Devarāja Toramāṇa.
- 495–500 *Kurā Stone Inscription* found in Khwera in the Salt Range (West Panjab). In this record Toramāṇa assumed the Indian titles Rājādhirāja Mahārāja, combined with the Central Asian title of Ṣāh(i) Jaūhkha (proto-Turkish: Yabgū?).
- 497–500 *Eran Stone Boar Inscription of Toramāṇa, Year 1.* In the first year of the reign of Mahārājādhirāja Toramāṇa. Installation of a Varāhamūrti (*trailokyamahāgrhastambhaḥ*) by Dhanyaviṣṇu, after death of elder brother Mātṛviṣṇu (in the first battle of Eran?). Beginning of the First Hunnic War.
- 498–501 Sack of Kauśāmbī.
- 498–501 *Mandasor Fragmentary Inscription of Ādityavardhana/Gauri.* In the reign of Ādityavardhana, after his conquest of Daśapura (Mandasor), Mahārāja Gauri of the Māṇavāyaṇi-kula dedicates a well in Daśapura to the memory of his mother.
- 500–503 *Sanjeli Copper Plate, Year 3.* In the third year of the reign of Mahārājādhirāja Toramāṇa, thanks to whose grace Mahārāja Bhūta in Vadrāpālī / Sanjeli is holding the governorship over the Śivabhāgapura district (North Gujarat).

- 500–510 Demonic Gaṇas of Śāmalājī, 175 km south-west of Daśapura (Mandasor), in North Gujarat.
- 510** *Eran Posthumous Stone Pillar Inscription of Goparāja, Gupta Year 191.* The inscription reports that Goparāja and Rāja Bhānugupta fought together in the second battle of Eran, in which Goparāja was killed.
- 513** Chinese translation by Bodhiruci of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.
- 513–515 Building of a Mahādeva Temple and Torāṇa in Madhyamikā (Nagarī), 10 km north of Chittorgarh, by a cousin of Naigama Bhagavaddoṣa, the viceroy of Prakāśadharman.
- 515** *Rīsthal Inscription, Mālava Year 572.* The Later-Aulikara king Prakāśadharman of Daśapura reports victory over the Hūṇādhipa Toramāṇa. Prakāśeśvara Temple, symbol of rising Bhāratavarṣa, erected by his viceroy (*rājasthānīya*), the Naigama Bhagavaddoṣa, in Daśapura. End of the First Hunnic War.
- 520** The Chinese monk Songyun meets the ‘King of the Huns’ (Mihirakula) in his army camp at the banks of the Jhelum River (Vitastā). Beginning of the Second Hunnic War.
- c. 530 *Gwalior Stone Inscription of Mihirakula, Year 15.* Toramāṇa’s son Mihirakula, Lord of the Earth, is bending to no-one save Paśupati.
- 532** *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman/Viṣṇuvardhana, Mālava Year 589.* Rājādhirāja Parameśvara Yaśodharman, alias Viṣṇuvardhana, of Daśapura reports the submission by force of the Northern Kings (Hūṇas). The inscription records the excavation of a well (*kūpa*) in Daśapura by Naigama Dakṣa, in memory of his uncle, the former *rājasthānīya* Abhayadatta.
- c. 534 *Sondhni Pillar Inscriptions of Yaśodharman.* Two identical pillars with identical inscriptions found in Sondhni, c. 2.7 km south of Mandasor/Daśapura. They claim that Emperor (*samrāj*) Yaśodharman had rescued the earth from rude and cruel kings of the present Kali age, and ‘had bent the head of Mihirakula.’ End of the Second Hunnic War.

Appendix 3

Sondhni Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman

The text presented here is based on the edition by Fleet in CII III (1880), 142–50, and Sircar in SI I, 418–20. The translation is by Bakker.

CONVENTIONS

all text silently restored to orthographic spelling
verse numbers and commas are added by the editor
danḍas (|) are inserted by the editor in accordance with standard convention
() emended reading
< > conjectural reading of damaged syllables
[*] conjectured reading of missing or illegible syllables
ins. reading of the inscription at issue
ḥ Upadhmaniya

TEXT

vepante yasya bhīmastanitabhayasamudbhṛāntadaityā digantāḥ,
śṛṅgāghātaiḥ sumeror vighaṭitadṛṣadaḥ kandarā yaḥ karoti |
ukṣāṇaṃ taṃ dadhānaḥ kṣitidharatanayādatta(pañcāṅgulā)ṅkaṃ,
drāghīṣṭhaḥ sūlapāṇeḥ kṣapayatu bhavatāṃ śatrutejāmsi ketuḥ || 1 ||
āvīrbhūtāvalepair avinayapaṭubhir llaṅghitācāramārgair,
mohād aidam̐yugīnair apaśubharatibhiḥ pīḍyamānā narendraiḥ |
yasya kṣmā śārṅgapāṇer iva kaṭhinadhanurjyākiṅāṅkaprakoṣṭhaṃ,
bāhuṃ lokopakāravratasaphalaparispandadhīraṃ prapanā || 2 ||
nindyācāreṣu yo 'smin vinayamuṣi yuge kalpanāmātravṛtṭyā,
rājasv anyeṣu pāṃsuṣv iva kusumabalir nābabhāse prayuktaḥ |
sa śreyodhāmnī samrāḍ iti manubharatālarkamāndhātṛkalpe,
kalyāṇe hemni bhāsvān maṇir iva sutarāṃ bhrājate yatra śabdaḥ || 3 ||
ye bhuktā **guptanāthair** na sakalavasudhākṛāntidṛṣṭapratāpair,
nājnā **hūṇādhipānām** kṣitipatimukutaḍhyāsīnī yān praviṣṭā |
deśāṃs tān dhanvaśailadruma(ga)hanasarīdvīrabāhūpagūḍhān,
vīryāvaskannarajñāḥ svagr̥haparisarāvajñayā yo bhunakti || 4 ||
ā lauhityopakaṅṭhāt talavanagahanopatyakād ā mahendrād,
ā gaṅgāśliṣṭasānos tuhinaśīkharīṇaḥ paścimād ā payodheḥ |
sāmantair yasya bāhudraṇaḥṛtamadaiḥ pādayor ānamadbhiś,
cūḍāratnām̐sūrājīvyatikaraśabalā bhūmibhāgāḥ kriyante || 5 ||

sthāṇor anyatra yena praṇatikṛpaṇatām prāpitaṃ nottamāṅgaṃ,
 yasyāśliṣṭo bhujābhyām vahati himagirir durgāśabdābhimānam |
 nīcais tenāpi yasya praṇatibhujabalāvarjanakliṣṭamūrdhnā,
 cūḍāpuṣpopahārair **mihirakulan**rpeṇārcitaṃ pādayugmam || 6 ||
 [gā*]m evonmātum ūrdhvaṃ vigaṇayitum iva jyotiṣāṃ cakravālam,
 nirdeṣṭuṃ mārgam uccair diva iva sukr̥topārjitāyāḥ svakīrteḥ |
 tenākālpāntakālāvadhīr avanibhujā śrī**yaśodharma**ṇāyaṃ,
 stambhaḥ stambhābhirāmasthirabhujaparighenoḥchritiṃ nāyito 'tra || 7 ||
 <ślā>ghe janmāsya vaṃśe caritaṃ aghaharaṃ dṛṣyate kāntam asmin,
 dharmasyāyaṃ niketaś calati niyamitaṃ nānunā lokavṛttam |
 ity utkarṣaṃ guṇāṇām likhitaṃ iva **yaśodharma**ṇaś candrabimbe,
 rāgād utkṣipta uccairbhujā iva rucimān yaḥ pṛthivyā vibhāti || 8 ||
 iti tuṣṭūṣayā tasya nṛpateḥ puṇyakarmaṇaḥ |
 vāsulenoparacitaḥ ślokaḥ kakkasya sūnunā || 9 ||
 [9] utkirṇā govindena ||

1–8 Sragdharā 9 Śloka

4c °gahana°] em. Fleet, Sircar : °śahana° ins. 7a gām evo°] conj. Fleet,
 Sircar : dhāmevo° conj. Balogh 9] cf. v. 29 of the *Rīsthal Inscription of Prakāśadharman* 1.9 *utkirṇā govindena*] cf. the *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman/Viṣṇuvardhana, Year 589*

TRANSLATION

May that flying banner (*ketu*) of Śūlapāṇi (i.e. Śīva) destroy the forces of your enemy, the banner that bears the Bull marked by the prints of the five fingers of the daughter of the mountain (i.e. Pārvatī), that (bull) whose terrific bellowing makes the quarters vibrate, bewildering the demons with fear, and whose pounding horns make the rocks in the valleys of Mount Sumeru crack. (1)

Oppressed by kings of the present (Kali) age of blatant haughtiness who lacked any love for the good,⁹⁶ whose delusion made them violate the path of proper conduct and who were cruel due to a total lack of decency—this earth took refuge to the arm of him, (Yaśodharman)—an arm which steadily brings observances to completion for the benefit of the world and whose lower part shows the calloses caused by the hard string of his bow, like the forearm of the Wielder of the Bow (Śārṅgapāṇi, i.e. Viṣṇu). (2)

The designation ‘emperor’, which shone just as little as a flower-offering on a dunghill, when it, in this age destitute of decency and by a fit of imagination alone, was applied to other kings whose conduct was reprehensible,⁹⁷ that (designation) perfectly shines in him, (Yaśodharman), who is a storehouse of goodness and a spitting image of Manu, Bharata, Alarka and Māndhātṛ,⁹⁸ just like a jewel shines in a beautiful golden mounting. (3)

(Yaśodharman), who spurns the boundaries of his own House and, after having overpowered their kings by his prowess, reigns (now) over countries which are clasped by the arms of heroes, rivers, jungle, forests, mountains and deserts—countries that were not (even) controlled by the **Gupta** emperors, whose glory was displayed by their invasion of the entire earth, and countries that the command of the **Hūṇa** captains (*adhipa*) had not reached, (though) it had affected many a royal crown. (4)

By feudatories bowing to the feet of this (Yaśodharman) the ground/land-divisions become dappled/mixed-up when the beams that radiate from the jewels in their crests spread over it/are blending, (feudatories)—from the borders of the Lauhitya River to the foot of the Mahendra Mountain with its impenetrable palmyra woods, from the Snow Mountains (Himālaya) whose tablelands are embraced by the Gaṅgā River up to the Western Ocean—whose pride had been taken away by the power of his arm.⁹⁹ (5)

By that King **Mihirakula**, whose head had never been forced to bow in humility by anyone save Sthāṇu (i.e. Paśupati/Śiva),¹⁰⁰ and the embrace of whose arms gave the Himālaya Mountain the illusion of being ‘impregnable’,¹⁰¹ even by him the feet of this (Yaśodharman) were humbly worshipped with an offering of flowers (fallen from) his crest, when the strength of (Yaśodharman)’s arms bent that (Hūṇa) monarch’s head painfully down into deference. (6)

By that illustrious **Yaśodharman**, who reigns the earth with a steady, club-like arm as beautiful as a column, this column that will last till the end of the Age, has been erected here, as if to measure the earth from above, to count the multitude of stars, and to point out to the highest skies, as it were, the path of his glory achieved by his heroic deeds. (7)

(A column) that is, as it were, a raised arm of the earth,¹⁰² erected out of love, and that, endowed by splendour, radiates widely, as if to write the excellences of **Yaśodharman's** qualities on the disk of the moon, so that it may be known: 'He is of noble birth, of behaviour, charming and purifying of sin, and the abode of Dharma, controlled by whom the conduct of the people does not falter'. (8)

This eulogy was composed by Vāsula, son of Kakka, with the desire thus to praise that King of virtuous acts.¹⁰³ (9)

(This inscription) has been engraved by Govinda.¹⁰⁴

ANNOTATION

The inscription is engaged on a victory column (*raṇastambha*) found near a village known as Sondhni, at 2.7 km south-east of Mandasor Fort. This site preserves two such columns, both containing an inscription. Due to damage the text of the second inscription is only partly preserved, but from what remains of it (CII III (1880), 149 f.), it is clear that it concerns exactly the same inscription as the one presented here in full, also engraved by Govinda.

Both columns are made of sandstone and therefore must have come from elsewhere. One of the columns may have been meant for another location, but this plan was not executed for reasons unknown.

From the contents of the inscription it is evident that these columns were made after King Yaśodharman's victory over the Alchon king Mihirakula. That victory is also referred to in this king's Mandasor inscription of AD 532, but the inscribed column seems somewhat later than the Mandasor inscription (above, p. 23).

The importance of the inscription cannot easily be overrated. It informs us of the end of Mihirakula exploits in India. The Alchon Huns may have retreated to their stronghold in West Panjab around Sialkot. The eulogy suggests that after this victory Yaśodharman became recognized as supreme ruler by the kings of the subcontinent, but for this there is no supportive evidence.

Notes

- ¹ CII III (1888), 92f. *Eran Posthumous Stone Pillar Inscription of Goparāja (Year 191)*.
- ² Priscus, fragment 33.1: καὶ ὁ μὲν τῶν Πάρθων μόναρχος, ὡς πολέμου αὐτῶ συνισταμένου πρὸς Οὐννοὺς τοὺς Κιδάριτας καλουμένους, ἀπεσείσατο παρ' αὐτὸν τοὺς Λαζοὺς καταφεύγοντας. ('Since the monarch [Yazdagird II] of the Parthians [i.e. Sasanians] was involved in a war with the so-called Kidarite Huns, he ejected the Lazi who were fleeing to him.') Blockley 1981–83 II, 336f., I, 54f., dating this fragment to AD 456. See also *ibid.* fragment 41.1, 41.3, 47, 51 (Blockley *op. cit.* II, 346, 348, 354, 360; Cribb 2010, 91).
- ³ Based on a detailed analysis of the numismatic evidence, this intrusion into Gandhāra has been dated by Cribb before AD 388 (Cribb 2010, 111, 113).
- ⁴ Falk 2015, 134ff. Cf. Kuwayama 1989, 116; Cribb 2010, 91f. who cautions that there may be a contamination in the *Weishu* with earlier reports on the Kuṣāṇas (Yuezhi); Wan 2012, 252.
- ⁵ Cribb 2010, 111 ('after AD 388').
- ⁶ Cribb 2010, 112f.; Errington 2010, 148f.; *Das Anlitz des Fremden* (accessed 8-9-2016). 'No finds of Alchon coins north of the Hindu Kush have been reported so far' (Vondrovec 2008, 30). This could indicate that the Alchons were, until the last decade of the 4th century, a subordinate group within the Kidarite people, who 'flew under the radar'. Cribb 2010, 116: 'Could the issues of the Alchano Huns represent the coinage of a faction of the Kidarites who rose to dominance after the end of Kidara's reign?'
- ⁷ Stickler 2007, 92–95, 100f.; Priscus, fragment 33.1 (above, n. 2 on p. 33).
- ⁸ CII III (1880), 59, 54.
- ⁹ Pfisterer 2013, 2–13, 93. This does not mean that all of Northwest India was in the hands of these four kings. Another group of Alchon chiefs, for instance, is presented in the coinage of Adomano, Pūrvāditya, Zabocho and Bhaloka (Bhālōka), either four rulers or only two and two *birudas* (Pfisterer 2013, 3.7). Coins 'in the name of Kidara' remained being minted in Kashmir where these kings may have found refuge after the Alchon take-over in Gandhāra and West Panjab. Under the heading 'Sub-Kidarite gold coins', Cribb (2010, 102) refers to again another group of coins carrying the royal names: 'Sri Visvama, Sri Kritavirya, Sri Kupuma, and Sri Sailanavirya', which may 'have been issued before 467'.
- ¹⁰ BM 1963,1210.1 (accessed 8-9-2016). See p. 14.
- ¹¹ Melzer 2006, 260. The king of Tālagānika is called: *devaputraṣāhī*; Khmīgīla and Mehama: *mahāṣāhī*; Javūkha: *mahārāja*.
- ¹² Melzer 2006, 258f., referring to Göbl's NumH 81. Vondrovec 2008, 28, 45 (Type

- 81). See also *Das Anlitz des Fremden* (accessed 8-9-2016). A Gaṇeśa image reportedly found in Gardez (c. 113 km south of Kabul), datable to the 6th century (?), contains a donative inscription in regnal year 8 by ‘his venerable Majesty, the illustrious king Khiṅgāla, Supreme Sovereign and Lord of Lords’: *paramabhattāarakamahārājādhirājaśrīṣāhikhiṅgālaudyātaśāhipādaiḥ* (conj. °*odyataśāhipādaiḥ*, a formular of respect?). Sircar 1963–64, 44–47; Dhavalikar 1971; cf. Tucci 1958, 328.
- ¹³ This tallies with the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim Songyun as found in the *Luoyang Qielanji* (*A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*), edited by Yang Xuanzhi. In AD 520 this pilgrim had an encounter with a Hunnic king, generally believed to have been Toramāṇa’s son Mihirakula, who is described in the translation of Kuwayama (2003, 92) as a *tegin*, whose lineage was installed two generations (*shū*) earlier by the ‘Heda (Hephthalites)’. Chavannes transliterates ‘Ye-ta (Hephthalites)’ and notes that another MS has a variant spelling (Chavannes 1903, p. 416 n. 3); cf. Pfisterer 2-13, 92.
- ¹⁴ Melzer 2006, 264. Year 68 leaves, according to Melzer, two possibilities open: if corresponding to the Kaniṣka Era, AD 495/96, or if corresponding with the Laukika Era, AD 492/93.
- ¹⁵ Sircar SI I, 422. Melzer 2006, 261. Sims-Williams 2007–12, II *Glossary* s.v. ‘αβγο’ (II, 215): ηβοδαλο αβγο, ‘the *yabghu* of Hephthal’. Chinese *xihou*, Turkish *yabghu*. Cf. *Encyclopædia Iranica* s.v. ‘Jabghuya’ (accessed 9-9-2016). Cf. a similar transition in the history of the Kuṣāṇas in which the reign of five Yabghus was substituted with the rule of the first Kushan monarch Kujula Kadphises in c. AD 30. The addition of Jaūḥkha to his titles may indicate that Toramāṇa saw himself as the founder of a dynasty (Falk 2015, 69, 85).
- ¹⁶ La Vaissière 2007, 27 ff. Bakker *forthcoming*.
- ¹⁷ Bakker *forthcoming*.
- ¹⁸ *Arthaśāstra* 6.2.13: *rājā ātmadravyaprakṛtisampanno nayasyādhiṣṭhānaṃ vijigīṣuḥ* ||
- ¹⁹ CII III (1888), 88–90. SI I, 334–36. In AD 484 the viceroy of these territories was Suraśmicandra, said to govern between the Gaṅgā and the Narmadā rivers. Whether he or a successor faced Toramāṇa is unknown. For the geography see Willis 1997, 18.
- ²⁰ Cunningham in *ASI Reports* 10 (1880), 87, Plates XXV, XXVI. This twin temple was probably dedicated to Vāsudeva and Saṃkarṣaṇa, alias Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. For a similar twin temple on the Rāmāgiri see Bakker 1997, 30.
- ²¹ CII III (1880), 89 l. 9: *janārdanasya dvajastambhaḥ*.
- ²² CII III (1880), 159 f.
- ²³ MBh 3 App. I No.16, ll. 91–99.
- ²⁴ Thaplyal 1972, 61: ‘The seal of Toramāṇa restruck on that of the Ghoshitārāma monastery (pl. XXII,2) has been found at Kauśāmbī, a site which has also yielded another sealing with the legend *Hūṇarāja* [?], most probably referring to the same monarch’. Cf. IAR 1954–55, Pl. XXXII B. Thakur 1967, 104.
- ²⁵ Sharma 1960, 15 f.
- ²⁶ Copper, Type 123 (Pfisterer 2013, 146); silver and gold (Tandon 2015).

- ²⁷ Tandon 2015, 20 f.: *avanipatoramā(ṇo), vijitya vasudhām divaṃ jayati*.
- ²⁸ BM: 1874,1003.1 (2.56 g) and 1865,802.12 (2.0 g). The legend on his silver coins is: *vijitāvanir avanipati(h), śrītoramāṇa divaṃ jayati* (Tandon 2015, 20). Both legends (on the dinar and drachm) are the second hemistich of an Āryā verse, hence *śrītoramāṇa*, metri causa.
- ²⁹ Though the Garuḍa emblem is often reduced to merely three dots, a clear instance of the imperial standard can be seen on the Patna-Museum coin of Prakāśāditya, reproduced in Tandon 2015, Figure 10. Cf. Biswas 1973, 60.
- ³⁰ Tandon 2015, 14.
- ³¹ Cf. Payne 2016, 4 discussing a similar polity in the eastern part of the Sasanian Kingdom: ‘The conquerors adopted Iranian institutions, integrated the Iranian aristocracy, and presented themselves as the legitimate heirs of the kings of kings in a manner reminiscent of post-Roman rulers.’
- ³² Ramesh 1974, 175.
- ³³ Mehta & Thakkar 1978, 14 f.; Ramesh 1974, 180 f.
- ³⁴ Sircar 1987 (EI 30), 124–26.
- ³⁵ EI 30, 132 v. 1: [*jitaṃ bhaga**](*vatā te*)*na garutma(dra)thayāyinā | trailokyām(a) v - - z [viṣṇunā cakra*]pāṇinā || 1 ||*
- ³⁶ EI 30, 132 v. 2: *jitvā ripubalaṃ saṃ(khye) ramyaṃ pura[ṇ*] daśādī[kam*] | [praśāsati*] naravyāghre narendrādityavardhane || 2 ||* The readings between [*] were suggested by Sircar 1987 in EI 30, 129, 132. The alternative reading suggested by Sircar, *pālayati*, is unmetrical.
- ³⁷ See discussion in Salomon 1989, 21, who tends to identify Gauri and Ādityavardhana.
- ³⁸ EI 30, 132 v. 8: *tenedaṃ nagarābhyā(se) [mātuḥ punyābhi*]vṛddhaye | khānī(tas) sa(rvasattvānām) sukhape(yo ja)lā[śayaḥ*] || 8 ||* Sircar proposes to emend *tenedaṃ* to *tenāyaṃ* (to save his strong conjecture in 8d).
- ³⁹ Mehta in Mehta & Chowdhary 2010, 28 f. Cf. Chowdhary 2010, 170. The relic casquet found carries the date ‘Kathika Year 127’, which, if identified with the Kalicuri Era, would yield the date AD 375, within the reign of the Kṣatrapa king Rudrasena III (348–378). However, the assignment to the Kalicuri Era has been questioned. If assigned to the Śaka Era it would correspond to AD 205 and belong to the reign of Rudrasena I. A third century date for the casquet inscription has been argued by Sircar on palaeographic grounds, which, if correct, would lead to the inevitable conclusion that the casquet is an early one and had been reinterred in the Devanī Morī Stūpa (Schastok 1985, 27–30).
- ⁴⁰ Williams 1982, 59 f. Schastok 1985, 30 f.
- ⁴¹ Regarding the date of the Śāmalājī pieces Williams 1982, 144 remarks: ‘None precedes the year 500, if we compare them with figures from Mandasor.’ Cf. Goetz 1952, 3 f.; Schastok 1985, 49.
- ⁴² The exact findspot of these four images is unknown. They seem to have been brought from Śāmalājī to Vadodara by V.L. Devkar in 1950 (Goetz 1952, 1; U.P. Shah 1960, 80). In the Baroda Museum, where these images are presently on display, they are labeled ‘Devni Mori’. Schastok 1985, 26 remarks about this set of images: ‘There are two small bodies of rather crudely carved stone sculp-

ture which may be placed between the technically perfected Śāmalājī sculptures and the Devnī Morī terra cotta Buddhas made no later than the late 5th century’.

⁴³ I am grateful to Claudine Bautze-Picron for discussing the hairstyle with me and to Robert Bracey who brought both coins to my notice: Drachm of Wahram V (BM 1917,0204), and the dinar minted in Sindh by an anonymous Hunnic king (identification by Bracey), which was offered for sale at an auction of the Classical Numismatic Group (accessed 12-7-2016), CNG 100, Lot 179: 18 mm. 7.00 g. 5h. On the auction site ascribed to Vahrām V (AD 420–438).

⁴⁴ BM 1897,1231.187.

⁴⁵ Tandon 2015, 13.

⁴⁶ Opinion differs on how to interpret this figure. There is a human head (not a skull) above the clasping hand, but the lower body is unclear. Goetz 1952, 4: ‘It is tempting to see in these foreign Gaṇa types with their garlands and staffs of human skulls a description of the Hun “demons of death”’. Schastok 1985, 26 f. briefly discussed these images, but is silent regarding their iconography: ‘These sculptures may not be *gaṇas*. Two of these images are nimbused’. She observes that these images may ‘represent an intermediate phase between Devnī Morī and the main corpus of Śāmalājī sculptures’, an opinion to which we subscribe. Schastok dates this group to ‘ca. A.D. 500’.

⁴⁷ Above p. 8.

⁴⁸ Errington 2010, 149. The iconography of this bowl testifies to the intimacy of Kidarites and Alchons.

⁴⁹ This chapter is among the later additions that are found in the Chinese text of Bodhiruci of AD 513 (Eltschinger 2014, 82).

⁵⁰ LASū 10.785 f.; tr. Eltschinger 2014, 82.

⁵¹ Bisschop 2015, 266. KVSū 265, 8:

ākāśaṃ liṅgam ity āhuḥ pṛthivī tasya pīṭhikā |
ālayaḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ līyanāl liṅgam ucyate ||

‘Space they call *liṅga*, the earth is its pedestal. It is the dwelling of all beings; because they merge into it (*līyanāt*), therefore it is called *liṅga*.’

Sanskrit quoted from Eltschinger 2014, 84 n. 198; cf. *ibid.* 141. KVSū 265, 8 = Śivadharmaśāstra 3.17 (Bisschop’s draft edition).

⁵² Eltschinger 2014, 85.

⁵³ Eltschinger 2014, 90.

⁵⁴ *Rīsthal Inscription*, Text and Translation by Richard Salomon (1989, 3–11).

⁵⁵ Bakker 2011; Cecil 2016.

⁵⁶ *Mahābhārata* 3.37–38.

⁵⁷ For a description and analysis of the archaeological remains in Nagarī and an iconographic analysis of the panels of the *torāṇa* architrave, see Bakker & Bisschop 2016.

⁵⁸ Bakker 2014, 36 f. Cf. Salomon 1989, 13–17.

⁵⁹ This stone, containing two brief fragmentary, but related inscriptions, was published by Sircar and Gai in *Epigraphia Indica* 34 (1961–62). The second inscription attests to the building of a temple, which was dedicated to Śīva, since the *maṅgala* verse speaks of ‘the one who hides the moon in the pile of his curling, tawny matted locks’ (*āpiṅgabhaṅgurajaṭācayalīnacandram*).

- ⁶⁰ The N.N. *rājasthānīya* is said to be a son of Viṣṇudatta and grandson of Varāha(dāsa). Sircar & Gai 1961–62, 53–58; Salomon 1989, 18. Bhagavadoṣa’s father Ravikīrti was married to a sister(?) of Bhānugupta (see Appendix 1). He may have fought along side his maternal uncle in the second battle of Eran in which Goparāja died (Bakker 2014, 33).
- ⁶¹ MBh 3.41.7–12. Bakker & Bisschop 2016.
- ⁶² Bhāravi’s *Kirātārjunīya* 14.14. Bakker 2014, 37.
- ⁶³ Jan Bialostocki *Iconography*, in: *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 2 s.v. ‘Iconography’.
- ⁶⁴ Bakker & Bisschop 2016, 254.
- ⁶⁵ For this image see Williams 1972/73, 60–61. Cf. Williams 1982, 142.
- ⁶⁶ *Rīsthal Inscription* (Salomon 1989, 4) v. 22: *lakṣma bhāratavarṣasya nidesāt tasya bhūkṣitaḥ | akārayad daśapure prakāśeśvarasadma yaḥ || 22 ||*
- ⁶⁷ *Eran Stone Boar Inscription of Toramāṇa* (CII III (1880), 159) v. 1: *trailokya-mahāgrhastambhaḥ*.
- ⁶⁸ *Rīsthal Inscription* (Salomon 1989, 4) v. 16:
*ā toramāṇanṛpater nṛpamauliratna-
 jyotsnāpratānaśabalīkṛtapādapīṭhāt |
 hūṇādhipasya bhūvi yena gataḥ pratiṣṭhām,
 nīto yudhā vitathatām adhirājaśabdaḥ || 16 ||*
- ⁶⁹ *Rīsthal Inscription* (Salomon 1989, 5) v. 28: *sara idam abhirāmaṃ sadma śambhoś ca tāvad | vihataduritamārge kīrttvistārīṇī stām || 28 ||*
- ⁷⁰ Pfisterer 2013, 160. Alchon chiefs who might have reigned simultaneous with Mihirakula are Baysira, Bhāraṇa and Narendra.
- ⁷¹ Mihirakula’s main objective at the time was probably to control the salt trade between the Salt Range and the passes of the Pir Panjal Range leading into the Kashmir Valley. Kuwayama 1989, 95–97. Bakker *forthcoming*.
- ⁷² Chavannes 1903, 416; Beal 1884 I, C; see n. 13 on p. 34.
- ⁷³ CII III (1880), 161. The inscription refers to the Gwalior Hill as the Gopa Mountain and the builder of the Bhānu (Sun) Temple recorded in the inscription, Mātṛceta, is said to live in the Hill Fort (*parvatadurgānūwāsatavyaḥ*), if Sircar’s conjecture is correct (SI I, 426). The inscription may also testify to the existence of a military garrison in the Hill Fort, since this seems to be mentioned as one of the recipients of the merit ensuing from the temple building (Sircar SI I, 426 (v. 10); Bakker 2014, 38).
- ⁷⁴ Bakker 2014, 41–53.
- ⁷⁵ CII III (1888), 162 (metre Āryā): *tasyoditakulakīrteḥ putro ’tulavikramaḥ patīḥ prthvyāḥ | mīhirakuletikhyāto ’bhaṅgo yaḥ paśūpatim a[vanataḥ]**. For the reading and emendation of this verse see Bakker 2014, 38 n. 105.
- ⁷⁶ Cf. Pfisterer 2013, 163: ‘Auf den Münzen Mihirakulas spiegelt sich deutlich seine auch inschriftlich und literarisch überlieferte Neigung zum Kult Śivas wieder.’
- ⁷⁷ *Sondhni Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman* v. 6: Appendix 3.
- ⁷⁸ Bakker 2014, 39 f, 52 f.
- ⁷⁹ CII III (1888), 153; SI I, 413 v. 7. See Bakker 2014, 39 f.

- ⁸⁰ The Maukhari adversary of Mihirakula and ‘eastern’ ally of Yaśodharman was Īsvaravarman. The *Jaunpur Inscription* (Bakker 2009, 211) says of him in v. 7 that he ‘brought happiness into the world and alleviated the distress caused by the arrival of cruel people through compassion and love’; the *Haraha Inscription* (v. 8) tells us that ‘his deeds eradicated the very nature of the Kali Age’ (Bakker 2014, 53).
- ⁸¹ *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman Year 589*, CII III (1888), 153; SI I, 414. Bakker 2014, 52.
- ⁸² *Sondhni Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman* vv. 2 & 4: Appendix 3.
- ⁸³ 24° 2′ 30′′ N, 75° 5′ 31′′ E, situated 2.5 km SE of the Paśupatinātha Temple (on the south bank of the River Sivna), and 2.7 km SSE of Daśapura Fort. Williams 1972/73, 58 f., Williams 1982, 142.
- ⁸⁴ Luard 1908, 108: ‘The site where these pillars lie has long been used as a quarry both by the inhabitants of Mandasor and the Railway Contractor, the Rājputāna–Mālwa line passing within a hundred yards of the spot. The soil is of the “black-cotton” class and the rock in the neighbourhood is Deccan trap. The sandstone pillars must thus have been brought from a considerable distance.’
- ⁸⁶ If, as Fleet thinks (CII III (1880), 143), the square pedestal was originally sunk into the ground, the pillar measures 12.2 m above the ground.
- ⁸⁷ *Sondhni Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman* v. 1: Appendix 3. Cf. Bakker 2014, 37. An Asokan pillar with bull capital was found in Rāmpūrvā (Falk 2006, 195–202).
- ⁸⁸ *Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Budhagupta* (CII III (1880), 143) v. 1:
jayati vibhuś caturbhujāś caturarṇavavipulasalilaparyāṅkaḥ |
jayataḥ sthityutpattinyayādihetur garuḍaketuḥ ||
- ⁸⁹ See Cunningham’s *Report* (1880) in ASI.
- ⁹⁰ *Mandasor Stone Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman* (CII III (1888), 147) v. 8: Appendix 3.
- ⁹¹ CII III (1880), 152–54 l. 20: [...] *gajendreṇārūṅgaṃ drumam iva kṛtāntena balinā* [...] *abhayadattaṃ* ...
- ⁹² Cf. the concluding hemistich of the *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman*: *baddhotsāhaḥ svāmikāryeṣv akhedī nirdoṣo ’yaṃ pātu dharmam cīrāya* || 28 || ... ‘May this Nirdoṣa protect the law/Dharma for a long time to come, (‘the faultless one’) whose strength is fixed, and who is never tired of services to his master.’ (CII III (1880), 154).
- ⁹³ Cf. Eltschinger 2014, 89 n. 218: ‘...Giuseppe Tucci drew the hypothesis of a massive natural disaster (an earthquake?) having occurred during the mid-sixth century, a hypothesis that seems to have been confirmed by the IsIAO team after fifty years of archaeological excavation in Swat.’
- ⁹⁴ In his attempt to explain the Śaiva dominance in the early Indian Middle Ages, Alexis Sanderson advances the following hypothesis: ‘That the principal cause of this success was that Śaivism greatly increased its appeal to a growing body of royal patrons by extending and adapting its repertoire to contain a body of rituals and normative prescriptions that legitimated, empowered, or promoted

all the key elements of the social and political developments that characterize the early medieval period.' (Sanderson 2006, 4). Next Sanderson specifies the four key elements that he has in mind: '(1) the spread of the monarchical model'; '(2) the proliferation of land-owning temples'; '(3) the proliferation of new urban centres'; '(4) the expansion of the agrarian base through the creation of villages,' etc. These are all valuable observations, but none of these four seems to me to be of such a nature that Vaisnavism could not equally well have supported them by developing appropriate ritual. When Sanderson goes on to specify the 'principal factors in this process', he observes that 'the granting of Śaiva initiation was extended to kings and reconceptualized in that special case as a means of increasing their military power and thereby protecting the state'. This too, I think, could and has been developed in the Vaiṣṇava fold. That what, however, gave the Śaiva officials a decisive edge over their rivals was the concept of the guru's embodiment of Śiva, which gave direct access to the divine and empowered the *ācāryas* of the Śaiva *paramparās*. It made Śaiva initiation rituals and rituals in general, in the eyes of the believers, more powerful than the Vaiṣṇava counterparts. This, I argue, is a distinctive factor, in addition to the loss of political credibility that Vaisnavism suffered after the fall of the Gupta Empire. The latter would explain that Saivism became especially strong in the territories of the former Gupta Empire, whereas Vaisnavism remained strong in the South.

⁹⁵ I am thinking in particular of the rise of devotion (*bhakti*), which created a model of power in the avatāra figures of Rāma and, to a lesser extent, of Kṛṣṇa (Bakker 1987). This can be seen as a counter movement, when ritual had become so complicated and monopolized by specialists that it blocked the devotion of common man. This is referred to as the 'Bhakti wave' and it shows that Vaisnavism could be used for political aims just as well as Saivism.

⁹⁶ From this and other inscriptions it is clear that the Hūṇa kings are meant.

⁹⁷ This again may be a sneer at Toramāṇa or Mihirakula.

⁹⁸ Celebrated kings of yore.

⁹⁹ This extravagant claim spans the whole Indian subcontinent. As Sircar (SI I, 419 n. 3) rightly remarks, it 'refers to *digvijaya*, which the king claims to have performed, and gives the conventional boundaries of the *Cakravartikakṣetra*'.

¹⁰⁰ This seems to be a rejoinder of Mihirakula's boast in his Gwalior Inscription.

¹⁰¹ This refers to the home country of Mihirakula, the Panjab and Kashmir.

¹⁰² Cf., for instance, Samudragupta's *Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription* ll. 29 ff. (CII III (1880), 8 f.).

¹⁰³ This same Vāsula, son of Kakka, composed the Praśasti of King Prakāśadharmān, c. 30 years earlier, after his victory over Toramāṇa. He is not mentioned as the author of Yaśodharman's *Mandasor Stone Inscription* of AD 532, but to judge by the style this could have been a composition by him as well. Vāsula was a fairly good Kāvya poet at the court of the Later-Aulikara kings of Daśapura, to whom we owe a great deal of our knowledge of the two Hunnic wars in India.

¹⁰⁴ The same Govinda engraved the *Mandasor Stone Inscription* of AD 532.

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Plate 1 Jan Gonda, Gouda 1906



Plate 2 Eran, memorial stone of Goparāja and his wife



Plate 3 Silver bowl from Swat in the British Museum



Plate 4 *idem*

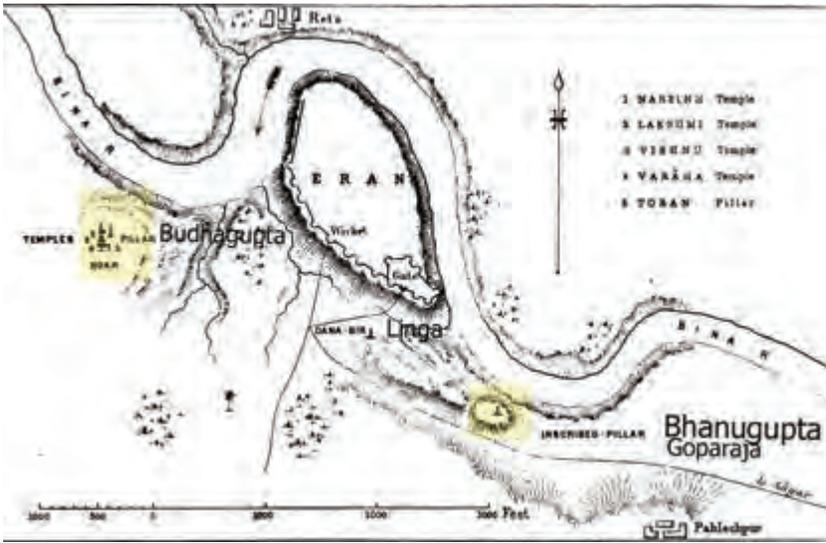


Plate 5 Plan of Eran, c. 1880 (ASI)



Plate 6 View of Eran (AIIS)



Plate 7 Eran, 'Column of Janārdana' (AD 484)



Plate 8 Eran, addorsed Garuḍa emblem (*ketu*)
on top of the 'Column of Janārdana'

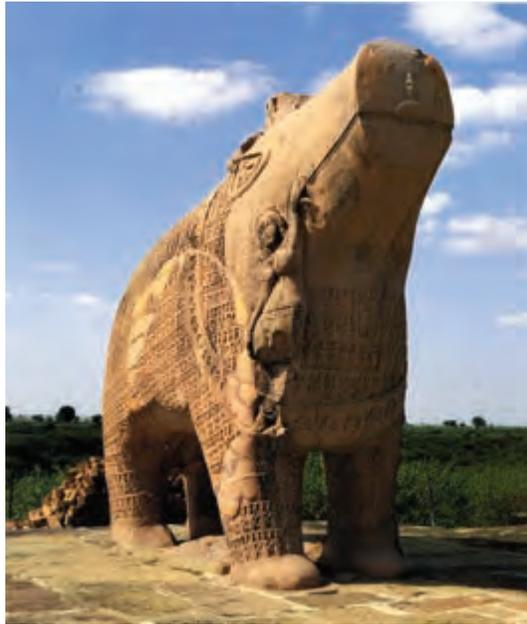


Plate 9 Eran, Varāha (c. 3.5 m) (Toramāṇa Year 1)



Plate 10 Seal (mirrored) of the Ghoshitārāma
monastery restruck by Toramāṇa, found in the
Kauśāmbī excavations



Plate 11 Dinar of Prakāśāditya (obverse)



Plate 12 Silver coin of Prakāśāditya
copied from a Skandagupta prototype



Plate 13 Buddha image from the Mahāstūpa in Devanī Morī



Plate 14 Demonic figure found in or around Śāmalājī



Plate 15
Drachm of Wahram V



Plate 16
Dinar of Hunnic king of Sindh



Plate 17 A silver plate (British Museum)
showing the Sasanian king Wahram V hunting lions



Plate 18
Detail of Plate 14



Plate 19
Detail of Plate 17



Plate 20 The four hunters on the BM silver bowl from Swat



Plate 21 Remains of an Entrance Gate (*torana*) in Nagarī



Plate 22 Nagarī architrave: 3rd panel from left (western side)
Who shot the boar?



Plate 23 The Lapiths against the Centaurs
Frieze from the Parthenon (Athens)



Plate 24 Nagarī architrave: 6th panel from left (eastern side)
Dakṣiṇāmūrti: initiation in the Śaiva doctrine



Plate 25
'Symbol (*lakṣman*)
of rising Bhāratavarṣa'
as found in
Mandasor Fort 1908

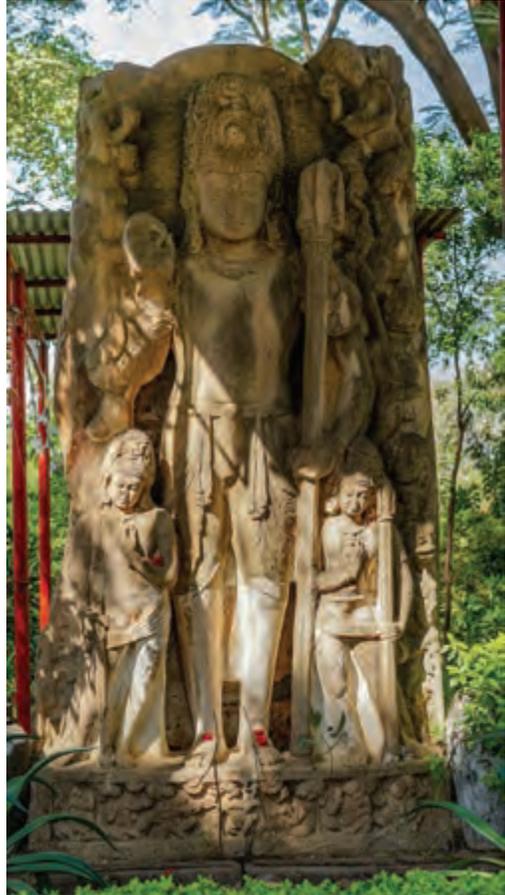


Plate 26
Image of Prakāśeśvara
after restoration (c. 3 m)
Mandasor Fort 2016

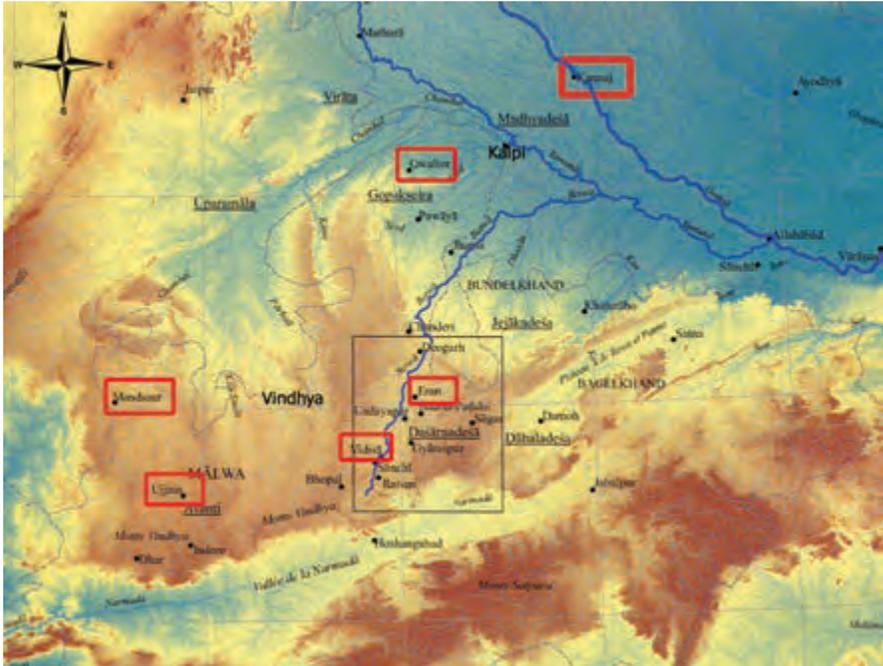


Plate 27 Map of the Vindhyas and the Betwā Valley



Plate 28 Sondhni: findspot of the victory pillars of Yaśodharman
1908



Plate 29 Sondhni: findspot of the victory pillars of Yaśodharman
2016



Plate 30
Khilchipura, tall post (5.6 m)
(now in Mandasor Fort)



Plate 31 Map of the findspots of Mandasor

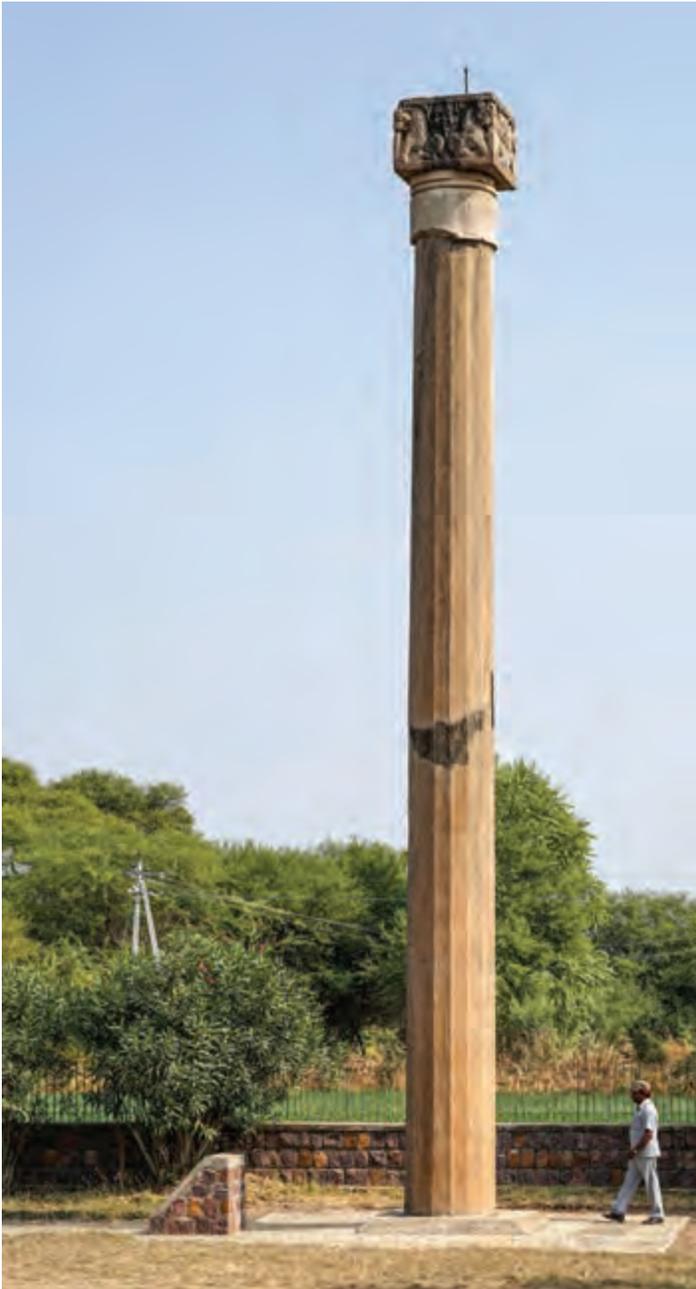


Plate 32 Sondhni: Yaśodharman's victory pillar (13.5 m)



Plate 33 Sondhni: two Dvārapālas (2.5 m)



Plate 34 Sondhni: pillar capital with graffito