Dakṣiṇa Kosala
A Rich Centre of Early Śaivism

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Natasja Bosma
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Promotor
Prof. dr. H. T. Bakker

Beoordelingscommissie
Prof. dr. W. J. van Bekkum
Prof. dr. P. C. Bisschop
Prof. dr. M. J. Klokke
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Introduction
The Case of Dākṣiṇa Kosala

Recent studies into the history of Śaivism have made it evident that the beginning of India’s early medieval period (ca. 400–900 CE) was a crucial time in the genesis and development of the religious tradition revolving around the god Śiva. In particular the sixth and seventh centuries were formative for the religion’s success; new forms of Śaivism developed that were open to all levels of society, thus expanding beyond the confines of a sectarian movement that was restricted to brahmin celibate ascetics only. Instead of wandering outside the prevailing brahmanical socio-religious order based on caste and discipline (varṇaśramadharmah.), these new forms of Śaivism incorporated the brahmanical convention and required initiates to maintain their social state at the time of their initiation. In addition, Śaiva propagators developed strong ties to royal houses and grew to be successful at establishing a range of religious institutions throughout the Indianized world, thus facilitating Śaivism to rise and develop into one of the most prominent religious traditions in the religio-political landscape of early medieval India.¹

The popularization of Śaiva religion also triggered the production of a large quantity and variety of texts in which the theology, mythology, philosophy and ritual codes of both the lay devotion to Śiva as well as the various branches of initiatory Śaivism were recorded.² In the last decades, many manuscripts of these texts have come to light, providing scholars with the means to explore the network of Śaiva schools that came into existence in the course of time.³ An important example of such a religious scripture is the original Skandapurāṇa, of which the edition and the historical inquiry

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¹These developments were explored, recorded and analyzed in Sanderson’s seminal article ‘The Śaiva Age — The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period’. SANDERSON 2009. Other articles relevant to this subject are SANDERSON 2004; SANDERSON 2010; SANDERSON 2013a, pp. 222–224 and SANDERSON forthcoming.

²Cf. SANDERSON 2014 for an extensive overview of the main divisions of Śaiva literature and ‘their interlocking religious contexts’.

³These literary sources have revealed that (initiatory) Śaivism can be divided into two primary divisions, referred to as the Atimārga and the Mantramārga based on the sources of the latter. The dichotomy between the two is roughly reflected by the sixth-seventh
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into its composition and spread has been an ongoing project by a team of scholars since the early 1990s. The oldest surviving recension of the *Skandapurāṇa* has been transmitted in Nepalese palm-leaf manuscripts (S1–4), the earliest of which is dated to 810/811 CE. Together with two more recent recensions, the *Revākhaṇḍa* (R) and *Ambikākhaṇḍa* (A), this so-called ‘Nepalese recension’ has been the main source for the text’s critical edition. Both Bakker and Yokochi agree, however, that the inception of the text was in India, more specifically in the north of India, and in a Pāṣupata context. Based on an analysis of the complicated evolution and transmission of these S, R and A recensions, Yokochi ascribes the first redaction of the *Skandapurāṇa* to the period 550–650 CE, after which it was transmitted into

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4 The *Skandapurāṇa* Project was initiated by Rob Adriaensen, Hans Bakker and Harunaga Isaacs from the early 1990s. At the time, all three were connected to the Institute of Indian Studies of the University of Groningen. Over the years, various scholars from different parts of the world took part in the project, but it remained headquartered in the Groningen Institute under the direction of Hans Bakker until the summer of 2013. From then on, the project has been continued by longtime members Peter Bisschop (Leiden University) and Yuko Yokochi (Kyoto University). At the moment, about one third of the text (*Adhyāyas* 1–69 and 167) has been critically edited and published: Volume I (*Adhyāyas* 1–25): *Adriaensen, Bakker & Isaacson* 1998; Volume IIa (*Adhyāyas* 26–31.14, i.e. the Vārānasī Cycle): *Bakker & Isaacson* 2004; Volume IIb (*Adhyāyas* 31–52, i.e. the Vāhana and Narakā Cycles): *Bakker, Bisschop & Yokochi* 2014; Volume III (*Adhyāyas* 34.1–61, 53–69, i.e. the Vindhyavāsinī Cycle): *Yokochi* 2013 and *Adhyāya* 167: *Bisschop* 2006. The text’s *editio princeps* was edited by Kṛṣṇaprasāda Bhaṭṭarāī (SP Bh) in *Bhaṭṭarāī 1988*.
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various hyparchetypes. The study of the Skandapurāṇa has had a profound influence on the research of the religious developments described above, for it speaks to the early phase of the institutionalization of Śaivism and it contains the earliest extant origination myth of the Pāśupata tradition, the precursor of various forms of Tantric Śaivism. The text celebrates the geographic spread of the Pāśupata movement over northern India from its point of origin in south Gujarat (second century CE), by means of a sequence of Māhātmyas, in which different myths are related to specific geographic locations, thus embedding the tradition into the religious landscape.

The historical inquiry into the place of the Skandapurāṇa in relation to the development and formation of Pāśupata Śaivism has been a reoccurring theme in the work of Hans Bakker, culminating in his recent The World of the Skandapurāṇa: Northern India in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries (2014). This comprehensive work was the end result of the research project A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Composition and Spread of the Skandapurāṇa by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), which aimed to study the text in the context of contemporary religious and cultural developments in northern India. A sub-strand of the research considered the possible connection between the Skandapurāṇa and a special area in central India called Daksīṇa Kosala. There is no reference to this area in the text, but, as we will see in the chapters to come, a large number of antiquities have been recovered from Daksīṇa Kosala, which gave reason to believe that Śaivism flourished there at an early stage. This triggered the question as to how Śaivism came to develop in the area and whether the Skandapurāṇa played a role in that development. Therefore, taking the religious developments mentioned thus far as background, this book will present the case of Daksīṇa Kosala.

Ancient Daksīṇa Kosala roughly corresponds to the modern state of Chhattisgarh, plus the districts of Sambalpur, Balangir and Kalahandi of Odisha (formerly Orissa). This region is often characterized as ‘marginal’ and, even today, Chhattisgarh – one of the fastest developing states of India – is sometimes considered to be somewhat ‘backward’, due to the fact that part of the state is still a tribal area. But in fact, epigraphical evidence, supported by archaeological remains, has shown that by the turn of the seventh cen-

6BAKKER 2014a, pp. 10–11 and BISSCHOP 2006, pp. 3–19
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tury, Dakṣiṇa Kosala was already a rich centre of early Śaivism. At that time, the region was under the control of the Pāṇḍava king Śivagupta of Śrīpura (the modern village of Sirpur). Śivagupta had a very long reign of at least fifty-seven regnal years, and from his records it becomes clear that this king was a great patron of religion, and of Śaivism in particular. In the context of this setting, the twofold objective of the present research was to see what fostered the rise of Śaivism in Dakṣiṇa Kosala and whether there was any relation to the Skandapurāṇa. The associated research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What were the historical and social circumstances that made Dakṣiṇa Kosala, and in particular Sirpur, such a fertile breeding ground for Śaivism to develop?

2. Was the Skandapurāṇa part of the the religious life in Dakṣiṇa Kosala?

An answer to these questions would not only shed light on the religious processes at work in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, but would also touch upon the interplay of political, social, economic and geographical factors.

The research focuses on two major sources. The starting point was the great collection of copper-plate charters and stone inscriptions issued by kings of Dakṣiṇa Kosala from the end of the fifth until the middle of the seventh century CE. Most of these records are available in edition, and they contain valuable information about the political and religious situation at the time of issue, for their common purpose is to record donations of land and money by the person in charge or his relatives to temples, temple-gods, brahmans and other religious people and institutions.7 The second source consists of the many archaeological remains of ancient Dakṣiṇa Kosala — some (very) recently excavated — that are preserved today in Chhattisgarh: at the original site, in private possession, in several site museums and in the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum in the capital city of Raipur. To survey these archaeological materials, three fieldwork trips to Chhattisgarh were carried out in the periods December 2006, December 2008–January 2009 and December 2012. During these fieldwork trips, I visited all the places where

7The whole collection of copper-plate charters and stone inscriptions are listed, as far as possible chronologically, in Appendix 1, with a brief description of their most important details (provenance, script, issuing king, date, subject, author, engraver) and references to the articles and books in which they are published. The records are given a ‘Dakṣiṇa Kosala number’ (Dk), which will be used in the footnotes to refer to the particular inscriptions.
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early remains have been found — Tāla, Malhār, Sisadevarī, Sirpur, Āraṅg, Rājim, Turturiā, Sardha, Garhsivani, Palāri, Dhobinī, Kharod and Aḍbhār — to study the remains and to collect a database of pictures to analyze. Of the material collected in this way, only the findings related to Śaivism will be discussed.

The resulting information and findings are discussed in four chapters, in which the two sources are kept separate. The first two chapters are based on the epigraphical material, and they provide an outline of the political and religious setting in which Śaivism came to flourish in Daksiṇa Kosala. In the next two chapters, the focus is turned to the archaeological material, to support the findings in the previous chapters. Chapter three gives an overview of the most relevant archaeological sites in Chhattisgarh, whereas the fourth chapter zooms in on the doorway iconography of the preserved Śiva temples. At the end, both threads of research are gathered together in the conclusion, in which an answer is formulated to the central research questions mentioned above. The book is closed by two appendices, namely: Appendix 1 listing the epigraphical records and Appendix 2 containing the edition of an unpublished stray copper plate.

Before expressing my gratitude to the many people who have helped me during the years of my research and the years of writing this book, I feel obliged to offer a word of caution on the excavation site of Sirpur. Being the ancient capital of Daksiṇa Kosala, Sirpur is by far the largest and most important excavation site in Chhattisgarh, but I also consider Sirpur to be a contaminated site that should be considered cautiously. As to be expected, many structural remains have been unearthed, presumably dating to the reign of king Śivagupta. While being excavated, these remains were rebuilt with original materials, but the authenticity of the reconstructions cannot be warranted, for the excavation reports mainly report on the remains after their reconstruction. The sculptural material has been removed from its original location to several site museums and particularly the somewhat later constructions are built with parts that do not match. This will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter of this book.

It has been a long journey from the moment I first heard of an area named Daksiṇa Kosala to the final preparations of this book, and in the course of that journey I have been helped by many people. Therefore, to conclude this introduction, I wish to express my gratitude to a number of them. First of all, I would never have thought about a project like this one without the inspiration of Professor Hans Bakker as my teacher and
supervisor. He first introduced me to the world of Indian art and religion and sparked my interest in the field of iconography, and it was he who first suggested that I take up Dakṣiṇa Kosala as the subject of my thesis. My appreciation also goes to the participants in the Skandapurāṇa project, who have motivated me during our annual August meetings at the Institute of Indian Studies. A special thanks goes to Frans Janssen, who was willing to accompany me during my 2008 research trip to Chhattisgarh. It was great having someone with his experience and knowledge by my side to show me around. I wish to thank the people who have helped me in India for their time and hospitality, in particular Professor L. S. Nigam, Mr. G. L. Raikwar and Mr. R. K. Singh in Raipur, Mr. G. Singh Thakur and Mr. S. Pandey in Malhār and Mr. A. K. Sharma in Sirpur. I am grateful to Professor Alexis Sanderson and Professor Yuko Yokochi for proofreading (parts of) the book and giving very useful remarks and suggestions concerning the contents. And finally I wish to mention my husband, Johan Sloot, who supported me in every step of the process and even accompanied me during my final fieldwork trip to meet my Indian friends and to see all the beautiful places that are part of this dissertation. Johan, without you this research would have been a lonely adventure!

Plate I.1: Excavation site of Tālā
Chapter 1

Political Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

The fifth and sixth century AD in North India can be characterized as a revolutionary period and a time of political turmoil. The power and influence of the great Guptan and Vākāṭaka dynasties were waning and they lost their grip on the regions under their control. After they disappeared from the scene, their old feudatories and adversaries were ready to compete for control and fill the power vacuum.\(^8\) The Dakṣiṇa Kosala region, although often viewed as backward, was certainly an arena for these developments. From the fifth to the seventh century, two successive royal houses held sway over this former part of the Guptan empire. The first dynasty that came to the fore was that of the kings of Śarabhapura. They became independent of their Guptan overlords in the second half of the fifth century. Their kingdom only lasted a few decades, for in the beginning of the sixth century they were overpowered by the Pāṇḍava kings hailing from the neighboring region of Mekalā.

The reigning kings of both dynasties, together with a few feudatory chiefs, left an impressive collection of epigraphical records inscribed on sheets of copper, stone slabs, pillar fragments and pedestals. The inscriptions report on the king’s financial support (in the form of land and money) to temples, temple-gods, brahmins and other religious people or institutions.\(^9\) Usually, the donations extended beyond the king’s own religious leanings. According to Bakker, this royal patronage and religious tolerance was one of the hallmarks of the Guptan-Vākāṭaka culture in the fourth and fifth century AD.\(^10\) From the great number of donative records in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, it is clear that the new dynasties of the post-Guptan period continued this tradition.

The copper-plate charters are all well-preserved and they make up the greater part of the epigraphical material. The text is usually written on

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\(^8\)For a detailed overview of the political world of post-Guptan North India, cf. Bakker 2014a.

\(^9\)Willis mentions that whenever brahmins or temple-gods acquired land, it was always referred to as a gift, even if it was in fact a purchase. Cf. Willis 2009a, pp. 81–84.

\(^10\)Bakker 2010a.
three sheets of copper. The middle sheet is inscribed on both sides, whereas the two outer sheets are often used on the inside only; in this way, the characters are protected from wear. The ends of the ring that joins the plates together are usually soldered on a seal of the ruling king, to give the grant authority and to prevent the removing or adding of plates (see Plate 1.1). All the charters have a similar composition. In the first lines, the royal house is introduced. Usually only the names of the king and his father are mentioned, but sometimes a more extensive genealogy is given. The king is characterized by his religious affiliation and his great qualities are listed. This preamble is followed by a description of the donation. In case of land donations, the villagers are informed that their village has been granted and they are warned to pay the royal share of their crops at the proper time to
1. Political Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

the donee of the grant. The charters end with the name of the goldsmith who incised the characters and the regnal year of the king in which the donation took place.\textsuperscript{11}

The stone inscriptions are more difficult to decipher. Their surface has been worn over time, which makes the characters sometimes illegible. Moreover, they are often incomplete, because the stone slabs broke off during the deterioration of the structures they belonged to (see Plate 1.2). The records and fragments that are readable, however, are invaluable for the reconstruction of Dakṣiṇa Kosala’s (religious and political) history, for their content is more elaborate than the standard phrases of the copper-plate charters.

Notwithstanding a few discrepancies and gaps, as will be seen below, the genealogies laid out in the preambles of the copper-plate charters and stone inscriptions are extremely helpful in putting together a political profile. Unfortunately, the kings of Śarabhapura and the Pāṇḍava kings dated their records in regnal years only.\textsuperscript{12} These regnal years give an indication of the length of each king’s reign, but they do not provide the certainty of historical years in dating the kings and can only lead to a relative chronology. There are, however, a few cross references to historically dated kings of contemporary dynasties (the Guptas and the Maukharis of Kanauj). It is with

\textsuperscript{11}For a more detailed analysis of copper-plate charters, cf. Salomon 1998, pp. 113–118.

\textsuperscript{12}There is, in fact, only one copper plate in the whole collection of epigraphical records issued by kings and feudatory chiefs of Dakṣiṇa Kosala from the period of the fifth to seventh century that contains an absolute date: the Āraṅ copper plate of Bhūmasena II (Dk68) is dated in the Gupta era. Unfortunately, there is no evident relation between this king of the Śūra family and either one of the two ruling dynasties. Furthermore, it is precisely this date that is controversial. For a more detailed discussion of this copper plate, cf. pp. 46–49.
the help of these references that an attempt at determining a more absolute chronology can be made.

THE RISE OF THE KINGS OF ŠARABHAPURA

The epigraphical evidence for the reign of the kings of Šarabhapura consists of fifteen complete sets of copper-plate charters and two stray plates. These records reveal the names of five generations, beginning with a king named Šarabha (for the pedigree, see Figure 1.1). The kings dominated the Dakšiṇa Kosala region in the second half of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth century AD. Despite their many records, we are still in the dark about the real name of this dynasty, for there is not a single reference to the family name of these kings. Since they issued most charters from their capital city of Šarabhapura, the kings are referred to as such.

Figure 1.1: The kings of Šarabhapura

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13 These are the entries Dk1–Dk17 in Appendix 1.
1. Political Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Śarabha & Śarabhapura

The lineage of the kings of Śarabhapura can be traced back to a certain Śarabha, who is considered to be the founder of the dynasty. There are no records preserved of this king and therefore he remains a bit of a mystery.¹⁴ His name is only mentioned in the legend on the seals of his son and successor Narendra, which is the reason why we know his position in the pedigree.¹⁵

The capital city of Śarabhapura, ‘city of Śarabha’, is obviously named after this first known member. The geographic location of the ancient city has been subject to much speculation and cannot be determined with certainty.

Many names of villages and sites have been put forward in an attempt to identify Śarabhapura. Among the suggested names are villages in the middle of the ‘Dakṣiṇa Kosala’ region, such as Saravā or Sarbhar in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh (Pandeya), as well as more distant places like Sarabhavaram in Andhra Pradesh (Konow) or Sarabhgarh (Pandeya) and Sambalpur (Cunningham) in Odisha.¹⁶ These suggestions are all solely based on the phonetic similarity of the names; there is no archaeological evidence to support their identification with Śarabhapura.

Bajpai and Pandey were the first to consider the material evidence when they came up with the village of Malhār in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh as a plausible location of Śarabhapura. They argued that a capital should have a palace with proper defensive walls, roads, water facilities and

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¹⁴Several scholars have identified Śarabha with the maternal grandfather of Goparāja, who is referred to as Sarabhārajā in a stone inscription from Eran dated to the Gupta year 191 (510 AD). SHASTRI 1995 Part I, p. 104. ‘We know that Śarabha’s daughter’s son was a feudatory of the Guptas and it seems quite likely that Śarabha himself also owed allegiance to the same imperial house.’ SIRCAR EI 31 (1955–1956), p. 267. Goparāja was the general of Bhānugupta and he died while he was fighting on behalf of the Gupta ruler in a battle with (presumably) the Hūṇa conqueror Toramāna. BAKKER 2014a, p. 32. The identification of the ‘forefather’ of the kings of Śarabhapura with this maternal grandfather of Goparāja has been proven false, because the Sarabhārajā of the Eran inscription is called śarabharajā-dauhittraḥ and this term is only used when a male heir is lacking, whereas Śarabha was the father of Narendra and therefore had an heir. BAKKER 1994, p. 8–9.

¹⁵SIRCAR & PANDEY IHQ 19 (1943), pp. 139–146, lines 1–2:

\[
\text{khadhgarājītabhuvah śarabhāt prāptajanmanah} | \\
\text{vṛtāḥ śrīnarendraya śāsanam ripuśāsinah} ||
\]

‘The charter belongs to the illustrious king Narendra who chastised his enemies, who was the son of Śarabha who conquered the earth with the blade of his sword.’

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the like. Today, Malhār is only a small village, but excavations have uncovered sufficient remains to indicate that it once was an extensive township, big enough to meet these requirements. They also found support in the fact that four of the Sarabhapura records have been discovered at Malhār and several of the granted villages can be identified with villages in the surrounding area.17

The arguments of Bajpai and Pandey are acknowledged by Shastri, but he deems the identification to be incorrect nevertheless. He argues that excavated evidence takes the antiquity of Malhār back to approximately 1000 BC and therefore Sarabha could not possibly have founded the city.18 We may argue, however, that if a king gives his name to a city it does not necessarily mean that he also founded that city. Therefore the antiquity of Malhār does not rule out its identification with Sarabhapura.

Shastri also argues that there is no archaeological or epigraphical evidence that the town was ever known as Sarabhapura, whereas two twelfth-century inscriptions of the Kalachuris of Ratanpur confirm that Malhār was known as Mallālapattana in the early medieval period.19 According to Majumdar, this appellation even dates back as early as the sixth or seventh century AD. She argues that the word ‘Mallāla’ originates from the the name Mahlan. a, which is mentioned in the first line of an inscription dated to this period on the left entrance wall of the Deur temple at Malhār (see Plate 1.3).20 There is, however, no reason at all to assume that the three lines of the inscription have any connection with the name of the town. They seem to be pilgrimage records left by visitors of the temple.21 The first line of the inscription reads śrīmahlan.aneśa, meaning ‘The illustrious lord of Mahlan.ana’.22 It is far more likely that this phrase refers to the god of a visiting devotee, instead

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21 R. K. Singh shares this view in Majumdar 2000, p. 28, note 4.
22 Majumdar reads Śrī Mahlan(ne)dra. The second and third lines read pratyāditya and cchhedanacana respectively. Majumdar reads Pratyāditya and chchh(r)i-nda chana. Cf. Majumdar 2000, p. 28, note 2.
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of the town in which the temple was situated. This means that the earliest references to Mallālapattana are the twelfth-century Kalachuri records. Since they were written at least six centuries after the kings of Sarabhapura, they do not provide any information about the sixth-century name of the place. Hence they do not exclude the possibility of identifying Sarabhapura with Malhār. Despite the lack of epigraphical support, the hypothesis of Bajpai and Pandey that Sarabhapura may have been Malhār is still the most convincing one.

Narendra

Śarabha’s son and successor Narendra is the first king of Sarabhapura who issued copper-plate charters that were preserved. He had a fairly long reign, for a charter discovered in the village of Kurud in the Raipur district of Chattisgarh is dated to his twenty-fourth regnal year (see Plate 1.1).²³ These Kurud plates are peculiar in more than one way. First of all, they are not issued from the capital Sarabhapura but from an army camp set up somewhere else.²⁴ Apparently Narendra was involved in some kind of...
conflict, which caused him to spend time away from his royal headquarters.\textsuperscript{25} Secondly, the charter may be the only example of a conversion of a palm-leaf charter into a copper-plate charter. The copper-plate version records the donation of the village of Keśavaka to a brahmin named Śaṅkhasvāmin. The same village had been granted before to Śaṅkhasvāmin’s father Bhāṣrutasvāmin by a person referred to as the ‘respected Paramabhaṭṭāraka (para-

\textsuperscript{25}As discussed below, Narendra may have been a feudatory king under the Gupta emperor Kumāragupta I. After the latter’s death, there was a struggle for the throne. Bakker 2006. Perhaps it was due to Narendra’s involvement in this conflict that he issued his Kurud plates from an army camp.

\textsuperscript{26}Dikshit, M. G. EI 31 (1955–1956a), pp. 263–266, lines 4–11 (orthographic):

\begin{quote}
viditam astu vah yathāyaṃ grāmāḥ paramabhaṭṭārakapādaśaiḥ (bhāṣ)rutasvāmine dhāraṇīsa-
gotṛāya gāṇḍavāṃ majjanāṃ kuruvaṃśḥ tālapatraśāsanena svapnāḥbhivṛdhdhaye dattakah

‘Let it be known to you that, for the increase of his own religious merit, this vil-
lage is granted to Bhāṣrutasvāmin belonging to the Dhāraṇī gotra by the respected
Paramabhaṭṭāraka, when taking a bath in the Gaṅgā, by means of a charter (written)

\textsuperscript{14}Goodall 2007. However, as pointed out by Alexis Sanderson (in a personal communication), the same prefix is also found outside a Pāśupata context. Moreover, a Pāśupata would not append \textsuperscript{\textdegree}svāmin to his name, as that is a marker of Vaidikas.
power. The Guptas used and popularized the term paramabhaṭṭāraka as an imperial title, and one of their headquarters was Pātaliputra on the river Gaṅgā. The respectful way in which the Paramabhaṭṭāraka is referred to and the fact that he took a bath in the Gaṅgā make it likely that Narendra was loyal to a Gupta overlord.27 This also explains the unpretentious preamble of his records, especially in the beginning of his reign.28 According to Bakker, the Paramabhaṭṭāraka of Narendra’s Kurud plates may have been the Gupta king Kumāragupta I (415–454 AD).29 This identification would fit the time frame of the kings of Sarabhapura (second half of the fifth century) and will be discussed below in more detail.30

Prasannamātra

Narendra’s first known successor is Prasannamātra, a king of whom we have only numismatic evidence and no inscriptions. Because of this lack of inscriptions, there is no certainty about the relation between Narendra and Prasanna. It is very well possible that they were father and son, but Prasanna may also have been Narendra’s nephew or grandson. Prasanna’s name is known from the charters of his son and grandson, who refer to him in the legend on some of their seals.31 There are, however, also coins that bear his

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28 In his third regnal year the words ‘illustrious’ (śrī)’ and ‘great king’ (mahāraja) are used, and later also the phrases ‘supremely devoted to Viṣṇu’ (paramabhāgavata) and ‘favoured by his father and mother’ (mātāpitapādānudhyātah), but the big claims of the later kings are missing.
30 The Guptas may have controlled the Daksīṇa Kosala region for over a century, beginning with the defeat and annexation by Samudragupta (335–375 AD) as described in his famous Allahabad pillar inscription. Among the twelve kings from the south who were defeated and reinstated by Samudragupta, there was a certain Mahendra of Kosala. Fleet CII 3 (1970a), pp. 1–17. One of the excavated items from Malhār is a clay sealing that, according to the legend, belonged to a king named Mahendra (mahārajamahendrasya). Bajpai & Pandey 1978, pp. 21–37.
31 Three seals of Prasanna’s son Jayarāja bear a legend in which the king is referred to as a ‘son of Prasanna’. The legend on his seals from Amgura (Dk4) and Āraṅg (Dk6) is:

prasannahṛdayasyaiva vikramākrāntavindvīṣāḥ
śrīmatāJayaraṇāśyaśāsanamvipūśāsanam

‘The enemy-chastising charter belongs to the illustrious Jayarāja, who was the heart of Prasanna and whose enemies were overcome by his valour.’ Tripathy 1977, p. 72 and Shastri 1995 Part I, p. 22. The phrase ‘prasannahṛdayasya’ may also hint at Jayarāja’s
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name (see Plate 1.4).  

The coins of Prasannamātra are part of a collection of coins that resemble each other in every aspect, except for the legend. The coins are manufactured by using the repoussé technique. The obverse side of the coins is encircled with dots and is divided into two halves by means of a horizontal line. The upper half shows in the centre Viṣṇu’s mount Garuḍa with outspread wings.

Plate 1.4: Repoussé coin of Prasannamātra

The bird is flanked by a crescent moon and a discus to its right, and the sun and a conch shell to its left. Below the horizontal line are a legend and a cluster of dots with an additional letter (śa, da, ra, ta). The legends of the

"pure heart", but we know it refers to his father Prasanna because in the legend on the seal of Jayarāja’s Malhār plates (Dk7), the phrase prasannatayasya, ‘son of Prasanna’, is used instead. Bhattacharya & Sivayya EI 34 (1961–1962), p. 31. Prasanna is mentioned on two seals of his grandson Sudevarāja. The seal attached to Sudevarāja’s Nahna plates (Dk8) bears a legend reporting that ‘the king’s birth was from the moon that was Mānāmātra, who was born to the sea that was Prasanna’: prasannārṇavasa-mbhūtamānāmatrendujanmanalḥ. Konow EI 9 (1907–1908), p. 173. The same words are used for the seal of his Arāṅg plates (Dk11). Pandeya EI 23 (1935–1936), p. 22.

32 A city called Prasannapura is likely founded by Prasannamātra, cf. p. 45.

33 Repoussé is a technique of working in metals. The dictionary meaning of the word repoussé is “shaped or ornamented with patterns in relief made by hammering or pressing on the reverse side”. These coins are made with patterns in relief on one side only while on the other side they bear the negative impression of the same pattern as intaglio. Verma 1994, p. 46.
three types of coins, written in fifth-century characters, read: śrīmahendrāditya, śrīkramāditya and śrīprasannamātra.\textsuperscript{34}

The coins with the third legend can easily be ascribed to Prasanna of Śarabhapura,\textsuperscript{35} but the identity of Mahendrāditya and Kramāditya is a matter of much controversy. Garuḍa was the royal symbol of the Gupta dynasty, and Mahendrāditya and Kramāditya are epithets used by the Gupta kings Kumāragupta I (415–454 AD) and his son Skandagupta (455–467 AD). Since the coins were minted in the period of these two Gupta rulers, it can be argued that indeed Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta issued the coins.\textsuperscript{36} This identification is strongly supported by the fact that the design of the repoussé coins is similar to the design of a copper coin of Candragupta II (see Plate 1.5).\textsuperscript{37} Local manufacturers may have imitated this design to produce coins in name of the Gupta overlords, to be used in the Dakṣiṇa Kosala region.

On the other hand, several scholars have argued that the repoussé coins are confined to the Dakṣiṇa Kosala region, whereas the usual Gupta coinage had no regional character. In addition, none of the usual types of coins issued


\textsuperscript{35} Although Majumdar questions this identification in a recent article. Coins of similar weight and fabrication were issued by five Nala rulers: Bhavadatta, Arthapati, Stambha, Varāharāja and Nandanarāja. These Nala coins have a couchant humped bull instead of an impression of Garuḍa. Majumdar argues that the Nalas may have minted all repoussé coins, including the ones with the names Mahendrāditya, Kramāditya and Prasannamātra. This conjecture is based mainly on the fact that issues of these coins were found in the same hoard, which is not a very convincing argument. She also admits that there is no supportive evidence in favour of her idea. Majumdar 2010, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{36} The arguments in favour of this identification are summarized by Ahmad. Cf. Ahmad 1994 and also Rode JNSI 10 (1948), p. 138.

by Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta appear in the hoards of coins that were recovered in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. Therefore, it is suggested that the repoussé coins with the Garudā emblem may have been minted by a local ruler who adopted the epithet Mahendrāditya after the example of Kumāragupta I.³⁸

To use the regional character of the repoussé coins as an argument to reject Mahendrāditya’s identification with Kumāragupta I is, however, unfounded, for these would not be the only ‘regionally fabricated’ coins of this Gupta king. He also issued silver coins in the western territories of the Gupta Empire, minted in the local tradition, after the design of the Western Kṣatrapas (see Plate 1.6).³⁹ The coins were ‘franchised’, as it were. They were designed and minted locally, but in the name of the Gupta overlord. Therefore, the arguments in favour of the identification of Mahendrāditya with Kumāragupta I carry most weight. This identification also supports Bakker’s hypothesis that Kumāragupta I was the Paramabhaṭṭāraka and Gupta overlord of Narendra’s Kurud plates. The dominance of the Guptas

³⁸ Verma argues, for example, that Mahendrāditya may have been an epithet of Narendra of Śarabhāpura, and Kramāditya an epithet of Narendra’s son or successor. Verma 1994, 48–49. Mirashi connects the repoussé coins with the Śūra family (see below), due to the fact that the single copper plate issued by a member of this family is dated in the Gupta era (see note 12). Mirashi JNSI 11 (1949), pp. 108–111.
³⁹ Candragupta II started minting these coins of ‘western fabrication’ after he successfully annexed the dominions of the Western Kṣatrapas to the Gupta Empire. Mukherjee 1991, p. 6 and Dikshitar 1993, p. 62.
was waning during the reign of Skandagupta, which may explain the fact that only three coins with the legend Kramāditya were found. Prasannamātra would be the king of Sarabhapura who became an independent ruler and started issuing coins in his own name, imitating the coins of the former Gupta overlords.

Jayaratāja

The growing dominance of the kings of Sarabhapura can also be deduced from the charters of Prasanna’s son and successor Jayaratāja. In the preamble of the charter from his third regnal year, the wording is still unpretentious and similar to Narendra’s preambles, but starting with the charters from his fifth regnal year his qualities as a conqueror are described in eloquent terms: ‘his feet are washed by the waters flowing forth from the sparkling crestjewels of the feudatory chiefs, who bow down for him because of his prowess.’ The legend on his seal adds that he overcame his enemies with valour. These strong terms are meant to impress the world (propaganda), but in the case of Jayaratāja there might be some truth in the claims. It was Jayaratāja who first appears in the records with the word ‘mahat’ prefixed to his name, the Great Jayaratāja, suggesting an increase of royal authority and political prestige. As a matter of fact, after Jayaratāja’s reign his successors expanded their control over the region by using a second headquarters about sixty-two kilometers as the crow flies south of Sarabhapura (Malhār).

Mānamātra/Durgaratāja

We only have nine regnal years for Jayaratāja and what happens after that remains uncertain. Sudevaratāja is already mentioned as the grandson of Prasannamātra and he is the first king of whom we have records after Jayaratāja’s reign. From these records it is known that his father was Mahā-Durgaratāja, a

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40Dk4. For the exact phrases, see note 28. Cf. also SAHU 2013, p. 164.
41SIRCAR EI 33 (1959–1960a), pp.155–158, lines 1–2: vikramopanasāmantacudāma-viprabhāprasekāmbubhir dhautapādanyagalo. This phrase is used in the two charters from Jayaratāja’s fifth regnal year (Dk5 and Dk6) and the charter from his ninth regnal year (Dk7).
42In the seals of the Amgura plates (Dk4) and the Āraṅg plates (Dk6) the phrase vikramakrunāntavidvīṣah is used, whereas the seal of the Malhār plates (Dk7) has the phrase vikramokhātavidvīṣah. Cf. respectively TRIPATHY JESI 4 (1977), p. 72; SHAHSTRI 1995 Part II, p. 22 and BHATTACHARYA & ŚIVAYYA EI 34 (1961–1962), p. 31.
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brother of Jayarāja. The name of this Durgaṛaṇa only appears in the preambles of Sudevaṛaṇa’s charters issued from Śrīpura (see below), though two of his seals attached to charters issued from Śarabhapura refer to the king as a son of Mānamātra. It is evident from these references that Durgaṛaṇa and Mānamātra are the same person; Mānamātra may have been an epithet used by the king. According to Shastri the word mahat prefixed to Durgaṛaṇa’s name reveals that he assumed regal power. Perhaps Jayarāja died without having any sons, thus leaving a power vacuum that was filled by Durgaṛaṇa. It is also possible that Durgaṛaṇa never ruled and that the throne was usurped directly by his son Sudevaṛaṇa. Both possibilities are based on the assumption that Durgaṛaṇa was a younger brother of Jayarāja. A third option is that he was in fact an older brother who died young, with Jayarāja acting as a regent for his nephew.

Sudevaṛaṇa

Mahā-Sudevaṛaṇa ruled for at least ten years, based on the regnal years in his charters. He was probably the one who founded the aforementioned second capital of the kings of Śarabhapura, for it is in his inscriptions that the name is mentioned for the first time. Perhaps as a symbol of the dynastic success, he named the city Śrīpura after the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī, the personification of (royal) fortune and prosperity. Sudevaṛaṇa’s seven charters are issued from Śarabhapura and Śrīpura alternately, so he used both cities to administer

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43 Lahiri EI 31 (1955–1956), pp. 314–316, lines 3–4: śrīmahādurgarājaṃputraśrīmahāsudevaṛaṇaḥ. ‘The illustrious Mahā-Sudevaṇa, the son of the illustrious Mahā-Durgarāja’. This is stated in the Dhamatari plates (Dk9) and the Kauvatal plates (Dk12).

44 For these references, see note 31.


46 The suffix ṣmātra is reminiscent of the term mahāmātra which is used as a designation for officers employed in various capacities in the Maurya administration. SircaR 1996, pp. 351–352. There is no evidence for the use of the same term for officers in the administration of the kings of Śarabhapura, but perhaps the epithet Mānamātra hints at Durgaṛaṇa’s function at the court of his brother. In that case, the same interpretation may apply to the suffix ṣmātra in the name Prasamamātra.


48 Dk9 and Dk12.

49 The capital Śrīpura has been identified with the modern village of Sirpur in the Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh. The history of Śrīpura/Sirpur is quite unique in India; for we do not only have the ancient remains of the city, but we also know when the city was founded and by whom.
his territory.\textsuperscript{50} There is, however, good reason to believe that he resided at Sarabhapura. In his charters from Sarabhapura, it is explicitly stated that the transfer of land was a direct order of the king himself (svamukhājñayā). The Śrīpura charters, although authorized by the king, assign the supervision over the transfer of land to the feudatory chief (sāmanta) Indrabala, who held the office of chief minister (sarvādhikārādhikṣa). During the king’s absence, Indrabala acted on his behalf in Śrīpura.

\textit{Pravararāja}

The flourishing years of the kings of Sarabhapura only lasted for a short period of time because after the death of Sudevarāja, his younger brother Mahā-Pravararāja lost control over the region. Pravararāja is known from two charters, both issued from Śrīpura in his third regnal year.\textsuperscript{51} None of these records mention a proxy and the plates recovered at Thākurdiyā even characterize the grant as a direct order of the king (svamukhājñayā).\textsuperscript{52} Hence Pravararāja probably shifted the royal residence completely to Śrīpura. After Pravararāja’s third regnal year, the history of the kings of Sarabhapura becomes silent and the Pāṇḍava kings assume control over Dakṣiṇa Kosala.

\textbf{Coup d’État of the Pāṇḍava Kings}

If we accept that Prasannamātra began his own coinage after Skandagupta, this means that we can fix the beginning of his reign in circa 469 AD. Allowing a period of ten years for Prasanna’s reign, and adding the twenty-two regnal years of his successors,\textsuperscript{53} we can conclude that the coup d’état of the Pāṇḍava kings took place in the beginning of the sixth century. As such, it coincided with similar developments in the whole of northern India;

\textsuperscript{50}He granted villages from Sarabhapura in his second (Dk8), seventh (Dk10 and Dk11) and tenth (Dk13) regnal years, whereas grants from his third (Dk9) and seventh (Dk12) regnal years are ordered from Śrīpura. Another undated record (Dk14) is also issued from Sarabhapura.

\textsuperscript{51}Dk15 and Dk16.

\textsuperscript{52}Dk15.

\textsuperscript{53}This is a period of nine years for Jayarāja, ten years for Sudevarāja and three years for Pravararāja. Together with the twenty-four years of Narendra, this means that, if counted by regnal years, the kings of Sarabhapura ruled for at least forty-six years.
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Bakker refers to this period as the ‘twilight of the Gupta Empire’, a period in which all existing patterns are replaced by new ones and the established political systems were overthrown.⁵⁴ After the Pāṇḍavas assumed control over Dakṣiṇa Kosala, they held sway for at least five generations (for the pedigree, see Figure 1.2). Their succession history can be traced in the fourty-nine epigraphical records ascribed to kings belonging to this dynasty.⁵⁵ They ruled the region from their capital Śrīpura, the second headquarters of the kings of Śarabhapura.

**Indrabala**

The Pāṇḍavas likely gained a foothold in the Dakṣiṇa Kosala region through sāmanta Indrabalarāja, the chief minister who represented Sudevarāja of Śarabhapura in his second capital Śrīpura.⁵⁶ We already saw his name appear in two of Sudevarāja’s copper-plate charters, but Indrabala is also known from a charter issued in his own name.⁵⁷ This charter records a land donation and was issued from Manḍaka, a city that has not yet been identified.⁵⁸ Shastri keeps open the possibility of identifying Manḍaka with modern Malgā in the Shahdol district of Madhya Pradesh, which is the village where the charter was found.⁵⁹ This is indeed a viable possibility, for the Shahdol district was part of the geographical region referred to as Mekalā, which was the homeland of the Pāṇḍavas (see below).

Indrabala issued the charter in his eleventh regnal year.⁶⁰ Both Shastri and the editors of the inscription argue that Manḍaka was probably the municipality in which Indrabala resided as a chief minister.⁶¹ This is, however, highly unlikely because we know from Sudevarāja’s charters that Indrabala acted on the king’s behalf in Śrīpura and therefore this city must have been his residence at that time as well. It is far more likely that the eleven regnal

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⁵⁴For a detailed overview of these developments, cf. Bakker 2014a.
⁵⁵These are the entries Dk18–Dk66 in Appendix 1, complemented by Dk9 and Dk12.
⁵⁷Dk18.
⁵⁸Mahajan 2000, pp. 148–149.
⁶⁰The reading of the year is not quite certain, see Appendix 1, p. 239, note 541.
years refer to the period before he was appointed chief minister by Sudevarāja, and that he issued the charter from Maṇḍaka, perhaps his hometown, when he still lived in Mekalā as a feudatory chief (sāmanta) under the kings of Śarabhapura. This interpretation finds support in the fact that Indrabala...
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is only styled ‘sāmanta’ in the introduction of his charter, whereas no mention is made of a position as chief minister; if this position had already been obtained, it would certainly be worth mentioning. The circumstances surrounding his appointment will be discussed in more detail later, but for now we can assume that, once settled in Śrīpura, Indrabala created a network that proved to be helpful after the death of Sudevarāja. We may presume that when Pravararāja succeeded his brother and moved his court to Śrīpura, Indrabala did not accept his authority and Śrīpura became the scene of a power struggle that resulted in the Pāṇḍavas gaining dominion over Dakṣiṇa Kosala.

There is no reference to the Pāṇḍava dynasty in the Malgā plates of Indrabala, but this omission may be explained by the fact that he issued the charter while he was still a feudatory chief. Apparently, his position was not yet strong enough to propagate his own family roots. The connection between Indrabala and the Pāṇḍavas is based on the records of his offspring. His name is included in several inscriptions of his sons, grandson and great-great-grandson, who do mention their Pāṇḍava heritage.62

Śūrabala

Most information on the early Pāṇḍava kings is provided by the two complete copper-plate charters of a king named Śūrabala63. Both records have a very extensive introduction, in which Śūrabala and four predecessors are listed. There is no reference to a capital, but the kings are said to hail from Mekalā, bordering Dakṣiṇa Kosala in the northwest (for a more detailed discussion, see below). The first two kings, Jayabala and Vatsarāja, do not have impressive titles and are only styled ‘king’ (rājan and nrpati respectively). The next in line, Nāgabala, was the first king who prefixed the word ‘great’ to his title (mahārāja). His qualities as a conqueror are also stressed in the verses devoted to him.64 This could indicate that the first Pāṇḍavas were minor feudatories, whereas Nāgabala rose to a higher rank.65 The latter’s

62Dk22, Dk25-Dk28 and Dk56.
63Dk19 and Dk20. There is also a stray plate of the same king, Dk21 (for the edition, see Appendix 2).
64The text of these verses can be found in Appendix 2.
65In the Māṇḍhal, Mahurjharī and Bālāghāt records of Vākāṭaka king Pṛthiviśeṇa II, he claims that his father Narendrasena (ca. 461–475 AD) had suzerainty over both Kosala and the Mekalā region. The Pāṇḍava kings Jayabala and Vatsarāja likely resided in the
1. Political Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

son Bharatabala is celebrated even more. He was Śūrabala’s father and it is stated that he married a princess from Kosala, born into ‘the family descending from Amara’ (see below, pp. 42–46).

Śūrabala and Indrabala were surely related, for their records bear a considerable resemblance. Not only are the same phrases used, but also the same nail-headed characters, whereas the records of the kings of Sarabhapura and the later Pāṇḍavas are written in box-headed characters. In addition, the copper sheets of Indrabala’s charter were engraved by Droṇāka, son of the goldsmith (suvarṇakara) Įśvara, and Droṇāka’s brother Mihiṭaka incised the charters of Śūrabala.66 Thus far, the exact nature of their relationship has not yet been determined,67 even though the records of Śūrabala do offer a clue in this matter. Śūrabala’s father is in all three inscriptions referred to by his name Bharatabala as well as the alias ‘Indra’ (see Appendix 2). In the Bamhanī plates, this prose passage and Indravajrā verse are followed by a Śārdūlavikrīḍita verse in which several excellent qualities of the king are compared to those of Indra, the god of gods, to explain the alias:

He (i.e. Bharatabala) is indeed Indra as he is the fire at birth from the kindle sticks, flaming with heat/valour and being possessed of oil/love; he who is one who gained the excellence of authority that was sustained by the counsel of Brahmans who observe good conduct; one whose sight inspires joy in (the hearts of) good people and brings to fruition the merit and wealth of the common men; one to whom offerings of riches are made on the altar ready for sacrifice, and who is always respected by worthy persons.68

Mekalā region in the third quarter of the fifth century, which means they could indeed have been feudatories of Narendrasena. Shastri argues, however, that given the difficult situation in which Narendrasena was placed due to the waning power of the Vākāṭakas, Prthivīśeṇa II’s statement cannot be taken literally. ShASTRI 1997, pp. 70–79.


68Translation based on CHHABRA EI 27 (1947–1948), pp. 132–145. In the same place, lines 17–21 (orthographic):

\[ \text{indro vāraṇisaṃbhave}^* \ 'tha hutabhuk tejajjvalaḥ snehavān } \\
\text{sadeśtasṭhitis invocationrādhibhuprapāyapramāṇaṇmānatiḥ}^*^* \\
\text{drśṭaḥ sadhusukhaḥ dārśaḥ hi nṛṇāṁ dharmaśāmśaṃpadako } \\
\text{vedyām adhvarasamsthite vasuḥutaḥ pūjyaḥ satāṁ sarvadā} \parallel 6 \parallel \\
^* \text{(em.: dāraṇiṣaṃbhave Ed.)} \]
Chhabra argues that Bharatabala may have been called Indra after his mother Indrabhatṭārikā. The same is suggested by the phrase indro vāraṇisambhaye at the beginning of the verse, which can also be interpreted as ‘he is Indra at birth from his mother’. Together with the Pāṇḍava habit of ending names in bala, his second name becomes Indrabala. Therefore, I suggest to identify Bharatabala and Indrabala as one and the same person, and to conclude that Indrabala and Śūrabala were related to each other as father and son.

To recapitulate, Bharatabala alias Indrabala was a petty king in Mekalā who issued a charter there in his eleventh year as a feudatory chief under the kings of Śarabhapura. At some point after his eleventh regnal year, he rose to the position of chief minister under Sudevarāja and settled in Śripura. Once there, he married an Amara princess from Kosala. For the kings of Śarabhapura, he soon ‘proved to be a cuckoo in the nest’, for within a few years his network was strong enough to challenge Pravararāja for the throne and to successfully take over his kingdom.

Īśanadeva

If we accept that Indrabala and Bharatabala were one and the same person, then it follows that Śūrabala was one of Indrabala’s sons, possibly the eldest (see below). The extensive introduction of Śūrabala’s charters may have served a special purpose, namely to acquaint the people with the Pāṇḍava name and background and to confirm their rule over the kingdom. A second son of Indrabala is known from a fragmentary stone inscription built into the wall of the maṇḍapa of the Lakṣmaneśvara temple at Kharod, in the Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh (see Plate 1.7).

When the inscription was found, it was plastered over completely. There was an attempt to remove the plaster, which failed miserably, and the record

**(em.: sadvṛttasthitivpramandravidhṛtaprāptapramāṇonnatiḥ Ed.)

There is not a similar verse explaining the alias in the Malhār plates, where the verse following the introduction of Bharatabala alias Indra continues to compare the king’s qualities with those of the legendary Bharata, the brother of Rāghava (Rāma) and son of Daśaratha. For this verse and the rest of the record, cf. SITARAMAN & SHARMA JESI 3 (1977), pp. 183–193.

69Chhabra 1945, p. 143, note 7.


71Dk22. The temple is locally known as Lakhneswar temple.
got badly damaged.\textsuperscript{72} Many of the characters are missing or illegible due to holes in the stone. Luckily, the lines of the inscription that are easily legible,

\textsuperscript{72}\textsc{Hira Lal} 1932, p. 125; \textsc{Shastri} 1995 Part II, pp. 375–376 and \textsc{Trivedi} (ed.) 2001, pp. 73–74.
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contain a Vasantatilaka verse in which Indrabala is mentioned and the first foot (pāda) of a Sragdharā verse that introduces his son Īśānadeva:

There was a lord of the earth named Indrabala, who had thrown off his enemies by... of his unimpeded..., who was the full moon in the sky that is the Lunar Dynasty (i.e. the Pāṇḍavas), and whose lotus-like feet were shining due to the row of jewels in the crests of all the kings of the earth (who prostrated before him).

He had a most excellent son, an ornament of the kings, the illustrious Īśānadeva, ...⁷³

The record describes Indrabala as a victor and a king, the pride of the Pāṇḍava dynasty. His early days as a feudatory chief (sāmantā) are already forgotten.

According to Shastri, Indrabala’s son Īśānadeva erected the temple at Kharod and donated several villages to the temple on the occasion of its erection. He used an estampage of the inscription and deciphered the names of a number of villages and localities: the village of Sāṭṭhapadraka, a place called Indrapura (obviously named after Indrabala) and a district named the Kośīranandapura viṣaya. Another village mentioned is Mekalapadraka, clearly named after the homeland of the Pāṇḍava dynasty.⁷⁴ Thus far, I have not been able to corroborate this information.

⁷³SHASTRI 1995 Part II, p. 375 (orthographic):

The inscription is inscribed into two equally sized slabs of stone that each seem to contain seventeen lines of characters. That brings the total number of lines to thirty-four, but since the outer parts of the inscription are deteriorated, there may have been more lines. The Vasantatilaka verse and first foot of the Sragdharā verse can be found in lines twenty-one and twenty-two.

⁷⁴SHASTRI 1995 Part II, p. 375–376. Hira Lal reads the name of the village of Sāṭṭhapadraka as Ghōṭhapadrakagrāmāḥ. HIRA LAL 1932, p. 125. The Kośīranandapura viṣaya is also known from a charter of the later Pāṇḍava king Śiṅgupta (see Dk33).
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Nannarāja I & Bhavadeva

A stone inscription recovered from Āraṅg reveals that Indrabala had two more sons named Nannarāja and Bhavadeva. The stone slab in which the characters are engraved is only the remainder of a larger stone. The proper left portion is broken away, and therefore part of the contents is lost. However, the preserved part of the inscription is enough to provide us with some valuable information.

After an invocation to the Buddha, the inscription tells us about a king named Sūryaghoṣa and how he constructed a Buddhist temple to commemorate the death of his son (verses 4–15). Apparently the son died rather tragically after a fall from the top of the palace, which caused his father great grief. It is unclear what the relationship between Sūryaghoṣa and the Pāṇḍavas might have been, since that information is not revealed in the text and Sūryaghoṣa’s name does not appear in any of the other records. But since the main purpose of the inscription was to report on the restoration of the temple, which had fallen into decay, and the text speaks of a ‘long lapse of a time’ (kāle gacchati) before introducing the Pāṇḍava kings, it is safe to assume that Sūryaghoṣa predated Indrabala and his sons.

It is in the seventh line of the inscription that an Ārya verse introduces a king named Udayana who is said to have been born in the Pāṇḍava dynasty, who possessed good qualities and had destroyed his enemies. This is followed by another verse of which only the last few syllables can be read. The phrase ‘a son’ (tanūjanman) is preserved, so the verse probably referred to Udayana’s offspring, as will be discussed in more detail below. In a subsequent Śārdulavikṛiti verse with double meaning (ślesa), a king is described in glorious terms and compared to Krṣṇa:

\[
\text{gacchati bhūyasi kāle} \\
\text{bhūmipatih kṣapitasakalaripupakṣah} \\
\text{pāṇḍavavamśād guṇavān} \\
\text{udayananāmā samutpannah || 16 ||}
\]

\[\text{Ibid., lines 7–8: . . . . . . sya tanūjanmā || 17 ||.}\]
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Which king was like another Krṣṇa, in that he removed a burden from the earth, when he (1) by aligning himself with non-cruel (allies), possessed an army that inspired his adversaries with fear/ by associating himself with Akrūra, was wielding the disc that inspired his enemies with fear; when he (2) raised himself, by expelling his fear for the terrifying hell/ by putting an end to the fear for the terrible Naraka demon; and when he (3) vanquished his enemies many a time, by directing a superior army/ by helping his elder brother Bala(rāma). \(^{81}\)

The name of the king portrayed in this verse (nr. pena yena) must have been introduced earlier in the inscription and therefore likely corresponds to the ‘son’ of verse 17. The next Mālinī verse is again only partly legible, but it mentions a ‘fourth son’, named Bhavadeva. \(^{82}\) The following part of the inscription (twenty stanzas) continues with a description of this Bhavadeva and the restoration of the Buddhist temple that was originally constructed by Sūryaghoṣa. This is why the record (and also the restoration and the accompanying grant) are often ascribed to Bhavadeva, even though it is not actually stated in the text. \(^{83}\)

The inscription ends with four verses that are different in style, and therefore Kielhorn suspects that they are a later addition. \(^{84}\) The verses are badly preserved, but they still yield the name of a king called Nannarāja who is...

\(^{81}\) Ibid., line 8 (orthographic): 

\[ \text{akrūre kṛtasamgamena dadhatā cakrāṇa dviśāṇa bhītidaṇ} \]
\[ \text{dārotsātāravadrakabhyayātmanām utkarsatā} \]
\[ \text{jyeśthām cāṇuyatā balam subahuṣaḥ śatrūkṣayaḥ kurvata} \]
\[ \text{krṣṇenevā nṛpena yena dharaṇer bharaṇaṭāraḥ kṛtaḥ} \]

\(^{82}\) Ibid., lines 8–9 (orthographic): 

\[ \text{suviḥita-vṛṣa} \]
\[ \text{ṣ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v} \]
\[ \text{ṣ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v} \]
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\(^{83}\) For the restoration of the Buddhist temple and Bhavadeva’s role therein, see Chapter 2, pp. 93–94. That a grant was made to provide for a sattra is based on a passage in a mutilated Sragdharā verse at the end of the inscription (verse 42), in which the word sattra appears. KIELHORN JRAS 37 (1905), p. 623, note 1. For the meaning of sattra, see Chapter 2, pp. 60–62.

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styled as a king (adhirāja) and conqueror (jayin).\textsuperscript{85} We know from the charters of Tivaradeva, the next king of whom records are preserved, that this Nammarāja was his father and that Indrabala was his grandfather.\textsuperscript{86} Apparently the reign of the Pāṇḍava kings continued at some point with Nannarāja’s branch of the family.

The names of Udayana and Nammarāja also both appear in one of the stone inscriptions from the Gandharvesvara temple in Sirpur (Śrípura).\textsuperscript{87}

There was a king named Udayana, belonging to the Lunar Dynasty (i.e. the Pāṇḍavas); from him arose the powerful Indrabala, equal to the slayer of Vala/Bala (i.e. Indra).

From him arose the illustrious Nannadeva, master of self-esteem, who filled the earth with Śiva temples named Nanneśvara.\textsuperscript{88}

Udayana is represented here as the patriarch of the Pāṇḍava dynasty and hence Kielhorn interprets the Āraṅg inscription in a similar way. Based on the double entendre of verse 18, alluding to Kṛṣṇa helping his elder brother Balarāma vanquish his enemies, he reckons that the ‘son’ in verse 17 was a younger brother of Indrabala.\textsuperscript{89} This reading of Udayana as the father of Indrabala (and a younger brother) would contradict the theory that Indrabala and Bharatabala were one and the same person, for the latter

\textsuperscript{85}Kielhorn JRAS 37 (1905), pp. 617–633, line 18 (orthographic):
\[
tārksyaśaksbhyā - ṇagksa - - phañiphañaratnaqoqupta - - prottunāmbhastarangasphuṭa - - bhujāṅgitāṅgām imāṁ gāṃ\]
\[
(prā) - - saṅga(γa)ṅgāsālilakalakalakṣepada(ṣaḥ) kṣitī(śa)\]
\[
ājēv ājītya gopājani jagati jāyī nannarājādhirājah* ∥ 40 ∥
\]
\[
*(em.: - - Ed.)
\]

\textsuperscript{86}See Dk25–Dk28.

\textsuperscript{87}Dk56.

\textsuperscript{88}Kielhorn IA 18, pp. 179–181, lines 2–5 (orthographic):
\[
āsīd udayano nāma nyṛaḥ śaśadharānvayah||
\]
\[
abhūd valabhīdā tulyas tasmād indrabalo bālir|| 2||
\]
\[
tataḥ śrīnandadevo bhūd abhimānarnahodayaḥ||
\]
\[
pūrṇāṁ naneśvarākhyair* yaś cakārorviṃ śivālayaiḥ|| 3||
\]
\[
*(em.: naneśvarākhyo Ed.)
\]

Kielhorn reads naneśvarākhyo, but from plate LXXXIV in Shastri 1995 Part II it is clear that naneśvarākhyair is inscribed.

\textsuperscript{89}Kielhorn JRAS 37 (1905), pp. 621–622.
is clearly stated to be a son of Nāgabala (tasya putras) in the charters of Śūrabala. However, as Bakker argues convincingly, the exact relationship between Udayana and the following kings is uncertain in the Āraṅg inscription, since only the last five syllables featuring the word ‘son’ are preserved. Furthermore, the phrase ‘abhūd tasmād’ in the Sirpur inscription does not necessarily mean that Indrabala was a direct descendent of Udayana. It is far more likely, as Bakker suggests, that both stone inscriptions refer to the legendary Vatsa king Udayana, who was a ‘descendant of Bharata through Parikṣit, Arjuna, Pāṇḍu etc.’ Such a reference provided the Pāṇḍava kings of Daksīṇa Kosala with a venerable pedigree that was linked with the Lunar Dynasty, a pedigree that has already been hinted at in the charters of Śūrabala, where Vatsarāja is compared to the same Vatsa king Udayana.

Kielhorn’s interpretation of verse 17 and 18 is rooted in his supposition that Indrabala was Udayana’s son. As it appears now that Udayana was a legendary progenitor to whom the Pāṇḍavas traced their roots to boost their pedigree, both verses are open to interpretation again. Based on what has been discussed about the Pāṇḍavas thus far, it seems more likely that the introduction of Udayana in verse 16 was followed by some reference to Indrabala and his offspring, as was the case in the Gandharvesvara inscription from Sirpur. If we accept the theory that Indrabala and Bharatabala were one and the same person, then we know that Indrabala had at least three sons (Śūrabala, Īśānadeva and Nannarāja). It is obvious from verse 19 that Bhavadeva had three elder brothers, for it is stated that he was the fourth son of someone referred to by the pronoun tasya. Therefore, I consider tasya to refer to Indrabala, which results in Bhavadeva being the king’s fourth son and the youngest brother of Śūrabala, Īśānadeva and Nannarāja.

90Dk19–Dk21.
93For example the first half of the Sragdhārā verse introducing Vatsarāja in Śūrabala’s Malhār plates, Sitaraman & Sharma JESI 3 (1977), pp. 183–193, lines 9–10:

tasyāsid vatsarājāḥ svabhujabalavagvatānurakṣatratrātāpaḥ
śrīmān vatsādhipeva kaśṭipattitilak vatsarājāḥ kaśitiśah|
‘His (i.e. Jayabala) son was the illustrious Vatsarāja, the glory of whose enemies was attacked by his virtues and the power of his arms, who was an ornament among kings like king Vatsarāja the king of Vatsa.’

94Bhavadeva is also identified as Indrabala’s fourth son by others, cf. Majumdar &
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For Indrabala to be indicated by the pronoun *tasya*, there must have been some description of him in the preceding part of the inscription. Perhaps his name was mentioned in the first lines of verse 19, but considering Indrabala’s position in the Pāṇḍava dynasty, one would expect a more extensive description then that. It may be more likely that the pronoun *tasya* corresponds to the king portrayed in verse 18. This would mean that the ‘son’ (*tanājanman*) in verse 17 refers to Indrabala as well. The preceding word could be ‘*yasya*’, referring to Nāgabala; the verse would then read something like ‘from him (i.e. Udayana) arose Nāgabala, whose (*yasya*) son was Indrabala...’ etc. Perhaps the *jyeṣṭham-balam* in verse 18 implies that Indrabala followed his father Nāgabala’s army – an army that is celebrated in the copper-plate inscriptions of Śūrabala.\(^{95}\)

As for the four verses on Nannarāja at the end of the record, I share Kielhorn’s suspicion that these verses were added on a different occasion. To speculate, one reason to do this would be that Nannarāja succeeded to the throne after the original inscription was finished, while the repair of the *vihāra* was still in process. If this is the case, it would mean that Indrabala was the ruling king when the original inscription was engraved.

**Tīvaradeva**

As mentioned above, the succession of the Pāṇḍavas continued with Nannarāja’s son Tīvaradeva, who in his charters is also referred to as Mahāśiva Tīvararāja.\(^{96}\) Apparently this Tīvara was a victorious king, for he managed to expand the Pāṇḍava kingdom even further. In his own inscriptions he is said to have obtained sovereignty over ‘the whole of Kosala’;\(^{97}\) and from the charter of his successor Nannarāja II it is evident that he also ruled in Utkala (i.e. the coastal districts of Odisha) and other surrounding countries.\(^{98}\)

Tīvara may have been supported in his activities by the Maukhari emperor (*mahārajādhirāja*) Śrīnavarman, who held sway over Magadha in the second quarter of the sixth century. Geographically speaking, a political
alliance between these two rulers would have been advantageous to both. Taking into account the political situation in Tivara’s days, his claim on Utkala was in all likelihood contested by the Gauḍas ruling north of Utkala (West Bengal). Iśānavarman was in an excellent position to put pressure on the Gauḍas from the west and therewith facilitate Tivaradeva’s march into Utkala. In return, Tivara may have helped the Maukhari emperor in his successful military campaign against the Viṣṇukundins of Andhra. In two Maukhari inscriptions Iśānavarman is lauded for his victory over ‘the king of Andhra’ and his elephant army. This king of Andhra was the Viṣṇukundin ruler Indravarman, also known as Indrabhaṭṭarakaivarman (ca. 526–555 AD). Bakker argues that their clash may have taken place in or near the Vindhyas, since this mountain range formed a natural border between the two powers and Indravarman is said to have taken shelter there. Having the support of the Pāṇḍavas of Dakṣiṇa Kosala would certainly have been helpful in this battle.99 The apparent alliance has been consolidated in the next generation by a marriage between Tivaradeva’s nephew Harṣagupta with Iśānavarman’s granddaughter Vāsaṭā (see below).

**Nannarāja II**

In his ninth regnal year, Tivaradeva made a grant on behalf of his ‘beloved son-in-law’ (priyajāmatr.) Nannarāja.100 Presumably the same Nannarāja issued a charter from Śrīpura, in which he is stated to be the son (ātmaja) of Tivaradeva, just as Pradyumna was a son of Kaitabhaṛi (i.e. Viṣṇu).101 Assuming both Nannarājas are the same, this means that the precise relation between Tivaradeva and his successor is not known. The former was a powerful king, so perhaps Nannarāja depicted Tivaradeva as his father, instead of his father-in-law, to make his pedigree more impressive.

Nannarāja only claims the sovereignty of the Kosala region in his charter.102 According to Bakker, this modest claim together with the fact that


100 Dk28.

101 Dk29.

Nannarāja’s charter is not dated in regnal years indicates that Tīvaradeva’s expansion of the Pāṇḍava kingdom was not lasting. However, a stone inscription from the village of Senakapāṭ (near Sirpur) seems to tell a different story. In this record a person named Devaraksita, who was a friend and confidant of king Nannarāja, is said to have been celebrated for two things, namely for reaching ‘the status of ruler of the Vindhyas’ and for ‘having become a destroyer of snakes/Nāgas/a Nāga at the bank of the river Varadā’. The river Varadā is identified with the modern river Wardha, which tributates to the Pranhita river and then flows into the Godāvari near the tripoint where the borders of Mahārāṣṭra, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh meet. This seems to imply that Nannarāja’s influence extended beyond Daksīṇa Kosala and that he marched to the north up to the Vindhya mountains and to the south up to the bank of the Varadā, though it is uncertain whether this actually took place or is just a hyperbole.

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103 Bakker 1994, p. 17.
104 Dk52.
105 Sanderson 2012, pp. 1–8, verses 6–7 (orthographic):

\[
tasmād abhūd bhuvanamanḍalamanḍanaśriḥ
śrīdevaraksita iti prathitah prthivyām
śrīnannarāja iti-gitatanor nṛpasya
viśvāsabhūmir iha yo ṛṣayopamānāh|| 6||
yo vīndhyadhūṛahravayā
varadātaτapahāṇihatāṃ ca samprāpya|
samprāptavān iha yaśo-
bhāṇḍāgāraḥkhyaṁ āhyātim || 7||
\]

*The reading and emendation of the phrase varadātaτapahāṇihatāṃ has been disputed. The original editors, Dikshit and Sircar, read parihatāṃ instead of phaṇihatāṃ and translated the whole phrase as ‘as far as the banks of the river Varadā’. Dikshit & Sircar EI 31 (1955–1956), pp. 31–36 and Sircar EI 33 (1959–1960b), pp. 255–256. They were contradicted by Mirashi, who stated that the correct reading was phalihatāṃ and the intended reading should be phaṇihatāṃ, translated as ‘having exterminated a Nāga king’ (i.e. on the banks of the Varadā). Mirashi EI 33 (1959–1960), pp. 251–256. Sanderson has acknowledged the reading and emendation of Mirashi. Sanderson 2012, p. 5.
107 The phrase ‘kosalāmaṇḍala’ could be mistaken for ‘kosalādaṁḍala’, which would be similar to the phrase used for Tīvaradeva’s realm (see note 98) and would do justice to the Senakapāṭ inscription.
Following Nannaräja’s reign, the sovereignty shifted to a collateral branch of the Pândava dynasty. Most information on this branch of the family is provided by a stone inscription from the Laksñana temple at Sirpur. The record has been issued by a king named Śivagupta, whose second name was Bāḷārjuna due to his competence in archery. He was a grandson of Tīvra-deva’s (younger) brother Candragupta, and a son of Harṣagupta. According to the inscription, the Laksñana temple was built in memory of Harṣagupta by his widow Vāsaṭā, who was a Maukhari princess from Magadha. She was the daughter of Śuryavarman, and the granddaughter of Tīvaradeva’s ally Īsānavarman. The marriage of Śivagupta’s parents was obviously the result of the existent alliance between the Pândavas and the Maukharis. The inscription also informs us that Śivagupta had a younger brother (anuja) named Raṇakesarinar, who helped him ‘to conquer the earth’. Among Śivagupta’s many copper-plate and stone inscriptions, there are three records dated to his fifty-seventh regnal year. This means that he

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108Dk30.

109Cf. for example Kielhorn IA 18 (1889), pp. 179–181, line 6–8 (orthographic):

\[ tasyājanistestaranāh
śivagupto mahīpatih
| dhanuvijñānamukhyo yah
khyato bāḷārjunakhyaya\]

110Śuryavarman is known from the Haraha stone inscription. This inscription is dated to the Vikrama Samvat 611, which corresponds with the year 554 AD. Šastri EI 14 (1917–1918). Cf. also Bakker 2009 & Bakker 2014a, pp. 47–57. The cross reference to these Maukharis of Kanauj is particularly valuable because it provides us with an absolute date to refine the time frame of the Pândava hegemony.

111Śivagupta is compared to Pṛthiś’s first son (i.e. Yudhiṣṭhira), who also ‘conquered the earth’ with the help of his younger brother Bhīma. Hira Lal EI 11 (1911–1912), pp. 184–201, verse 12 (orthographic):

\[ tasmād ajāyata mahāśivaguptarājo
dharmāvaitāra iti nireitathāṁ pratitah
| bhimena yah suta iva prathamaḥ prthāyāḥ
prthiṃ jīgya raṇakesarinarunujena\]

Śivagupta’s younger brother was not the first member of the Pândava dynasty with the name Raṇakesarinar (‘being a lion in battle’), for it was also an epithet of Bhavadeva. See Dk23 and Dk24, and also Appendix 1, p. 243, note 549.

112Dk46–Dk48.
had an incredibly long reign (ca. 590–650 AD), and that he probably became king at a young age. There is good reason to believe that Śivagupta succeeded Nannarāja directly, without intermediate regnal years of either Candragupta or Harṣagupta. This is supported by the identity of the engravers of both his charters and the charters of Tīvaradeva. The goldsmith Boppanāga was employed by Tīvaradeva for his Boṇḍā and Baloda plates, whereas Boppanāga’s son Golāyya engraved one of Śivagupta’s charters. In between, there seems to be hardly enough time for Nannarāja’s reign, hence it is very unlikely that Candragupta or even Harṣagupta ever came to be king. The circumstances under which the power shifted from Tīvaradeva’s son to this collateral branch of the family are unclear, but the fact that it was Śivagupta who ended up on the throne is no surprise. After all, he had the powerful family of his mother to support him. His connection with the Maukharis, no doubt, helped him to become the great and powerful king that he was, based on the epigraphical and archaeological remnants of his reign.

That Śivagupta had a strong position is also evident from the blossoming of culture in his kingdom. He was a great patron of religions, and during his reign a large number of temples and monasteries were constructed at Śrīpura (Sirpur). He granted many villages, not only on behalf of himself, but also at the request of others. For example, in his sixth regnal year Śivagupta donated a village to an order of monks on behalf of his maternal uncle Bhāskaravarman. And near the end of his reign he granted several villages at the request of his two queens, Amaradevi and Ammādevī, to maintain the temples they established. Such activities are only possible under peaceful conditions, when time and money do not have to be spent on battles. Śivagupta was a contemporary of Harṣavardhana of Kanauj (ca. 612–647 AD), who sought to enlarge his empire and aspired to extend his authority as far east as the coastal region of Odisha. Considering that Harṣa never marched against Śivagupta, and taking into account the tranquility of Śivagupta’s reign, it is likely that both kings kept the matrimonial relation...

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113 Respectively Dk25 and Dk28.
114 Dk34. Boppanāga’s grandson Nāgadeva also engraved two of Śivagupta’s records (Dk42 and Dk48).
116 Dk32. The record is undated, but Śivagupta issued the charter on the same occasion as a charter dated to his sixth regnal year (Dk31): the solar eclipse of the month of Āśādha.
117 The records on behalf of Amaradevi are Dk40 and Dk41, and the records on behalf of Ammādevī are Dk43 and Dk44. See also Chapter 2, pp. 78–81.
between their houses alive.\textsuperscript{118} This may have ended with Harsa’s death in 647 AD and the end of Svagupta’s reign shortly after, for Svagupta is the last known Pāṇḍava king of Daśśīna Kosala and with him their history ends.\textsuperscript{119}

The final episode of Svagupta’s reign is a mystery. Having reigned for such a long time, it is not unlikely that Svagupta’s death caused a power vacuum. There is not a shred of evidence that his younger brother Raṇakesarin or any other relative was successful in an attempt to fill the vacuum.\textsuperscript{120} Instead, the Nalas invaded Daśśīna Kosala from the south (i.e. Bastar) and they seem to have ousted the Pāṇḍavas from their territory. These Nalas are known from an undated stone inscription built into the left wall of the mandapa of the Rājivalocana temple at Rājim, in which the Nala king Vilāsatuṅga is said to have erected a Viṣṇu temple in memory of his unnamed son.\textsuperscript{121} The inscription has been dated paleographically to about 700 AD and Stadtner has ascribed the sculptural style of the Rājivalocana temple to approximately 695–710 AD.\textsuperscript{122} During the reign of Svagupta, the Nalas

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{118} BAKKER 2014a, pp. 95–134, and in particular p. 56, note 152 and pp. 102–104. According to Bakker, one reason for keeping the alliance in force may have been the threat of a shared enemy in the person of the Cālukya king Pulakesin II (610–642 AD), who was a rising power in Svagupta’s time and had an encounter with Harsa in the fourth decade of the seventh century: ‘Kosala’s alliance with Kanauj may have held back Pulakesin from a war with Śrīpura.’ \textit{Ibid.}, p. 112.
\item\textsuperscript{119} In a set of undated copper plates (Dk50), Svagupta makes a donation on behalf of a certain Sivanandin. Shastri suggests that Sivanandin might be Svagupta’s son, but this is pure speculation and finds no support. \textit{SHASTRI} 1995 Part II, p. 140, note 18.
\item\textsuperscript{120} It has been suggested to connect Raṇakesarin with a couple of artefacts from Balpur in the Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh, namely a seal bearing the name ‘Rāṇaka Bālakesarin’ and some coins with a fragmentary legend restored as ‘Śrī-Kesarī’. But Shastri argues against this connection, since the names Raṇakesarin and Rāṇaka Bālakesarin are too different and the legend on the coins is quite uncertain. \textit{SHASTRI} 1995 Part I, pp. 170–172. Cf. SINGH DEO 1987, pp. 158–159.
\item\textsuperscript{121} MIRASHI \textit{EI} 26 (1941–1942a), pp. 49–58.
\item\textsuperscript{122} STADTNER 1976, pp. 156–178. The architecture of the Rājivalocana temple resembles the previously mentioned Laksmana temple at Śirpur. Krishna Deva assigns the temple therefore to the much earlier date of ca. 600 AD. He even argues that the Rājivalocana predates the Laksmana temple and may have been built by Svagupta’s father Harsagupta. Hence, the Nala inscription would be extraneous to the Rājivalocana temple, or refer to the restructuring of the original temple. \textit{DEVA} 1988 in \textit{EITA} II.1, pp. 230–232. According to Stadtner, however, the ‘conservative nature’ of the Rājivalocana’s architecture indicates that the Nalas drew upon the pre-existing architectural forms that were present in Daśśīna Kosala. \textit{STADTNER} 1976, pp. 177–178.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
1. Political Profile of Daksîna Kosala

were probably confined to the Bastar region, but after his death they presumably took their chance and marched towards Śrîpura. They may have driven the remaining Pândavas from their capital to the eastern outskirts of their former kingdom, where in the ninth century a connected branch of the lunar dynasty rises to power.\textsuperscript{124}

Mekalā versus Kosala

Almost all of the territorial claims expressed by the kings of Śarabhapura and the Pândava kings are implicit; the land donations described in the inscriptions imply that the kings had control over the mentioned villages and districts, indicating that they were part of their kingdom. In a similar way, we know for example that the political boundaries of the kings of Śarabhapura changed, because a second capital started to appear in the charters of Sudevarāja. Tivaradeva and Nammarāja II are, in that sense, an exception, because in their charters an explicit statement is made about their territory. Geographically most informative are the two complete charters of Śûrabala, for they disclose that Mekalā, the homeland of the early Pândavas, consisted of a northern and a southern province.

The northern province (\textit{uttararâstra}) of Mekalā is known from Śûrabala’s Bamhanī plates, whereas the southern province (\textit{daksînarastra}) is mentioned in his charter from Malhār.\textsuperscript{125} In this latter charter, Śûrabala grants a village named Saṅgama to the god Jayeśvara-bhâṭṭaraka.\textsuperscript{126} This village of Saṅgama has been identified with the modern village of Tālā in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh, situated near the confluence (\textit{saṅgama}) of the river Manıarī with the Seonath river (Śivanâthā).\textsuperscript{127} In the charter, Saṅgama is located in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123}In the Aihole inscription of Câlukya king Pulakeśin II (see note 118), the Nalas are said to have been ‘exterminated’ by Pulakeśin’s father Kîrttivarman I. The end of Śivagupta’s reign not only coincides with the end of Harṣa’s empire, but also with the victory of the Pallavas over the Câlukyas. Dikshit, D. P. 1980, pp. 87–99. This reshuffle of political power in the middle of the seventh century likely helped the Nalas to take hold of Daksîna Kosala.
\item \textsuperscript{125}Dk19 and Dk20 respectively.
\item \textsuperscript{126}See Chapter 2, page 64–65 for a more detailed discussion of this grant.
\item \textsuperscript{127}Bajpai & Pandey 1978, p. 23; Bajpai 1978, p. 435; Bakker 1994, p. 20 and Mahajan 2000, p. 36.
\end{itemize}
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

the southern province (daksinarāstra) of Mekalā, whereas the village of Tāḷā (Saṅgama) is only about 20 kilometers from Malhār (Śarabhapura). By situating the village in the south of Mekalā, Śūrabala clearly makes a claim on territory that used to be under the control of the kings of Śarabhapura. This raises the question as to where the two countries, Dakṣiṇa Kosala and Mekalā, bordered each other at the time of the coup d’état.

The toponym Mekalā is still preserved in the name of the Maikal range, connecting the Satpuras with the Vindhyas. The river Narmadā springs from the eastern part of this mountain range, better known as Amarakan.t.aka, and is therefore also referred to with the expression ‘daughter of Mekalā’ (mekalasutūra or mekalakanyakā).128 According to Chhabra, the Mekalā kingdom likely contained the northern part of the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh and the Bagelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, which is the northeastern portion of Madhya Pradesh consisting of the districts Anuppur, Rewa, Satna, Shahdol, Śidhi and Umāria.129 Indrabala’s Malgā plates, presumably issued before he was appointed in Śrīpura by Sudevarāja, and the Bamhāni charter of Śūrabala (second regnal year) are indeed from this Bagelkhand region.

Obviously, territorial boundaries tend to shift with the political context. Originally, the Mekalā country may have been confined to the hills, but at the time of the growing influence of the early Pāṇḍavas, culminating in Indrabala/Bharatabala’s takeover, it must have covered a larger territory. The recovery of Śūrabala’s Malhār plates (eighth regnal year) and the stray plate from Būrhikhār (adjacent to Malhār), as well as the Kharod inscription of Iśānadeva, give reason to assume that Śūrabala’s above-mentioned claim was a valid one and that Mekalā stretched indeed as far as the old capital of the kings of Śarabhapura.

The relevant archaeological sites, including Malhār (Śarabhapura) and Śirpur (Śrīpura), are located in the valley of the Mahānādī and this is also where nearly all epigraphical records of the kings of Śarabhapura and the Pāṇḍava kings were found in an overlapping region (see the red and yellow marks in Figure 1.3).130 The Seonath river, flowing east into the river Mahānādī, clearly divides this valley in two. Given that the kings of Śarabhapura do not state anywhere in their records that they are from Kosa-

128 Bhattacharyya 1977, p. 78.
130 The yellow pointers mark places where charters of the kings of Śarabhapura were found and the red pointers mark the findspots of the inscriptions of the Pāṇḍava kings.
la, and that it is only during the reign of either Jayarāja or Sudevarāja that they expanded their territory south of the Seonath river – where Sudevarāja founded Śrīpura – it seems plausible that their original kingdom was the area north of the Seonath river, that is to say the southern province of Mekalā according to Śūrabala’s later claim.

Features of the natural landscape are often used to demarcate boundaries, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that the Seonath river used to be a natural boundary between Mekalā and Daksīṇa Kosala. We could argue then that the Bilaspur and Bagelkhand region described above was the northern province of Mekalā, whereas the southern province would have been the upper half of the Mahānadi valley, north of the Seonath river. Only with their expansion southwards, crossing the Seonath river, would the kings


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of Śarabhapura have extended their territory into Kosala. Within this geographical setting, it is likely that the early Pāṇḍavas hailed from the northern part of Mekalā, where Indrabala spent his eleven years as a feudatory chief. When the kings of Śarabhapura extended their kingdom in the south, it was Sudevarāja who installed his northern feudatory Indrabala as chief-minister in the new capital. There, he turned out to be charismatic enough to assemble a network around him, possibly with the help of his in-laws, to contest Pravararāja for the throne. With his coup d’état over the kings of Śarabhapura, the Pāṇḍavas gained the control over the same country as the kings of Śarabhapura, namely Mekalā and Kosala.

Revolution and the Forging of Alliances

To conclude, I should like to return to the crucial juncture in the history of the Pāṇḍavas, namely their conquering of Dakṣiṇa Kosala in the beginning of the sixth century. A coup d’état seldom comes out of the blue. It is usually preceded by a period of growing friction between the different parties, in which existing friendships are renewed and new alliances are forged. The same is expected to have taken place in Dakṣiṇa Kosala on the eve of Indrabala’s takeover. We already saw him maneuver into an excellent position as Sudevarāja’s representative in Śrīpura, and when the king died both he and Pravararāja probably tried to strengthen their network for the battle to come. There is epigraphical evidence of two more families in the area, contemporary to the kings of Śarabhapura and the early Pāṇḍava kings. These families likely were part of the developments that took place, and they may have picked sides and forged an alliance with either Pravararāja as the hereditary successor or the newcomer Indrabala.

The Amaras

As noted above, Indrabala’s queen was a princess born into the Amara family from Kosala. She may have been a key figure in the coup d’état, for it was by marrying her that Indrabala likely gained access to a supportive network that helped him in the end to take control over the region. The significance of her Amara background also seems to be reflected in the charters of her son Śirabala, where she is not only introduced as his mother – like the other queens – but also praised in extenso in the verses devoted to her:
Peerless, the chief queen of king Bharatabala, whose fame resembles the illustrious rays of the moon—she, being as it were the river Gaṅgā herself descended to earth from the world of the gods, who purifies the people, carrying the waters of her good character, bright and spotless like cristal, her pure stream contained within the two banks formed by self-control and good conduct, and her waves being a mass of virtues and tranquillity—she, being born in Kosalā and holding high the fame of the family descending from Amara, and being very much the ‘Lustre of the World’ (Lokapraṅkāśā), by whom darkness has been counteracted by eternal dharma, artha and kāma, she has attained pre-eminence (owing to) her grandsons and great-grandsons, princes like lions, devoted to good policy and conduct.\footnote{Translation of Bakker 1994, p. 7, note 20. In the same place:}

\begin{verbatim}
ekaiva,
sphāṭikavimalasubhram bibhrati śidatogam
yamaniyamataṭantapraṇtaśuddhapravāham|
prasāmaṇaguṇaṇaṃṣaṃ yā janam pāvayanti
svayam śa suralokād āgata jāhnavīva || 9 ||
śrīmañcāndrāṃśukiter bharatabalanaṃpasyottamā rājapatnī
jātā yā kosalāyam amaravajukulajāṃ kṛtim uccair dadhānā|
śāvaddharmārthakāṃaprativhitatamatīva lokapraṅkāśā
yātā pautraḥ prapautraḥ nayavījanaratai rājasimhahai pratiśthām || 10 ||
\end{verbatim}

Bakker’s translation and text are based on the edition of Mirashi, who explains that the words ekāvīna are in prose and have to be construed with bharatabalasya rājapatnī. Mirashi CII 5 (1963), pp. 82–88, note 12.

\footnote{Sitaraman & Sharma JESI III (1977), pp. 183–193, lines 26–28 (orthographic):
tasya putras tatpādāṇudhyatāḥ paramāvahastāravaram paramabrahmaṇaṁ samayam|
vatādvayaiva pārthe dvāsetah śrīmaṇ śrīmatyāṁ ma(yā)/devyāṁ utpannaḥ śrīmaṇhārajaśūrabalaḥ|
For the translation of a similar passage, see Appendix 2. The Sragdharā verse is the sixth verse in this inscription.}

\footnote{The feminine form ‘Kosalā’ is used to specify the queen’s homeland; this could mean}
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from Amara (amarajakulājīmai).

Presumably the same family is known from another record, namely a charter recovered from Malhār, issued by a certain Vyāghrarāja.134 He was the younger brother (anuja) of the chieftain (manujapati) Pravarabhaṭṭāraka, and both were sons of Jayabhaṭṭāraka. Pravarabhaṭṭāraka is said to be ‘the moon in the firmament that was the Amarāya family’ (amarāryakulāmbara-śaśīnāh).135 Due to this designation, there can hardly be any doubt that this was the same Amara family in which Indrabala’s queen ‘Lokaprabhāśa’ was born. Perhaps she was the daughter of Jayabhaṭṭāraka (see Figure 1.4). One may recall that Śūrabala granted the village of Saṅgama to the god Jayesvāra-bhaṭṭāraka (see p. 39). Considering the name, it is likely that someone named Jaya was either the one who constructed the temple of this god, or the one in whose memory the temple was erected. Thus, Śūrabala may have supported with his grant the god of his maternal grandfather.136

The position of the Amaras in Dakṣiṇa Kosala is a much-debated issue. The names Jaya and Pravara obviously bring to mind the kings Jayarāja and

Figure 1.4: The family descending from Amara

134Dk67.


136Another possibility would be that Lokaprabhāśa and Jayabhaṭṭāraka were siblings, which would make the latter Śūrabala’s maternal uncle. But in view of Śūrabala’s support to ‘Jaya’s god’, a lineal relation between the two seems to be the more likely option.
Pravararāja of Šarabhapura, were it not that the Jaya and Pravara of the present record are father and son instead of uncle and nephew. Based on this similarity in names and the fact that the Amaras were hailing from Kosala, Sircar and Bhattacharya identify the family with the kings of Šarabhapura. Shastri convincingly argued against this hypothesis and has demonstrated that an identification with the kings of Šarabhapura is untenable. For instance, these kings would not have remained silent about it if the real name of their dynasty was ‘Amara’. Instead, he presents the Amaras as contemporaries of the later kings of Šarabhapura, who ruled over a part of Kosala ‘not included in the dominions of the Šarabhapuriyas’. However, as Bakker correctly observes, ‘there is little in Vyāghrarāja’s inscription that points to a sovereign royal dynasty’. Far more likely is a situation in which the Amaras were local chieftains under the kings of Šarabhapura. Their residence was Prasannapura, situated on the bank of the river Niḍilā. This city seems to bear the name of Prasannamātra and therefore may have been part of the dominions of Šarabhapura. Furthermore, the village donated by Vyāghrarāja was located in the Pūrvarāṣṭra, an administrative division of the kingdom of Šarabhapura. The Amaras may have been appointed

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138 His argument is mainly based on the differences in style between the records of the kings of Šarabhapura and the charter of Vyāghrarāja. Shastri JESI 9 (1982), pp. 40–47.
140 Bakker 1994, p. 6.
141 Prasannapura is said to be purified (pavitrāy) by the river Niḍilā, ‘the waters of which were divided throughout being struck by the round hips of the concubines of Pravara’ (pravarakāminitambimbahighatabhinnāṁbasā). Ibid., p. 5. Both the town and the river are not identified with any certainty. Bajpai and Pandey identify the Niḍilā with the Lilāgar running east of Malhār; they believe that Prasannapura may be looked for near the source of this river and that the Pūrvarāṣṭra was the region across the left bank. Bajpai & Pandey 1978, p. 28. Bakker questions this identification and proposes to identify the Niḍilā with the Kaṇjī Naḍī, which runs 18 kilometers further east and is the location of the old village of Kosalā that may be a possible site for Prasannapura. Bakker 1994, pp. 5–6, note 16 (see also ibid. note 7). Given what is discussed in the previous paragraph, however, one would expect Prasannapura to be somewhere south of the Seonath river (i.e. in the Kosala region), whereas both these options entail a location north of the Seonath river (i.e. in the Mekalā region). Therefore the best option may be provided by Mahajan, who thinks that Prasannapura may be the village of Parasvani in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. Mahajan 2000, p. 92.
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governors over this eastern division of the kingdom.

The charter of Vyāghrarāja is dated in the forty-first year of an ‘increasingly victorious reign’ (pravardhamāṇa vijayarājyasamvat), but it is not explicitly stated in whose reign. Sircar, Bhattacharya and Shastri agree that the reign of Vyāghrarāja’s brother Pravarabhaṭṭāraka is probably meant; but they were all under the impression, though from different perspectives, that the Amaras ruled independently.143 Bakker cautiously suggested that the date might refer to the reign of Pravarabhaṭṭāraka’s overlord.144 However, in the light of the scenario sketched above – the Amaras being local governors at the time of the coup d’état, first under the kings of Sarabhapura and later as the in-laws of Indrabala – it seems more plausible to assume that the forty-one years pertain to Pravarabhaṭṭāraka’s time as a petty king.145 Vyāghrarāja does not mention any overlord, which may indicate that the political turmoil of the coup d’état already affected the country. The Amaras were related to the upcoming Pāṇḍava kings by marriage and they probably conspired with their in-laws against the former overlords. Pravararāja failed to maintain control in Dakṣiṇa Kosala; assuming Vyāghrarāja issued his charter in this period of changing leadership, there would be no reason for him to mention anyone except for his elder brother who was the local authority.

The matrimonial connection between the Amaras and the Pāṇḍavas may have been a lasting one. Śivagupta is known to have been married to a woman named Amaradevi.146 The name of this queen immediately brings to mind a possible connection with the family ‘descending from Amara’.147 If we take this connection to be true and assume that she was indeed a member of the same family as Indrabala’s chief queen ‘Lokaprakāśā’, this indicates a long history of the Amaras in Dakṣiṇa Kosala.

The Śūras

When the kings of Sarabhapura crossed the Seonath river and expanded southward into Kosala – where Sudevarāja founded his city, which became

145 In the same way, the Malgā charter that was issued by Indrabala as a feudatory chief (sāmanta) is dated in the eleventh year of his ‘increasingly victorious reign’ (see p. 22).
146 Dk 40 and Dk 41, see also p. 37.
147 Cf. also Bakker 2000a, p. 1158.
known as Śripura – they may have been confronted with a family of kings referred to as Śūras. There is only one record that testifies to the presence of these Śūras in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, namely the Āraṅg copper plate of Bhīmasena II. The first lines of the copper plate introduce us to six generations of kings, beginning with one named Śūra (see Figure 1.5). Just as was the case with the kings of Sarabhapura, there is a complete lack of any reference to the family name. Consequently, the kings are named after this first known member of their family. The Śūras are described as ‘having fame and dignity equal to (that of) the royal ascetics (rājarṣitulya)’. According to Hira Lal, this phrase indicates that the Śūras were feudatory chiefs of the Gupta kings, for Candragupta II is styled ‘royal ascetic (rājarṣi)’ in his Udayagiri cave inscription. Bhīmasena II would have used this title to compare his own family to the Gupta overlords.

![Figure 1.5: The Śūras](image)

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148 Dk68.
The proposition of Hira Lal finds support in the fact that the inscription is dated in the ‘year of the Guptas’ (Gupta era), which makes it the only record found in Dakṣiṇa Kosala in the period of the sixth and seventh century that is dated in a known era instead of regnal years. Yet, there is disagreement about the reading of the numerical symbols in which the year is expressed. Hira Lal originally edited the record and reads the Gupta era as 281, which corresponds with the year 601/2 AD. Mirashi revised the edition of Hira Lal and argues that the year should be read as 182 instead, corresponding with 501/2 AD. Looking at the political situation in which the Guptas found themselves, the latter reading clearly makes more sense, for their influence was already waning in the last quarter of the fifth century. This would mean that the Śūra kings were contemporaries of the kings of Śarabhapura, and that Bhīmasena II can be placed in the middle of the revolutionary events that took place around the turn of the sixth century.

Actually, the geographical information provided in the inscription gives reason to assume that Bhīmasena lived near Śrīpura, and therewith near the centre of the coup d’état. He issued his copper plate from the Suvarṇanadī, the ‘Golden River’. This river is often identified with the well-known river Son, a tributary river of the Ganges that originates from the Amarakan.taka hills, but in the present context it would be far more likely to look for a golden river closer to home. A stone inscription from the Gandharvesvara temple in Sirpur (Dk58) starts with the following invocation:

This great golden (haimi) river, the waters of which are holy, washes away impurity after merely looking at it. How much more will it be able to destroy by bathing in and drinking of (the river’s water)? May the god Gāndharvesa, who resides on her banks, whose glory is widespread, and who desires the wellbeing of (all) living creatures

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151 Ibid., pp. 342–345.
153 Thus the Śūras found themselves in a similar position to that of the early kings of Śarabhapura, i.e. subordinate to Gupta overlords. Bakker has argued that, by dating his copper plate in the Gupta Era, Bhīmasena II may have pledged allegiance to the Gupta overlords in the hopes of securing a dominant position in the ‘political arena’. BAKKER 1994, p. 2. The fact that the Śūras disappeared from the scene without leaving further traces, whereas the kings of Śarabhapura became independent and rose to a powerful position in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, makes it clear that Bhīmasena II did not succeed.
1. Political Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

protect you for a long time!\textsuperscript{155}

The Gandharvesvara temple is situated on the bank of the Mahānadi, which means that the Suvarṇanadi may be identified with this local river. Hira Lal thinks that the Donḍā district (\textit{viṣaya}) in which the granted village of Vāṭapallikā is located, was in the vicinity of Āraṅg, the village where the copper plate was found.\textsuperscript{156} This means that the territory of Bhīmasena II was only about fifteen kilometers from Śrīpura, which makes it likely that he was a pawn in the political game between Indrabala and Pravarāja.\textsuperscript{157}

CONCLUSION

This chapter has given a detailed overview of the political events that took place from the fifth up to the first half of the seventh century, beginning with the kings of Śarabhapura who broke away from Gupta influence, continuing with the rise of the early Pāṇḍavas from the north to take possession of Dakṣiṇa Kosala with the help of their allies, and ending with the cultural efflorescence of the reign of Śivagaṇt. In all these events, Śrīpura played a central role. The city started as a token of Sudeva's success, then it became the scene of the coup d’État in the period around the turn of the sixth century, and about a century later Śivagaṇt transformed it into the city of rich heritage one can still visit today. In the coming chapters, this political profile will serve as the backbone of an analysis of the religious and art-historical developments in the same period.


\begin{align*}
\text{yeyam haimī pravahati mahāvāhiṇī punyatoyā} \\
\text{drṣṭvaivālam kṣapayati malaṁ kiṁ punaḥ snānapānaiḥ} \\
\text{asyāṁ tīre vasatīm akarod dehiṁ ō hitaiśī} \\
\text{gāṇḍharvēśaḥ prathitamahimā so² yam avyāc ciram vaḥ || 1 ||} \\
\text{* (em.: ṣo Ed.)}
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{156}\textit{Hira Lal EI} 9 (1907–1908a), pp. 343–344.

\textsuperscript{157}The kings of Śarabhapura may have subjugated Bhīmasena’s family when they entered the region. Consequently, they would have been the overlords of the Śūras. This does not necessarily entail that the Śūras supported Pravarāja in the coup d’État, for Indrabala may have forged close ties with them in his years as Sudeva’s minister in Śrīpura.
Chapter 2
Religious Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

In the preambles of the copper-plate charters and stone inscriptions, the issuing kings tended to express their religious inclinations by characterizing themselves with a religious epithet declaring their ‘complete devotion’: paramamāheśvarar for devotees of Śiva, paramabhāgavata or paramavaiśnavar for devotees of Viṣṇu and paramasaugata for followers of the Buddha.158 These claims about their personal faith did not necessarily determine their financial support, for the donative activities of the kings usually extended beyond their own religious leanings. This is very visible in, for example, the records of Śivagupta Bālārjuna (see below).159 The religious traditions competed for royal support and to construe a religious profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala it is therefore of the utmost importance to look into the distribution of royal benefactions to these different traditions, for the royal patronage likely reflected ‘the balance of allegiance in the wider population’.160

Royal Religion

The kings of Śarabhapura were Bhāgavatas, devoted to the god Viṣṇu (Bhāgavat). In the introduction of the charters issued by Narendra, Jayarāja, Sudevarāja and Pravararāja, they are all described with the epithet ‘entirely devoted to Viṣṇu (paramabhāgavata)’.161 Their royal emblem points to

158 There are less common alternatives to these epithets. Among the Vākāṭaka kings, Rudrasena I (ca. 335–360 AD) is for example described with the very rare atyaṃtasaśvānimahābhairavabhakta and Prthivīśena I (ca. 360–400 AD) is styled atyaṃtamaheśvara. Bakker 1997, p. 13, note 23. On this topic, cf. Sanderson 2009, p. 44, note 7.
159 Another example is the Viṣṇukūṇḍin ruler Vikramendravarman II (ca. 555–572 AD), who is styled paramamaheśvara in his Chikkula plates but sponsored a Buddhist community in his Tummalagudem plates. Sanderson 2009, pp. 70–72 and Von Hinüber 2013, p. 367.
161 This public claim of religious adherence to Viṣṇu was popularized by the Guptas, and Candragupta II was the first known ruler who used the epithet in his inscriptions and on his coins. Willis 2009a, p. 65.
Vaiṣṇavism as well, for the kings used the image of Śrī-Lakṣmī – the goddess of fortune and prosperity and Viṣṇu’s spouse – on the seals that protected and authorized their grants, presumably as a symbol of their royal success.

The seals of the kings of Śarabhapura are all similar in design (see Plate 2.1). The surface is divided into two halves by means of a double horizontal line. The lower half contains a two-line legend that describes the king who issued the grant. In the upper half, Śrī-Lakṣmī is sprinkled with water by two elephants facing her on either side. The elephants are standing on lotus flowers and they carry vessels with water in their uplifted trunks. The goddess, also on a lotus pedestal, is standing in between them with her arms raised upwards. This motif of the consecration (abhiṣekha) of Lakṣmī is known as gajalakṣmī. Among the accessory devices depicted in the corners left and right of the goddess are the conch shell (śaṅkha) and the discus (cakra). These are both typical Vaiṣṇava objects. The seals, together with the coins of Prasannamātra (see Plate 1.4) that bear the motif of Viṣṇu’s mount Garuḍa flanked by a conch shell and sun at the left and a discus and crescent moon at the right, demonstrate that the kings of Śarabhapura were supporters of Vaiṣṇavism.

They may have adapted the religion of their Gupta overlords, who ruled

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162 According to Shastri, a floral design is depicted below the legend, though it seems that most seals are too damaged to recognize this element. Shastri 1995, Part I, p. 7.

163 Shastri argues that Lakṣmī seems to hold ‘some indistinct object’, which he is not able to identify. Ibid., p. 6. It seems to me, however, that she is just raising her hands upwards and the indistinct object is actually just the trunks of the elephants.

164 The conch shell is used on all seals of Jayarāja and Sudevarāja, but not on the seals of Narendra and Pravararāja. The discus only appears on two seals of Sudevarāja, in combination with the conch shell. All the other seals have a conch shell combined with a lotus flower. The seals of Pravararāja have a lotus flower on both sides of Lakṣmī and a seal of Narendra has a pellet and crescent, representing sun and moon. For a full account on these accessory devices, see Ibid., p. 6.

165 Mishra claims that the kings of Śarabhapura were members of the Pañcarātra school of Vaiṣṇavism, based on the name of one of their districts. In the Malhār plates of Pravararāja (Dk16), the king gave away the village of Mitragrāmaka situated in the ‘Śaṅkhacakra district (bhoga)’. The name of this district would, according to Mishra, commemorate an initiation ritual of the Pañcarātras, in which the conch shell and the discus were branded on the body. Mishra 1995, p. 32. This strikes me as a rather far-fetched idea. As mentioned above, the conch shell and the discus are both typical attributes of Viṣṇu. Presuming that the district was named after these Vaiṣṇava symbols seems far more likely than assuming that the name was a cryptic reference to this uncommon ritual, especially at this early date.
Plate 2.1a: Seal of Jayarāja (Dk6)

Plate 2.1b: Seals of Narendra (Dk2) and Sudevarāja (Dk11)
2. Religious Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

under the Garuḍa banner and promulgated the Bhāgavata faith in their records and the construction of many beautiful Vaiṣṇava monuments. By proclaiming their adherence to this faith – the state religion of the Guptas during their golden years – the kings of Śarabhapura may have tried to increase their status.

Vyāghrāja, of the Amaras hailing from Prasannapura, does not refer to the religious leanings of either himself or his family. From the symbols on his seal, however, it is obvious that he was a Bhāgavata as well. Despite the corrosion of the seal, one can still recognize a conch shell and the side view of a discus. In between these two objects, presumably the head of an animal is depicted. Sircar and Bhattacharya describe this as a lion’s head, whereas Shastri is of the opinion that the head belongs to Garuḍa. The seal is in fact too corroded to identify the head definitely (see Plate 2.2), but the conch shell and discus are enough to support the conclusion that Vyāghrāja was devoted to Viṣṇu.

Plate 2.2: Seals of Vyāghrāja (Dk67) and Śurabala (Dk20)

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167 The seal is divided into two halves by a single horizontal line. The conch shell, animal’s head and discus are depicted in the section above the line. The lower half contains the legend ‘śrīvyāghrājaḥ’. Underneath the legend is another symbol, which may have been a lotus flower or other floral design.
The religious affiliations of the Śūra family are not clear. Bhīmasena II does not mention any religious epithets in his charter, he only makes the common remark that he is ‘devoted to gods, teachers and brahmins’.

Hira Lal describes the emblem on his seal as a lion in a sitting posture, with the legend ‘śrīmahārājabhīmasenasya’ underneath. Perhaps the seated lion should be interpreted as Narasimha, which would imply that Bhīmasena II was a devotee of Viṣṇu. Given the fact that he used a Gupta title to style the Śūra family and the Gupta era to date his charter, it would not be surprising if he had adopted the Gupta faith as well.

The early Pāṇḍava kings were primarily devoted to the god Śiva (Maheśvara). Nagabala, Bhāratabala/Indrabala and Śūrabala are all styled with the epithet ‘entirely devoted to Śiva (paramamāheśvara)’ in the records of the latter king. The same words are used to describe Indrabala in his own record, issued as a sāmanta. Śūrabala’s seal, attached to his copper plates from Malhār, vouches for Śaivism as well, for it is decorated with an image of a couchant bull, representing Śiva’s mount (see Plate 2.2). Two of his brothers, Nannarāja I and Īśānadeva, were also Māheśvaras. In one of the stone inscriptions from Sirpur, Nannarāja is said to have filled the earth with Śiva temples named Nanneśvara. Īśānadeva is known to have sponsored a temple of Śiva during his father’s reign. This, together with the religious leanings of the rest of his family, is reason enough to assume that he was devoted to Śiva. There is no information on the religious affiliation of their younger brother Bhavadeva; we know his name from the Buddhist stone inscription from Araṅg, but there is no indication to assume that he was an adherent of Buddhism himself.

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171 Ibid., p. 342.

172 See Chapter 1, pp. 46–49.

173 They are also declared to be ‘entirely devoted to brahmins’ (paramabrahmaṇya). For the relevance of this, see below, pp. 59–63.

174 The surface of the seal is, again, divided into two almost equal parts by a horizontal line. The upper part shows the couchant bull, whereas the lower part contains a single-word legend: ‘śrīpurusā’. Shastri 1995 Part I, p. 22.

175 Dk56. See Chapter 1, p. 31.


177 In line 13 of this Buddhist stone inscription (Dk23), Bhavadeva is described as ‘a lion in battle’ (raṇakesarin). The same phrase is used in line 13 of a fragmentary stone inscription from the Mahāmāyī (Viṣṇu) temple at Āraṅg (Dk24). Because of this similarity, Sircar thinks that both records should be ascribed to Bhavadeva. Sircar EI 33 (1959–1960b), p. 256. The presence of the phrase Raṇakesarin in both inscriptions is, however,
2. Religious Profile of Daksīṇa Kosala

The following generations Paṇḍava kings, beginning with Tīvaradeva, show more variation in their religious leanings. Both Tīvaradeva and his son Nannarāja II were great worshippers of Viṣṇu, for they are both styled with the epithet ‘paramavaṁśaṇava’ in their records. Tīvaradeva’s religious attitude is emphasized by the emblem on his seals (see Plate 2.3): the seated figure of Garuḍa with a human head and the body of a bird. His wings are spread out and he is grasping a serpent with raised hood in each of his two hands. Garuḍa is flanked by Viṣṇu’s attributes, the conch shell and the discus.\(^\text{178}\) In addition, Tīvaradeva is said to have gained his qualities like leadership (naya), modesty (vinaya), truthfulness (satya), liberality (tyāga)

\(^{178}\) The seals have the same design as the seals of the kings of Śrīvarapāluna, only the section above the double horizontal line is slightly smaller. \textit{Shastri 1995 Part I, p. 28.}
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

and heroism (śaurya) by the grace of the honorable god Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) in the copper plates of Nannarāja.\(^{179}\) This obviously raises the following question: Why did Tivaradeva convert, at least publicly, to Vaiṣṇavism, when his family had been devoted to Śiva for generations?\(^{180}\) The answer may lie in the reasonable assumption that the established religion in Dakṣiṇa Kosala at the time of his reign revolved around Viṣṇu. As mentioned above, the Guptas and the kings of Śrīmadāra were devoted to this god, as were the Amaras and presumably the Śūras. We have seen in the previous chapter that Indrabala and his sons consolidated the Pāṇḍava hold on power in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, and that Tivaradeva even expanded the kingdom. Perhaps the time was not ripe, in the light of these changing circumstances, to introduce Śiva as the new ‘state deity’ as well.

Tivara’s younger brother Candragupta may have retained the Śaiva faith of his family. A Vasantatilaka verse in the important stone inscription from the Laksmana temple in Sirpur (Dk30) seems to hint at this:

There was a king on earth celebrated by the name Candragupta – whose glory became a wonder in the world like the moon – whose power was [equal to his devotion to] Bhūtapatī (i.e. Śiva), who truly was an unequalled ornament of the lunar family and whose virtues were manifold.\(^{181}\)

This verse can hardly be called ‘evidence’, since the second foot mentioning Bhūtapati is partly based on conjectures, but it does seem to allude to a connection between the king’s power (prabhāva) and Śiva. Be that as it may,

\(^{179}\)Dk29.
\(^{180}\)It is remarkable in this respect that Tivara is also referred to by the name ‘Mahāśiva’; the king is named Tivaradeva in the legend on his seals and in the opening of his charters, but the following prose passages in his charters refer to him as Mahāśiva Tivararāja. Shastri thinks that Mahāśiva may be Tivaradeva’s coronation name, whereas Tivaradeva would be his personal name since this is the name we find on his seal. Shastri 1995 Part I, p. 161. Perhaps Tivaradeva chose to reign under the name Mahāśiva as a compromise between his own (public) devotion to Viṣṇu and the religious leanings of his family.

\(^{181}\)Hira Lal EI 11 (1911–1912), pp. 184–201, line 4 (orthographic):

\[\text{[śaśić chaśi]va bhuvanādbhutabhūtabhūtīr}
\udbhūtabhūtapatī/bhaktisama/prabhāvah|
\text{candranvayakatī/lakah khalu candragupta-}
\text{rājākhyayā prthugunāh prathitaḥ prthivyām || 4 ||}^*

*The portions between brackets are conjectures of Hira Lal.
Candragupta’s son Harsagupta was quite evidently a devotee of Viṣṇu, for the same Sirpur stone inscription records that the Lakṣmana temple was constructed in his memory by his wife Vāsaṭā and their son Śivagupta. The temple was meant to display the Viṣṇuloka, where Harṣagupta resided among the deceased devotees of Viṣṇu:

She caused this eternal temple of the all-pervading Viṣṇu to be made to demonstrate that such is the place in which her famous husband, who had been a worshipper of Viṣṇu, dwells forever now that he has died.\textsuperscript{182}

Whether or not Vāsaṭā was devoted to the same god as her husband cannot be determined. Her own religious persuasion is not mentioned in the record, but she could very well have been a devotee of Śiva, for the Maukharis were staunch Śaivas.\textsuperscript{183}

Their son Śivagupta is definitely known as a great patron of Śaivism, as were his maternal relatives. Like the early Pāṇḍava kings, he is characterized as a devout worshipper of Śiva (\textit{paramamāheśvara}), and in the introduction of his records he is also compared to Śiva’s son Kārttikeya in his relation to his father.\textsuperscript{184} Śivagupta’s royal emblem, as depicted on his seals, is another expression of his affiliation to Śaivism: the couchant humped bull, flanked by the typical Śaivite trident (\textit{triśūla}) and a jar with flowers (see Plate 2.4).\textsuperscript{185} Shastri has argued that Śivagupta’s preference for Śaivism meant a ‘revolutionary change in the religious persuasions of the dynasty’ because ‘Vaiṣṇavism was replaced by Śaivism’.\textsuperscript{186} This is certainly true in the sense that

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{182}Hira Lal 1911–1912, pp. 184–201, lines 13–14:
\begin{verse}
tayā nījāḥ pretyā patīr yathāvidhe
vasaty asau nityam upāsitacyutah |
prakāśitaṁ tādyām eva kārītam
vibhor idaṁ dhāma hareḥ sanātanaṁ || 20 ||
\end{verse}
\textsuperscript{183}Bakker 2014a, p. 35
\textsuperscript{184}Cf. for example Singh, P. K. 2009, pp. 16–18, lines 4–5: \textit{kārttikeya iva kṛttivāsaso rājñāḥ śrīharsaguptasya sūnāḥ.} ‘(Śivagupta) who was a son of king Harṣagupta, like Kārttikeya was of Kṛttivāsa (i.e. Śiva).’
\textsuperscript{185}Except for the emblem, the design of Śivagupta’s seals is almost identical to that of Tivaradeva’s seals and the seals of the kings of Sarabhapura. The only difference is the floral design underneath the legend, which has developed on the seals of Śivagupta into a detailed and full-blown lotus flanked by stalks on either side. Cf. also Shastri 1995 Part I, pp. 28–30.
\textsuperscript{186}Ibid. p. 29.
\end{quote}
Daksīna Kosala

Śivagupta was the first ruling Pāṇḍava king in Daksīna Kosala who publicly stated his devotion to Śiva. The early Pāṇḍavas came from Mekalā, Indrabala and his sons were in the process of consolidating their power over the region and we have seen that Tīvaradeva and Nannarāja II adopted the former state deity Viṣṇu. Śivagupta is the one who broke this pattern and his royal adherence to Śaivism meant, in fact, a religious change for the whole region. He was a great sponsor of religion and during his long and prosperous reign he granted many villages to brahmins, religious teachers, temples and monasteries. The archaeological remains in Sirpur and the epigraphical evidence, however, both suggest that, although Vaiṣṇavism, Buddhism and Śaivism were competing to attract patronage, Śaivism was most successful in this respect. By providing stability and financial support, Śivagupta facilitated the development of Śaivism in Daksīna Kosala at an early stage and we find references to several early forms of Śaivism in his records (see below).

Plate 2.4: Seal of Śivagupta (Dk32)
2. Religious Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

GRANTS TO BRAHMINIS

Giving (tax-free) land to Vaidika brahmins was an important religious obligation for the kings in the early medieval period (fifth–thirteenth century CE).\(^{187}\) The brahmins were an important group to maintain because they were responsible for preserving their knowledge of Vedic rituals and the performance of these rituals. The granting of villages to brahmins was also a ‘good investment’; it would not only earn the donor merit (**punya**), but the brahmins would also employ their sacred knowledge in favour of the sponsoring king and his realm.\(^{188}\) As a result, royal donations to brahmins are well represented in most collections of copper-plate charters. According to Schmiedchen, brahmins remain by far the most important group of donees until the tenth century CE:

\[\text{\'Nach dem Befund der Kupfertafelepigraphik beschenkten beinahe alle frühmittelalterlichen indischen Dynastien der Periode bis zum 10. Jahrhundert vor allem Brahmanen (ohne ersichtlichen Tempelbezug) und nur in sehr viel geringerem Umfang hinduistische Tempel, jainistische Institutionen und buddhistische Klöster.'}\(^{189}\)

The donation pattern of the kings of Dakṣiṇa Kosala was no exception to this general trend, for more than fifty percent of their grants were made to brahmins.\(^{190}\) The kings donated land to one hundred and thirty-one (presumably) different brahmins, either alone or in a group.\(^{191}\) In all but one record, these brahmins are mentioned by name.\(^{192}\) Usually their Brahmanical identity is further specified by reference to their lineage (**gotra**), their

\(^{187}\) Sanderson 2009, p. 43 and in particular note 5.
\(^{189}\) Schmiedchen 2014, p. 158.
\(^{190}\) Out of the total amount of sixty-eight inscriptions, sixty-one are well enough preserved to contain information about the donee. Thirty-two of these remaining sixty-one records, report on donations to brahmins: Dk1–Dk2, Dk4–Dk19, Dk25–Dk31, Dk33–Dk36, Dk51 and Dk67–Dk68.
\(^{191}\) One of these brahmins received two grants. In his seventh regnal year, Sudevarāja issued a village to Bhaṭṭa Purandarasvāmin of the White Yajurveda (Vājasaneyya) and the Pāṇāsara **gotra** (Dk12). His brother Pravararāja issued a village to the same Purandarasvāmin in his third regnal year (Dk15).
\(^{192}\) In Tīvaradeva’s Baloda plates, issued in his ninth regnal year, a land donation is made to a group of thirty brahmins, without identifying them personally (Dk28).
adherence to a particular Vedic school (samhita) and, in a few instances, the particular branch (sakhā) within this school.

There are fifty-two brahmins for whom a Vedic school is not mentioned. Among the remaining seventy-nine, the Yajurvedins form the largest group: twenty-three brahmins belonged to the Taittiriya and Maitrāyanīya sakhā of the Black Yajurveda; eighteen to the Vājasaneyā sakhā (Mādhyandina, Kāṇva) of the White Yajurveda; and four were Yajurvedins without any specification of their branch. The second largest group consists of twenty-three brahmins involved in the Sāmaveda (Chandoga), whereas there are only eleven adherents of the Rgveda (Bahūrca).193 The presence of Atharvavedins in Dakṣiṇa Kosala cannot be determined from the epigraphical evidence, but land donations to Atharvavedic brahmins have always been rare.194

Although the purpose of these endowments is only stated in a single case, the land donations to brahmins were likely meant to provide for their maintenance and to finance their ritual duties.195 The single case is the record from Tivaradeva’s ninth regnal year, in which he makes a land donation to provide for the daily feeding of any brahmins and others who might turn up (yathāprāpta) in the village of Bilvapadraka, up to thirty in total.196 In the record, this charitable provision of food is referred to as sattru. According to Willis, sattras were connected to temples and they were meant to provide

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193Black Yajurveda (Taittiriya): Dk10 and Dk35. Black Yajurveda (Maitrāyanīya): Dk25. White Yajurveda (Vājasaneyā): Dk1, Dk4, Dk6, Dk8–Dk9, Dk12, Dk15, Dk17 and Dk31. White Yajurveda (Vājasaneyā Mādhyandina): Dk11, Dk18, Dk19, Dk26 and Dk29. White Yajurveda (Vājasaneyā Kāṇva): Dk11. White Yajurveda (no specification): Dk30. Sāmaveda (Chandoga): Dk25, Dk30, Dk33, Dk36 and Dk51. Rgveda (Bahūrca): Dk7, Dk16, Dk30, Dk34, Dk67 and Dk68.

194SCHMIEDCHEN 2007, p. 355. The donee in Sudevarāja’s Dhamatari plates (Dk9) has ‘caturveda’ as part of his name, which could imply that he had knowledge of all four Vedas. JAIN JESI 5 (1978), pp. 93–97, lines 10–11 (orthographic): kāṣyapagotravājasaneyānimādhavacaturvedasvāmin. ‘(The grant has been made) to Mādhavacaturvedasvāmin, who is a Vājasaneyin and who belongs to the Kāṣyapagotra.’ According to Schmiedchen, caturvedins were usually defined as belonging to a particular Veda, indicating that they did not study all the four Vedas equally. SCHMIEDCHEN 2007, pp. 372–373. Cf. also SCHMIEDCHEN 2014, pp. 162–164. In the present case, this would mean that the brahmin Mādhavacaturvedasvāmin was a Yajurvedin who was also versed in the other three Vedas.


charity (food, medicine, clothing, etc.) to brahmins, wandering mendicants and other destitute people. He suggests that these *sattras* were designed to counter the successful Buddhist support system, and to strengthen the position of the temple.\(^{197}\) Two offerings that appear regularly together with *sattras* in inscriptions are the *bali* and *caru* offerings. Both are offerings of food. The first, *bali*, consists basically of ‘a portion of food which is presented to whomever it is due’. This may be a house-deity, a tree spirit, a god or any other deserving creature, and therefore *bali* offerings are generally described as ‘the offering of food to all beings’.\(^{198}\) The second, *caru*, is a burnt offering of cooked porridge prepared from unpounded rice or barley grains, cooked in water with butter or milk.\(^{199}\) Thus, the main difference between these two is, that *bali* is directly offered to some being, whereas *caru* is an indirect oblation by means of the fire.

Together, the three offerings – *sattras*, *bali* and *caru* – can be aligned with elements of ‘the five great brahmanical sacrifices’ (*pancamahāyajñā*) as prescribed by Manu in his *Dharmaśāstra* (3.70):

> ‘Teaching and study is the *brahmayajñā*, the sacrifice to Brahman, the offering of water and food called *tarpana* is the *pitr.yajñā*, the sacrifice to the ancestors, the burnt oblation or *homa* is the *devayajñā*, the sacrifice to the gods, the *bali* offering is the *bhūtayajñā*, the sacrifice offered to *bhūtas*, the hospitable reception of guests or *atithipūjana* is the *manus.yayajñā*.’\(^{200}\)

Willis made a detailed analysis of the five great sacrifices in connection to the formation of temple ritual (*pūjā*), and he aligns *sattras* with the offering to men (*manus.yayajñā*), *bali* with the offering to beings (*bhūtayajñā*) and *caru* with the offering to gods (*devayajñā*). The five great brahmanical sacrifices were daily domestic rituals, centered around the sacrificial fire at home and performed by the pater familias, but Willis argues that they served as a template for constructing the *pūjā* rituals that the priests conducted in the temple.\(^{201}\) With the rise of upcoming new religious traditions in the early

\(^{197}\) Willis 2009b, pp. 5–8.

\(^{198}\) Ibid., pp. 4–5.

\(^{199}\) Ibid., pp. 8–9.


\(^{201}\) Willis 2009b.
medieval period – such as Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism – the need for a proper temple ritual to honour the deities installed in the newly constructed temples arose as well. Consequently, priests used the well-established domestic rituals and carefully applied them to the religious activities in the temple.\textsuperscript{202}

Generally, it is not possible to connect the receiving brahmins in the copper-plate charters of the kings of Dakṣiṇa Kosala with specific religious sectarian movements. It was precisely the absence of such affiliation that was the hallmark of their Vaidika status. Names like ‘Viṣṇusvāmin’ and ‘Rudrasvāmin’ obviously hint at the reverence for either Viṣṇu or Śiva, but their devotion would normally be in forms compatible with their Vaidika status and not extend to Śaivism or Vaiṣṇavism proper of the initiatory varieties. An exception is the grant made by Nānarāja II, in which he donates a village to the Yajurvedin teacher (upadhyāya) Nārāyaṇa.\textsuperscript{203} This brahmin is not only said to belong to the Vājasyaneya-Mādhyandina branch of the White Yajurveda, but he is also identified as a devotee of Viṣṇu (bhāgavata).\textsuperscript{204} As the new religious traditions gradually developed next to the existing Vedic tradition, it is to be expected that the same may apply to some of the other brahmins; although not yet specifically stated in the records, they may have either been devoted to Viṣṇu or Śiva or involved in Buddhism in combination with their performance of the traditional Vedic rituals. It is only during the

\textsuperscript{202}In particular Atharvavedins likely have played an important role in this process, for brahmins initiated and trained in the Atharvavedic tradition were long appointed to office as the personal priests of rulers (rājapurohitah). As royal priests they performed consecration ceremonies and a wide range of rituals to ensure a strong and protected kingdom. SANDERSON 2007, p. 195. The royal priests retained a high status: ‘The royal priest, then, was ranked below the king himself but above the queen and the crown-prince, enjoying the same status as the chief minister.’ Ibid., p. 208. Sanderson has shown that they added Śākta-Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava rituals to their repertoire and has surmised that they did so in order to respond to a shift in expectations of their royal clients. Ibid., p. 196.

One should realize, though, that temple worship was not in the hands of the traditional brahmin priests. Brahmanical sources indicate that brahmins who functioned as a temple priest, and were therefore living off the wealth of a god, were looked down upon. After persisting in this work for three years, they would lose their brahmin status and be known as a Devalaka or a ‘sub-brahmin’ (upabrāhmanah). SANDERSON 2009, pp. 276–278.

\textsuperscript{203}Dk29.

\textsuperscript{204}Jain EI 31 (1955–1956), pp. 219–222, lines 15–17: kaunḍinyasagotrāya vājasyaneyamādyahya(nid)abhāgavatabrāhmaṇanārāyaṇopādhyāyāya. ‘(The grant has been made) to the brahmin teacher Nārāyaṇa of the Kaunḍinya gotra, who was a devotee of Viṣṇu (bhāgavata) and who belonged to the Vājasyaneya-Mādhyandina sākhā of the White Yajurveda’.
2. Religious Profile of Daksśiṇa Kosala

reign of Śivagupta that different branches of Śaivism become recognizable in the records through the names of the officiants receiving the grant (see below).

In his article on Śaivism in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka Age, Bisschop surmises that the Śaivite leanings of Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II may have been rooted in the teachings of the Black Yajurveda. Phrases from several fragmentary inscriptions ascribed to this king are reminiscent of the Śiva-oriented Śvetāsvatara-Upaniṣad, a text associated with the Taittirīya branch of the Black Yajurveda.205 The Brahmānical grants of the kings of Daksśiṇa Kosala do not provide us with similar clues, but they do show that the Black Yajurveda, and in particular the Taittirīya and Maitrāyanīya branches, were well-represented. Perhaps the presence of this Vedic school was of influence in Daksśiṇa Kosala as well and inspired the area to become a breeding ground for the development of early forms of Śaivism.

Grants to Śaivism

There are twenty inscriptions that testify to the presence of Śaivism in Daksśiṇa Kosala.206 Most of these records are attributed to Śivagupta’s long and prosperous reign, and all but two of them can be related to a specific temple or temple complex. The temples referred to in these inscriptions all have the term śiva as the second part of their name, indicating that they were dedicated to Śiva. In some cases the temple is mentioned as the receiving party, but usually either Śiva’s manifestation presiding in the temple or the officiant (ācārya) responsible for managing the temple’s ‘business’ is mentioned as the donee of the grant. Despite the scarcity of provided information, it is possible with the help of the initiation names of the officiants associated with the temples to draw some conclusions about the different Śaiva traditions that were present in Daksśiṇa Kosala at the time of Śivagupta’s reign (ca. 590–650 AD).

205 Bisschop 2010a, pp. 477–488.
206 Dk20, Dk22, Dk37–Dk47, Dk50, Dk52–Dk53, Dk55–Dk58 and Dk61.
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The Temple of Jayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka

A manifestation of Śiva named Jayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka is known from the Malhār copper plates of Śūrabālā. In his eighth regnal year, the king granted a small village (grāmaka) named Saṅgama to a certain Narasiṃha, who was a son of Bota and a grandson of the merchant Manoratha. With the permission of the king (asmadanumatyā), Narasiṃha gave the village to the god Jayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka. Though copper-plate inscriptions are usually concise compared to stone inscriptions, a rather extensive description of this deity is given in the first lines of the charter. A reference to the destruction of Kāma alludes to Śiva’s third eye and several of his other well-known characteristics (trident, bull, serpents) are mentioned as well.

The name of the granted village, ‘village at the confluence’ (saṅgama-grāmaka), makes clear that the village was situated at a confluence of rivers (samgama). The location of the village is further specified by the addition that it was situated in the southern province (dakṣiṇarāṣṭra) of Mekalā. In the previous chapter it is already mentioned that Saṅgama has been identified with the modern village of Tālā in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh, which is near the confluence of the river Manirā with the Seonath river and therefore also known as Saṅgama. This identification may be supported by the fact that, in Tālā, one can visit the ruins of two stone temples that are dedicated to Śiva: the Jetānā and the Devarānā (see Plate 3.13). These ruins are among the earliest Śaiva remains in the region, and it has been suggested by Bajpai that one of these temples may have been the temple of Jayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka.

The name ‘Jayeśvara’ might imply that the temple of this god was either built by a certain Jaya, or constructed in the memory of someone named Jaya after his death. The previous chapter has shown that there are three

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207 Dk20.
208 For the text, see Dk20 in Appendix 1.
212 It was a common practice from the fourth century AD onwards to name a temple after the person who built it or to whom it was dedicated. This would be done by prefixing
2. Religious Profile of Daksīṇa Kosala

Jaya’s in the history of fifth and sixth century Daksīṇa Kosala. One of them was Jayarāja of Sarabhapura, but, given the fact that he was a staunch devotee of Viṣṇu, it is very unlikely that he was the one who lent his name to an abode of Śiva. Jayabala of the Pāṇḍavas from Mekalā seems to be a good candidate, for he was probably a devotee of Śiva like the other early Pāṇḍava kings. However, since the Pāṇḍava kings were still confined to the northern part of Mekalā at the time of his petty reign and the region including Tālā was still part of the territory under the control of the kings of Sarabhapura,213 it is doubtful that he would have constructed his temple in this part of the country. Therefore the hypothesis of Bakker, that the temple of Jayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka was founded by Jayabhaṭṭāraka of the Amara family residing in Prasannapura, is the most plausible one.214 Presuming that Mahādevi ‘Lokapratikāśā’ was indeed Jayabhaṭṭāraka’s daughter, it makes sense that Śūrabala provided the god of his maternal grandfather with financial support.215

The Temple of Ṣāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka

With the following epigraphical reference to Śaivism, we jump to the end of Śivagupta’s reign. This may seem a bit random but considering that the receiving deity is connected to Ṣāneadeva it seems suitable to discuss it here. Śivagupta granted a village to the illustrious god Ṣāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka (Śiva) in his fifty-seventh regnal year, on the day of the full moon in the month of Kārttika.216 The temple that enshrined this manifestation of Śiva was probably constructed by, or in memory of, Ṣāneadeva and was situated in the plains of Pattana-Khadirapadra (see below). The charter records that Ṣāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka received the village of Vaidyapadraka in the Oni bhoga to finance the repair of the temple’s dilapidations, as well as worship through dance (nrṛṭta) and music (vāditra), the performance of bali and caru offerings and to provide for a sattra.217

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213See Chapter 1, pp. 39–42.
215See Chapter 1, p. 42–46.
216Dk46.
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The endowment was requested by Śūlapāṇi, a pupil of the ācārya Pramatha who is characterized as a constant wanderer (capalagocarin) hailing from the celebrated Pañcayajñīa penance grove (tapovana) situated in the Dvaitavana.\(^{218}\) This forest is known from the Mahābhārata as the forest where the epic Pāṇḍavas dwelt on multiple occasions during their twelve-year exile.\(^{219}\) According to the Mahābhārata, the Dvaitavana was located near a desert and the river Sarasvatī was flowing through it. The forest was named after the Dvaita Lake that was within its boundaries.\(^{220}\) The location of the forest on the banks of the Sarasvatī denotes that the Dvaitavana was part of the Kuru country (i.e. Kurukṣetra).\(^{221}\) Whether Dvaitavana was an actual historical site or rather a mythological forest cannot be attested, but its reference in the present record may hint at a connection to the Kuru (Kauruṣya) branch of Pāṇḍapata Śaivism, which, according to tradition was

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\(^{218}\) Pandeya EI 27 (1947–1948), pp. 322–323, lines 12–14: \textit{dvaitavaniyaśrīmatpañcayajñīatapovanavirgatakapalagocarinah bhagavacchipramathācāryyasīṣyāśrīśīlapāṇibhagavatpāḍapṛśṛthānapī.} ‘(The grant was made) at the request of the venerable (bhagavatpāda) Śūlapāṇi, who was a pupil of the venerable (bhagavat) ācārya Pramatha, who was a constant wanderer hailing from the celebrated Pañcayajñīa penance grove situated in the Dvaitavana.’ The syntax of this Sanskrit sentence is irregular; if the description \textit{dvaitavaniyaśrīmatpañcayajñīatapovanavirgatakapalagocarinah} (in the genitive case) qualifies Pramatha, as is the case in the translation, we need the genitive \textit{pramathācāryasya}, whereas we need the genitive \textit{bhagavatpāḍasya} if the description qualifies Śūlapāṇi.

\(^{219}\) Mahābhārata 3.25.13–16: ‘Thereupon they departed, all the Pāṇḍavas who strode by the Law, accompanied by numerous brahmans, for Lake Dvaitavana. There were brahmans who had kept up the \textit{agnihotra} and others who did not keep the fires, others who studied the Veda, or begged for their food, or recited prayers, or lived in the forest. The brahmans who accompanied Yudhiṣṭhira were many, hundreds of ascetic brahmans avowed to truth and strict in their vows. Thus, traveling with these many brahmans, the Pāṇḍavas, bulls of the Bharatas, came to the lovely and holy Lake Dvaitavana.’ Van Buitenen 1975, p. 269.

\(^{220}\) The \textit{Śatapathabrāhmaṇa} tells a different story, this text says that the forest was named after the Matsya king Dvhasan Dvaitavana after he performed a horse sacrifice there. \textit{Śatapathabrāhmaṇa} XIII.5.4.9. Pandeya refers to the Dvaitavana as ‘lying between Taigaṇa on the north-east and Kurukṣetra and Hastināpura on the south-east’. Pandeya EI 27 (1947–1948), p. 322. Cf. Sørensen 1963, ‘Dvaitavana’.

\(^{221}\) Bakker 2014a, pp. 155–171.
established by the fourth pupil of Lāgudi (Lakulīśa) who was born in the Kuru country. This might seem too far-fetched, but the presence of this Pāśupata branch in Dakṣiṇa Kosala is attested in another inscription that will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

As for the place where the Īśāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple was situated, we may be able to further specify the location based on another, presumably earlier, record. The fragmentary stone inscription in the maṇḍapa of the Lakṣmaṇeśvara temple at Kharod (see Plate 1.7), in the Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh, may be among the oldest records that testify to the presence of Śaivism in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. The temple is completely reconstructed and the inscription is the only remainder of the original sixth-century structure, assuming that it was not removed from another site. The door jambs of the sanctum and two pillars may belong to the eighth century, and there is also an inscription in the maṇḍapa of the Kalachuri king Ratnadeva III, dated Kalachuri 933 (1181–1182 AD). Locally, the temple is known as Lakhneswar and it is still in use today; a laterite liṅga is housed in the temple’s sanctum (see Plate 2.5).

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222 The Skandapurāṇa SP₄ 167.110–138 in Bisschop 2006 tells the narrative of Śiva’s descent to earth and the spreading of the Pāśupata tradition through his four pupils. The Lord is said to have descended at Kārohaṇa (Karvan) in the Kali yuga, where he assumed a ‘white-bodied appearance’ (i.e. besmeared with ashes) and resorted to the house of a man named Somaśarman. He initiated Somaśarman along with his family and granted them ‘perfection in yoga’ (yogasiddhi). Then he goes to Ujjayānī, where he settled on grounds that were being used for cremations and initiated his first pupil Kauśika. A second and third pupil, Gārgya and Mitra, are initiated in Jambumārga (near Puṣkara) and Mathurā respectively. The fourth pupil is not mentioned by name, but he is said to be a brahmacārin from the country of the Kurus, who received his initiation at Kanyakubja. SP₁ 167.123cd: brahmacārī caturthas tu kuruṣ eva sugotrajaḥ || 123 || and SP₄ 167.129: kanyakuhye lataś cāṇyaṁ anugṛhyam jagatpatih Jayasiddhāntam dadau yogam uvācedam ca lāgudih || 129 ||. A number of (later) sources inform us about four Pāśupata lineages, each deriving from Lakulīśa through his four pupils Kauśika/Kuśika, Gārgya, Mitra/Maitreya and Kauruṣya/Kauruṣa. According to Bakker, the name Kauruṣya may have been a later invention within the tradition, used to supply a name for the founder of the lineage from the Kuru country. Bakker 2007, pp. 1–6; Bakker 2011: Bakker 2014a, pp. 137–153 and p. 170, note 529 and Bisschop 2006, pp. 37–50. Cf. Pathak 1960, pp. 9–11; Lorenzen 1972, p. 181 and Sanderson 2003–2004, p. 375, note 82. The initiation of the Lord’s first pupil, Kauśika/Kuśika, is corroborated by Kauṇḍinya’s Pancaśārthabhāṣya, and he is generally accepted to have been a historical person. Bakker 2010c.

223 Dk58.

224 Dk22.

Dakṣiṇa Kosala

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Shastri believes that Indrabala’s son Ṣānadeva was the one who erected the original temple at Kharod and made a land donation on the occasion. There is actually too much damage to the surface of the inscription to make any certain statements about the temple’s sponsor and the circumstances under which it was constructed, but in view of the fact that the present inscription is the only one in the collection that introduces Ṣānadeva in the Pāṇḍava pedigree, Shastri’s hypothesis may be a valid one. This raises the question as to whether it would be possible

Plate 2.5: Śiva’s linga at Kharod

According to Mirashi, a god named Lakṣmānadeva is mentioned in the thirty-first line of the inscription and was the manifestation of Śiva enshrined in the temple. He also claims to have read the name of the ascetic Śūlapāṇi in the present inscription and he ascribes the erection of the temple to him. Cf. Mirashi 1952. These readings have not been corroborated by anyone since (or before), however, and they may be doubtful. It seems very unlikely that an ascetic like Śūlapāṇi would have erected a temple, and even if the erection was actually financed by Śivagupta at Śūlapāṇi’s request then it would still be out of pattern that the brother of Śivagupta’s great-grandfather (i.e. Ṣānadeva) is among the kings introduced in the inscription.
to identify the temple at Kharod with the temple of Īśāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka discussed above. We know from the copper-plate inscription that the temple of Īśāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka was situated in the plains (tala) of Pattana-Khadirapadra. This Khadirapadra has been identified by Pandeya with the village of Kharapali in the Bargarh district of Odisha; Mahajan has identified it with the village of Kharapali in the Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh, whereas Rajaguru has identified it with the village of Khairapada in the Kalahandi district of Odisha. All three options seem rather dubious, however, for why would Īśānadeva have erected his temple at such a distance from where the Pāṇḍavas were active at that time? Mirashi refers to Khadirapadra as ‘plainly Kharod’, and given the location of Kharod – at the border between Mekalā and Kosala, in the centre of the recently acquired Pāṇḍava kingdom – I am inclined to agree with his identification. If we accept that Īśānadeva was the one who erected the temple at Kharod, then it seems likely that it was indeed this temple that enshrined the god Īśāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka and received Śivagupta’s financial support more then half a century later.

The Temple of Kapāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka

In a set of undated copper plates from Malhār, the god Kapāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka (Śiva) is endowed with a grant. The temple of this manifestation of Śiva was constructed by a certain Śivanandin, who lived in a place called Kosalānagara. Śivagupta presented the temple with the village of Śuṣkasirillīka, which was also located in the Oni bhoga. The endowment was meant to provide for the repair of the temple’s broken parts and for the performance of bali and caru offerings. The name ‘Kapāleśvara’ means literally ‘Lord of the Skull’. This appellation most likely refers to the story of Śiva cutting off Brahmā’s fifth head, after which the skull of this severed head becomes his begging bowl. A beautiful series of images in which Śiva is depicted with the skull in his hand can be found in Malhār; one of the door jambs of the

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228 Mirashi 1952.
229 Dk50. For the name, see Appendix 1, p. 259, note 565.
230 According to Mahajan, the village of Śuṣkasirillīka is named after dried (śuṣka) Sirāla plants. The place has not been identified. Mahajan 2000, p. 51.
232 Skandapurāṇa SP, 5–7 in SP I.
ruined Deur temple tells the story of Śiva’s visit to the Devadāruvana, where he enters as a naked mendicant with the skull as his begging bowl (see Plates 4.24–4.28). Both the copper-plate inscription and the Deur door jambs likely date to the second half of Śivagupta’s reign, and since the present charter was found in Malhār as well perhaps the ruined Deur temple used to be the abode of ‘the Lord of the Skull’.

The Gandharveśvara-bhattāraka Temple

The Gandharveśvara temple in Sirpur, situated on the bank of the river Mahānadi, is still in use and very popular (see Plate 2.6). The name of the temple alludes to Śiva’s lordship over the celestial gandharvas. According to the naming conventions, Śiva’s manifestation in this temple (i.e. Gandharveśvara) would be a liṅga held to have been installed by a gandharva; as such, its power or sanctity would be greater than that of the historical liṅgas installed by human patrons (mānuṣa-liṅga) but less than that of the liṅgas considered to be self-created (svayambhū-liṅga). Among the ancient remains are nine stone inscriptions, some of which are very fragmentary. The inscriptions probably did not all belong to the temple originally, for the temple has been repaired with materials from the ruins of several other structures. Four of the nine inscriptions record flower offerings to Śiva. The presentation of fragrant flowers to Śiva, in addition to besmearing the

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233 For the date of the inscription see Appendix 1, pp. 258–259, note 564; for the Deur door jambs see Chapters 3 and 4.

234 This class of demigods was devoted to Śiva and they honored him with offerings of music, dance and song. In Bāṇa’s Kādambarī it is said that the gandharvas built temples of Śiva. Tava Kar 1971, pp. 16–17.


236 Dk54–Dk62.


238 These are Dk55–Dk58. There is a fifth inscription that refers to Śiva (Dk61). The stone slab bearing this inscription was originally fixed on the compound wall outside the temple’s gateway to the Mahānadi river. Unfortunately, an indefinite portion of the stone slab is broken off and lost. An Āryā verse in line 13 of the inscription (verse 23) refers to Śiva with the epithet ‘Uneven-Eyed’ (Viśamekaṇa). This is followed by an Anuṣṭubh verse in line 14, in which the inscription is said to be engraved by the artisan (śilpin) Goṇḍaśiva in the abode of Bhavabhedin (verse 24). Sankaranarayanan and Jain compare the partly preserved verses 5–18 with Bhartṛhari’s Vairāgyasataka, since they seem to dwell on the emptiness of worldly life. Sankaranarayanan & Jain EI 39 (1971–1972), pp. 153–156.
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Plate 2.6: The Gandharveśvara (Gandheśvara) temple at Sirpur

liṅga with scented paste (gandha), is a common ritual practice (see Plate 2.7).\textsuperscript{239} Superficially, the fragrance or gandha of both ritual offerings (i.e. flowers and paste) seems reflected in the contraction ‘Gandheśvara’, which is the popular name of the temple nowadays.\textsuperscript{240}

An inscription built into the plinth of the temple mentions explicitly the name Gandharveśvara. The opening lines are an invocation of Śiva, who

\textsuperscript{239} Cf. Davis 1991, pp. 137–162.

\textsuperscript{240} The connection between the temple’s original name Gandharveśvara, it’s location on the river bank and the modern name Gandheśvara may not be accidental. In the Atharvaveda (2.2.3) the gandharvas, together with the apsarases (water nymphs), are said to dwell in the waters. Macdonell 1981, p. 137. The etymology of the word gandharva is elusive. However, based on a few references in the Rgveda and Atharvaveda, one derivation suggested is from the word gandha (scent). In the Rgveda (10.123.7) the gandharvas are described as wearing fragrant (surabhi) garments and according to the Atharvaveda (12.1.23) the gandharvas share the fragrance of the earth. Shendge 1977, pp. 100–107; Cuevas 1996, p. 281; Wayman 1997, p. 1.
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is referred to as Hara and is said to bear the stream of the river Gaṅgā in his locks of matted hair.241 The lines 12–15 of the inscription describe the arrangement made for the offering of a flower garland for the worship of Gandharveśvara (Śiva) by a certain Jorjjarāka, who was a subject of Śivagupta. The garland measured a man’s height (puruṣapramāṇa), was fragrant (sugandha) and very beautiful (sumanorama). The flowers for the garland were to be supplied for as long as the moon, the sun and the stars will last by the garland-makers (mālākāras) of the New Market (navaṭṭa), which may have been a quarter of Śrīpura.242

Underneath the inscription in the plinth is a second record, of which the content is more or less the same (see Plate 1.2).243 Nāgadeva, a brahmin of high rank in the service of Śivagupta, and the proficient artist Keśava, together provided the money to finance four garlands of flowers for the worship of the Trident-Bearer (Śiva). The garlands were measuring a man’s height, and the worship of Śiva expressed by the donation of the garlands was meant to last until the destruction of the earth. Nāgadeva and Keśava obtained the garlands from the gardeners of Śrīpura.244 An Anuṣṭubh verse at the end of the inscription proclaims the wish that these garlands may serve for the worship of Śrīkanṭha (Śiva) until the destruction of the earth:

May this, which intoxicates the bees with its fragrance (i.e. the four flower garlands), be until the earth ceases to exist for the

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241 For the text, see Dk55 in Appendix 1. This inscription clearly shows that the original name of the temple was Gandharveśvara. Cf. Shastri 1995, Part II, p. 153, note 13.
243 Dk56. Kielhorn edited this inscription from rubbings supplied by Cunningham. According to Cunningham, the inscription was complete when first discovered and when the rubbings were made. Apparently the upper right corner has been broken off later, so today the beginning of each of the first three lines is missing. Kielhorn IA 18 (1889), pp. 179–181.
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worship of Śrīkaṇṭha, whose throat is (black) like a bee!\(^{245}\)

The epithet Śrīkaṇṭha (‘Beautiful throat’) refers to the story in which Śiva drank the deadly poison (*halahala*) created from the world ocean when the *devas* and *asuras* churned it in order to obtain the nectar of immortality (*amṛṭa*). As a result of this act, his throat became dark blue, a quality which is invoked for protection in the first lines of the inscription.\(^{246}\)

Another inscription is engraved on a stone slab built into the floor of the entrance of the Gandharvēśvara temple.\(^{247}\) It is also written in the praise of Śiva and also seems to refer to the offering of flowers, as it mentions ‘the gardeners (*mālākūras*) of Pranavahaṭṭaka’. According to Hira Lal, this marketplace is the same as the New Market mentioned above.\(^{248}\) Mahajan, on the other hand, argues that the word ḫaṭṭaka instead of ḫaṭṭa suggests that this must have been a small marketplace separate from the New Market of the previous inscription.\(^{249}\)

The fourth inscription is engraved on the southern face of the left pillar of the *maṇḍapa*, near the central shrine of the Gandharvēśvara temple.\(^{250}\) In the inscription it is recorded that a Śaiva ascetic named Udbhavaraśi resided at Śrīpura during the reign of Śivagupta. Ambulloka, the pupil of Udbhavarāśi, offered garlands to Śambhu (Śiva), bearing the name Gandharvēśa. The garlands were to be supplied daily by the garland-makers of Śrīpura as long as the earth, the sun and the moon will last.\(^{251}\)

The suffix *rāśi* at the end of Udbhavarāśi’s name is a marker of a branch of teachers in the Pāṣupata tradition.\(^{252}\) Bakker has argued that these Rāśi ascetics likely trace their origin back to Rāśikara, who was the fourth teacher in the Kuru lineage of the Pāṣupata tradition.\(^{253}\)

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\(^{245}\) Kielhorn IA 18 (1889), pp. 179–181, lines 15–16 (orthographic):

| etad ¯a medin¯in¯aśad āmodonmadasaṭpadam | 
| astu ṣatpadakaṇṭhasya śrīkaṇṭhasyārcanaṃkṛte || 11 ||

\(^{246}\) For the text, see Dk56 in Appendix 1.

\(^{247}\) Dk57.

\(^{248}\) Hira Lal 1932, pp. 98–99. This is also accepted by Shastri, cf. Shastri 1995 Part II, p. 382.


\(^{250}\) Dk58.


\(^{252}\) Goodall 2007.

\(^{253}\) It would seem a plausible hypothesis to connect the branch of Pāṣupata teachers
record would be the earliest epigraphical attestation of such a Raṣi ascetic. Udbhavarasi is described as ‘an ocean for the streams of his own doctrine (svasiddānta).’ The phrase svasiddānta is used in the Skandapurāṇa to refer to Lāgūḍi’s Pañcarthā doctrine, which he passed on to his fourth pupil in particular. Therefore, Bakker argues that the prefix ‘sva’ before the word doctrine (siddānta) does not refer to Udbhavarasi himself, but to the lord he served. He also suggests that novices in the Raṣi branch of Pāṣupata Śaivism received an ordination name ending in -raṣi, because their initiation ritual consisted of taking a first bath in a heap of ashes (bhasmarasi).

According to the Skandapurāṇa, the initiation of Lāgūḍi’s pupil from the Kuru country took place in Kanakubja (the city of Kanauj). After being initiated, the four pupils were instructed to free other brahmins from the bond of death (martyabandhana) by initiating them. This renders it plausible that Kanakubja became one of the first important centers of the Pāṣupata tradition. From there, the movement may have spread to other

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with names ending in ṛaṣi to this Raṣikara, and it might perhaps be not too far-fetched to imagine that by the time that the SP was composed Kanauj/Kanakubja possessed a Pāṣupata Maṭha, possibly of the Raṣi branch, which claimed its authority by means of a paramparā that went straight back to Lakulīśa through the guru who came from the Land of the Kuru. Bakker 2007, p. 5. See also note 222.

The so-called Cintra Praśasti of 1287 AD from Somnathapattan/Prabhāsa seems to contradict this hypothesis. The sthānādhipati Kārtikaraśi and his pupil Vālmikirasi are introduced in lines 19 and 20 of the inscription, where Kārtikaraśi is said to be an ornament of Gārgya’s lineage (gārgeyagotrābharanam). Apparently, this Raṣi ascetic traced his paramparā not back to Lakulīśa’s pupil from the Kuru country, but to Gārgya instead. BÜHLER E1 1 (1892), pp. 271–287.

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257 Skandapurāṇa SPs 167.129 in BISSCHOP 2006. See note 222.
258 Skandapurāṇa SPs 167.130 (ibid.):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{rahasyaṃ paramaṃ hiṃ paṇcārthā iti śaṃpyaṃtām}| \\
\text{viprāṃ mocaśitaṃ datto yuṣmaḥyaṃ martyabandhanāt}| \\
\text{anayaḥ diśayaḥ viprāṃ prapayadhvaṃ paraṃ padam || 130 ||}
\end{align*}
\]

“This is the final mystical teaching known as Paṇcārthā. It has been proclaimed to you in order that you liberate the brahmins from the fetters of death. You should make the brahmins reach the highest station by initiating them (in this teaching).” Translation of Bakker 2014a, p. 146.
parts of Northern India and beyond.\textsuperscript{259} Kanauj was the capital city of the Maukharis, and therefore Bakker has suggested that Udbhavarāśi may have come to Dakṣiṇa Kosala in the train of Śivagupta’s mother Vāsātā when she married Harṣagupta.\textsuperscript{260}

\textit{The Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka Temple Complex}\textsuperscript{261}

Among the inscriptions pertaining to Śaivism, eleven report on and relate to the construction of a Śiva temple established by Śivagupta himself and the transformation of this temple into an important centre of early Śaivism (see Plate 2.8 and Figure 2.1).\textsuperscript{262} Śivagupta’s royal temple is referred to as ‘Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka’ in these inscriptions, which means that it was named after his epithet ‘Bālārjuna’.\textsuperscript{263} Of the eleven inscriptions connected to the Bāleśvara temple complex, nine were found together, consisting of a hoard of nine sets of copper-plate charters that were found by accident while digging a small mound at Sirpur in April 1987.\textsuperscript{264} These records were a tremendous addition to the collection of epigraphical material from Dakṣiṇa Kosala, for not only do they tell the construction history of the complex, but they also inform us that the Bāleśvara temple and its subsidiary shrines were firmly connected to a lineage of officiants (ācāryas) belonging to the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition of Śaivism. Further, as will be shown below, there is epigraphical evidence that officiants of the Somasiddhānta tradition of Śaivism were involved in the Bāleśvara complex as well.

The first reference to the Bāleśvara complex dates back to Śivagupta’s thirty-seventh regnal year.\textsuperscript{265} The charter dated to this year was issued at

\textsuperscript{259} Bakker 2007; Bakker 2011, p. 28–32.  
\textsuperscript{260} Bakker & Isaacson 2004, p. 30, note 103. A similar process is proposed by Bakker to have taken place in Nepal, when the Maukhari princess Vatsadevi married the Licchavi king Śivadeva II. Bakker 2007, pp. 11–13.  
\textsuperscript{261} The following section is a slightly modified version of an independent article published in the \textit{Indo-Iranian Journal} 56, a special double issue containing the proceedings of the symposium \textit{Epigraphical Evidence for the Formation and Rise of Early Śaivism}, which was held at the University of Groningen, 4–5 June 2012. Bosma 2013.  
\textsuperscript{262} Dk37–D45, Dk47 and Dk51.  
\textsuperscript{263} See Chapter 1, p. 36.  
\textsuperscript{264} Shastrī 1995 Part II, p. 376. These nine sets of copper-plate charters are preserved today in the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum in Raipur, the capital city of Chhatisgarh. They were edited by Girdhari L. Raikwar and Rahul Kumar Singh, published in \textit{Jain} 2005, pp. 196–217.  
\textsuperscript{265} Dk37.
Plate 2.8: Temple ruins of the Bāleśvara complex at Sirpur

Figure 2.1: Overview of the Bāleśvara complex at Sirpur
the time of the establishment of the Bāleśvara temple (śrībāleśvarampratīsthā-kāle) on the fifth day of the first fortnight of the month of Vaiśākha. This was the main temple and the beginning of the complex. On the occasion of this establishment Śivagupta granted the village of Hastipadraka, situated in the administrative unit Svalpaśarkarāmga, to a certain Vyāpaśiva, who is said to be a respected ācārya and is referred to by the honorific title bhagavatpāda. Vyāpaśiva is also said to be a pupil of the ācārya Dīrgha.\textsuperscript{266} As suggested by Shastri,\textsuperscript{267} it is indeed very likely that Vyāpaśiva was involved in the procedure of establishing the Bāleśvara temple.

More detailed information about the temple and the officiant is provided by a charter from Śivagupta’s thirty-eighth regnal year.\textsuperscript{268} In this record it is stated that the Bāleśvara-bhāṭṭāraka temple was established by Śivagupta himself in the plains of Śrīpura (śrīpuratatalasvakārita). The charter also informs us that the temple was by now extended with a maṭhikā for housing, for it was the establishment of this maṭhikā on the day of the full moon in the month of Śrāvaṇa that gave reason to issue the grant. Vyāpaśiva likely presided in this maṭhikā, since he is again the donee of the grant. He received the village of Bhāṇḍāgaracattāka in the Aryaṅgā bhoga,\textsuperscript{269} for the purpose of sponsoring continuous charity (sattra) and worship as well as teaching, initiations and offering ceremonies for the line of pupils and grand-pupils.\textsuperscript{270} Vyāpaśiva’s paramparā is traced back one more generation in this inscription;

\textsuperscript{266}The village of Hastipadraka can be identified with the modern village of Hasod in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. The name ‘Śarkarāmga’ literally means ‘sandy road’. The prefix ‘little’ (svalpa) implies that there was also ‘big’ Śarkarāmga. Mahajan argues that the division once must have been a sandy road, which developed into an administrative unit when it became inhabited on both sides. She mentions the villages of Sakarai and Sakara, both on the bank of the river Kharun at the western border of Raipur, as the possible heart of the two Śarkarāmga districts. Mahajan 2000, p. 43. Shastri suggests that the division may have something to do with the village of Śarkarāpadraka, situated in the Nandapura bhoga, which was granted by Narendra of Śarabhapura (Dk1). Shastri JESI 18 (1992), p. 22, note 13. The latter option is indeed convincing, since Dīrgha is said to have come from Nandapura (see below). Śarkarāmga was probably important, for Śivagupta grants two more villages from this administrative unit: the villages of Aḍakeraka and Kośambrika in respectively his eleventh (Dk34) and fifty-fifth (Dk44) regnal year.

\textsuperscript{267}Shastri JESI 18 (1992), p. 16.

\textsuperscript{268}Dk38.

\textsuperscript{269}Mahajan identifies the Aryaṅgā bhoga with the city of Āraṅg, in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. Mahajan 2000, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{270}Jain 2005, pp. 206–208, lines 2b.1–2 (orthographic): śisyapraśisyādiṣṭānaṁ śatatajāgādiṣṭāniśāyākhyābhartasa(ttra)pravartanārtham.
he is not only described as the pupil of Dīrgha, but also as the grand-pupil of the śaiva-cārya Aghorasiva.

Eight years later, in Śivagupta’s fourty-sixth regnal year, the king extended the evolving Bāleśvara complex one last time. He established the Dayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka shrine inside (anta) the mathikā, again on the full-moon day of the month of Śrāvaṇa, and endowed this sanctuary with the village of Bhāṇḍāgaratkaḍāṅgaka in the Devī bhoga. The grant was meant to meet the expenses of repairing (future) dilapidations, to sustain the shrine’s entourage and to sponsor music and worship for Hara. This was, however, not the final episode of the construction history. The Bāleśvara complex was a project in which not only Śivagupta, but also other members of his family were involved. In the following years, two more additions were made by female relatives.

In a charter dated to Śivagupta’s fourty-eighth regnal year, a woman named Amaradevi, presumably one of Śivagupta’s queens, is said to have erected the Amareśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple in the mathikā of the Bāleśvara complex. When the god, or devabhaṭṭāraka, of this sanctuary was installed, on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Phalgun, Śivagupta made an endowment at the request of Amaradevi. The recipient was the bhagavatpāda Astraśiva, the pupil of Vyāpaśiva from the previous grants. He received the

271 Dk39.
272 The Devī bhoga has retained its name in the modern site Devabhoga in the Bindranavagarh tehsil of the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. Mahajan 2000, p. 105.
273 Jain 2005, pp. 208–210, lines 2a.6–2b.1 (orthographic): eva khaṇḍasphaṭitasamśvāraṁ rtha(m) tadupayogiparikarpārattananṛtha(m) *hara(em.: haraha Ed.) pūjāsaṁśvātaṁ pravartanārtha(m) ca. The grant was issued after having furnished milk and vegetables for a sattrā. Ibid., line 2b.3: sattrāya gorasa*pattrosāka(em.: patragak Ed.) kalpayitvā. As will be clear from the rest of this section on the Bāleśvara temple complex, a rather common purpose of Śivagupta’s grants was to provide for a sattrā, which I interpret to be the charitable provision of food for the local teachers and their pupils and guests, etc. The present reference to sattrā has, however, a different meaning. The furnishing of milk and vegetables for the sattrā is not mentioned among the purposes of the grant – as is the case with the other sattras – but among the circumstances under which the grant was made at the end of the notification (i.e. where for example the expression ‘preceded by an ablution of water’ (udakapūrvam) is often found). The present sattrā of milk and vegetables may, perhaps, have something to do with an offering to the presiding deity, for there is another inscription in the hoard of nine that refers to a similar thing among the circumstances of the grant. The charter dated to Śivagupta’s fifty-fifth regnal year (see below, pp. 78–79) was issued ‘after having excluded milk and vegetables for the deity’. Ibid., pp. 213–215, lines 2b.5–6 (orthographic): gorasa*pattrosākaual(em.: patrasāko Ed.) devasya varjaṅgitvā.
274 Dk40.
village of Devapadrullaka in order to finance a sattra, teaching, initiations and offering ceremonies for the pupils and grand-pupils.\textsuperscript{275} Interestingly enough, the present record mentions Dīrgha not as a pupil of Aghorāśiva, but identifies the two as being the same person with the expression aparānāma.\textsuperscript{276}

A set of undated copper plates slightly rectifies the information on the Āmaraśvara shrine.\textsuperscript{277} Although the date is missing on these plates, it is likely that they were issued in Śivagupta’s forty-eighth regnal year or later, since it was in that year that the installation of the god took place. Apparently, the shrine was not erected in the maṭhikā itself, but in the tapovana belonging to the maṭhikā. The charter also adds that it was Vyāpāśiva who installed the devabhāṭṭāraka in the shrine. Further, it is recorded that the sanctuary received the village of Katambapadrullaka in the Callātasimē bhoga, again requested by Amaradevi, to finance the repairs of dilapidations as well as to sponsor music, worship, bathing and anointing of images.\textsuperscript{278}

Another seven years later, in Śivagupta’s fifty-fifth regnal year, his noble queen (bhāṭṭinirānī) Ammādevī developed the evolving temple complex even further with the Ammeśvara-bhāṭṭāraka temple.\textsuperscript{279} If the emendation is correct, the expression pratibaddha seems to indicate that this temple was attached to the original Bāleśvara-bhāṭṭāraka temple of her husband.\textsuperscript{280} On the occasion of the temple’s establishment, Śivagupta granted at the request

\begin{footnotes}
\item[275] Jain 2005, pp. 211–212, lines 2b.1–2 (orthographic): śīṣyaprāśīṣyāḥ yūgaśikṣāvākhyānasattacatusṭaya(em.: duśattracatuṣṭava Ed.)pravartanāya. This description of the purpose of the grant is partly based on conjecture, but the word catusṭaya denotes a set of four and sattra, teaching, initiations and offering ceremonies are a common combination in the records related to the Bāleśvara complex. The village of Devapadrullaka is said to be attached (pratibaddha) to Bhāṇḍāgarāsvatthaka, belonging to the Callātasimē bhoga. According to Mahajan, this district can be associated with the modern village of Charonda in the Mahasamund tehsil of the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. Mahajan 2000, p. 105.
\item[276] Jain 2005, pp. 211–212, lines 2a.6–2b.1 (orthographic): nandapurāśrīnandaghorāśivāparanāmadirgācārāpyrāśīṣyebhyaḥ śrīyāpāśivācārāpyrāśīṣyebhyaḥ *astra(em.: rātra Ed.)śivabhagavatpādēbhyo. ‘…to the venerable (bhagavatpāda) Astraśiva, who was the pupil of the illustrious acārya Vyāpāśiva and the grand-pupil of the illustrious acārya Dīrgha of Nandapura, whose other name (aparānāma) was Aghorāśiva.’
\item[278] Jain 2005, pp. 213–215, lines 2a.4–5 (orthographic): śrubāleśvarabhāṭṭāraka*pratibaddhammeśvara(em.: pratidvābbāṇvar Ed.)bhāṭṭārakapratisthākāle. ‘(The donation has been made) at the time of the establishment of the Ammeśvara-bhāṭṭāraka temple, which is attached (pratibaddha) to the Bāleśvara-bhāṭṭāraka temple.’
\end{footnotes}
of Ammādevī the village of Vārttoḍaka in the Uni bhoga to Astraśiva, who is described here as ‘senior officiant in charge of the sacred site’ (sthānaguru). This specification of his function implies that he took over the leading role from Vyāpaśiva and likely was the one who managed the establishment and its endowments. The grant, requested by Ammādevī, was split into two parts. Half was meant for the repair of the temple’s broken parts, worship, etc. and the other half was a gurudakṣiṇā (see below).

Again, there is an undated set of copper plates that provides slightly different information. In this charter, the Ammeśvara temple is said to be ‘in the vicinity’ (samīpastha) of the Bāleśvara temple. This position may be confirmed by the archaeological remains of the temple complex, for among these remains are two adjacent temple ruins that could represent the Bāleśvara and Ammeśvara temples (see Figure 2.1 and Chapter 3). As the Ammeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka was established in Śivagupta’s fifty-fifth regnal year, these undated copper plates were probably issued in the same year or later. The charter reports that the Ammeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple received a second village at the request of Ammādevī, who is characterized here as Śivagupta’s ‘partner in religious duties’ (dharmapatnī). The village of Kośambra in the administrative unit Svalpaśarkāraṁārga was given for the repair of dilapidations and to meet the expenses of offerings of bali, caru, music, incense and worship, as well as the bathing and anointing of images.

The day on which the grant was made is specified by the sun’s entrance into an equinoctial sign (Viṣuva saṃkrānti) as well as its entrance into an solstitial sign.

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282 Dk44.

283 We know from the previous inscriptions that Śivagupta’s court was polygamous, and that he had (at least) two wives: Amaradevī and Ammādevī. The fact that Ammādevī is referred to here as Śivagupta’s dharmapatnī indicates that she was the one who participated in his religious obligations (dharma); a dharmapatnī is a married householder’s senior wife or ‘religious wife’, without whom he cannot carry out the prescribed rituals. Even in a polygamous court, the king has only one dharmapatnī. A definition of the word is given in Kārṇalagomin’s ninth century commentary on the Pramāṇavārttikavrτti of Dharma-kirti (seventh century), Sāmkṛtvāyaṇa 1982, p. 613: dharmasya sādhanabhūta patnī dharmapatnīti madhyapadolopī samāsaḥ. ‘The word dharmapatnī is a compound [of two words] with ellipsis of a word in between, meaning “a wife who is an instrument for the accomplishing of dharma”’ (translation provided by Alexis Sanderson). Cf. LESLIE 1989, pp. 121–128.

sign \((\text{uttarāyana saṃkrānti})\) in the month of Māgha.\textsuperscript{285}

To summarize, we have the following stages in the construction history of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple complex:

- the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple
- the maṭhikā of the Bāleśvara temple
  - the Dāyeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka shrine in the maṭhikā
  - the tapovana belonging to the maṭhikā
  * the Amařeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka shrine in the tapovana
- the Amaṃeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple

As for the officiant in charge of the complex, it is clear that Vyāpaśiva presided over the Bāleśvara complex at first, being the recipient of the donations and performing the establishments and installations, whereas Astraśiva took over the position of sthānaguru at some point before Śivagupta’s fifty-fifth regnal year. The remaining two charters of the set of nine – one undated and the other from Śivagupta’s fifty-second regnal year – shed a little more light on this succession.

In the fifty-second year of Śivagupta’s reign, the king endowed Astraśiva with the village of Aṭavitunāgī in the Kikkidā bhukti at the request of a certain Jejjatā.\textsuperscript{286} In this record, Astraśiva is referred to as the sthānaguru of the tapovana, whereas Vyāpaśiva is still said to belong to the Bāleśvara temple. Apparently, Astraśiva already had a position ‘second in charge’ when Vyāpaśiva was leading the Bāleśvara complex. This is already reflected in the charters reporting on the Amaṃeśvara shrine in the tapovana, for one may recall that it was Astraśiva who received the grant, whereas it was Vyāpaśiva who installed the god. The village was granted on the day of the full moon in the month of Kārttika, in order to finance offering ceremonies, initiations, teaching and a sattra for the pupils and grand-pupils.\textsuperscript{287} The toponym Phuṭṭipāṭi appears in this record as Dirgha’s original hometown, a detail not

\textsuperscript{285}For more information on these special astronomical circumstances, cf. Salomon 1998, p. 175.

\textsuperscript{286}Dk42.

\textsuperscript{287}Jain 2005, pp. 197–199, lines 2a.8–2b.1 (orthographic): \(\text{śisyapraśisyāṇāṃ yāgadikṣā-
*vyākhya\textsuperscript{nā}}\text{em.: vyākhyānātra Ed.})sa(ttra)pravartanāya.\)
mentioned in the other records. The identity of Jejjatā and his relation to the king is not clear, but he must have been an important figure, for in the undated set of copper plates he is the one who received the grant. From this latter inscription it becomes clear that Jejjatā was a Śāmavedin of the Kauśikagotra, hailing from Kanyakubja (Kanauj).

Thusfar, I have mentioned four names of Śaiva officiants: Astraśiva, Vyāpaśiva, Dīrgha and Aghoraśiva. Three of them have the suffix °śiva as the second half of their name, which indicates their affiliation to the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. The relation between Astraśiva and Vyāpaśiva is apparent, and it is also clear that Vyāpaśiva was the pupil of Dīrgha. The exact relation between this Dīrgha and Aghoraśiva, however, remains a bit uncertain. Two of the nine charters mention Dīrgha as a pupil of Aghoraśiva, whereas a third one refers to both as being the same person. I propose to take the fact that Dīrgha’s name does not end in °śiva as evidence that he was indeed the same person as Aghoraśiva: the latter being his ordination name, and Dīrgha being his original name before the initiation.

The officiants of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition were not the only ones connected to the Bālesvara temple complex. The Junvāni copper-plate charter

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288 Ibid., pp. 197–199, lines 2a.5–8 (orthographic): atraiva śrīparatapratishthita śrimadbālesvara(em.: śrīmatnaleśvara Ed.)tapovanasthānagurubhyah phuṭtipāṭivinirgata-ndapuriyabhagava(cchr.)maddirghācāryapraśīsa śrimadbālesvarīya(em.: śrīmadralesva-riya Ed.)bhagavadvyāpaśivacāryaśyasrīmadbhagavadastraśivacāryebhyaḥ. ‘(The donation has been made) to the venerable acārya Astraśiva who was the guru in charge (sthānaguru) of the penance grove belonging to the Bālesvara temple established here in the plains of Śrīpura, who was a pupil of the venerable acārya Vyāpaśiva of the Bālesvara temple and grand-pupil of the venerable (acārya) Dīrgha of Nandapura, who originally hailed from Phutṭipāṭi’.

289 Dk51.

290 Jain 2005, pp. 199–201, lines 2a.4–5 (orthographic): ...kanyakabjavinirgatāya kauśikasagotrayya chāndogyakauthumaḥbhaṭṭajejjatāya... ‘... (The village has been granted) to Bhaṭṭa Jejjatā of the Kauthuma (branch) of the Chandoga (Śāmaveda), of the lineage of Kauśika, hailing from Kanyakubja...’.

291 Initiates of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition may belong to any of four ‘initiation lineages (gocaras)’. Their ordination name is determined by the gocara into which they are initiated. The four possibilities are Śiva/Śambhu, Jyotis/Jyoti, Śikhā and Sāvitra. Sanderson 2006b, pp. 73–76. Cf. also Goodall 2007 and Sanderson 2003–2004, pp. 398–399, note 179. The officiants of the Bālesvara temple belonged to the Śiva gocara.

292 Aghoraśiva was, however, a rather common name among Śaiva teachers. Identifying Dīrgha and Aghoraśiva as being one and the same person does not rule out that the ordination name of Dirgha/Aghoraśiva’s teacher was Aghoraśiva as well.
2. Religious Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

dated to Śivagupta’s fifty-seventh regnal year also refers to the complex.293 The record informs us that Śivagupta granted the village of Paśīpadraka, together with (sahita) the village or suburb of Kurapadraka, both situated in the Oni district,294 to a Śaiva teacher named Bhūmasoma for the maintenance (pratipālana) of the tapovana of the Bālesvara temple. More specifically, the grant was meant to meet the expenses of offering ceremonies, initiations, teaching and housing for the pupils and grand-pupils, as well as to finance the repairs of the temple’s broken parts.295

Bhūmasoma was a pupil of Tejasoma and a grand-pupil of Rudrasoma. The suffix °soma at the end of their names is typical for initiates in the Somasiddhānta tradition.296 Bhūmasoma is also referred to as ‘sthānaguru’, meaning he was in charge of either the tapovana of the Bālesvara temple or of the whole Bālesvara complex.297 As mentioned above, Astraśiva succeeded Vyāpaśiva as sthānaguru of the Bālesvara complex at some point between Śivagupta’s fifty-second and fifty-fifth regnal year. Perhaps the Somasiddhāntin Bhūmasoma presided over the tapovana after the Śaiva Siddhāntin Astraśiva took over Vyāpaśiva’s leading role, or Bhūmasoma succeeded

293Dk47.

294In fact, these two villages were secured from a group of Vājasaneyins residing in the area, who were given the village of Bhāṇḍāgaratulapadraka in the same district in return. Bakker 2000b, p. 8, lines 1–4: ayaṁ grāmah. sakurapadrakah. vājasaneyacaranaṇād abhyarthya bhāṇḍāgaratulapadrakam onibhojiyaṁ parvartena dattvā. This is the only instance of such an exchange of villages in the charters of the Pāṇḍava kings. Shastri JESI 27 (2001), p. 29. Shastri takes the toponym ‘Bhāṇḍāgaratulapadraka’ as the name of two villages, Bhāṇḍāgara and Tulapadraka, and he tentatively identified Bhāṇḍāgara with the modern village of Bodor in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. Tulapadraka would be a suburb of this locality. Ibid., p. 40. This identification is unlikely, for one may recall that among the villages granted earlier to the Bālesvara Complex were also three villages of which the name starts with the prefix bhāṇḍāgarara (Bhāṇḍāgaracattāka, Bhāṇḍāgaraṇaḍānagaka and Bhāṇḍāgaraṇaḍavatthaka). If these villages were all situated in the same district, one could suggest to interpret them as to refer to four suburbs of the same village, Bhāṇḍāgara, instead. However, the four villages are all situated in different districts, which makes it far more likely that the toponyms refer to four separate villages. The word ‘Bhāṇḍāgara’ as the first part of the village names may mean ‘market-place’ or ‘entrepôt’, specifying the function of the village.

295Bakker 2000b, p. 9, lines 8–9: āśyyapraśishyāṇāṁ yāgadikṣāvyākhyānnavatipravartanaṁyāṁ bhāgnavidirṇa-devakulasāṁskṛtaya ca.

296Shastri JESI 27 (2001), p. 36. This makes the Junvānī record one of the rare sources for the Somasiddhānta tradition.

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Astraśiva as officiant in charge of the whole complex. A third, and perhaps more likely, possibility is that the Bāleśvara complex had two tapovanas: one led by officiants of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition and the other by officiants of the Somasiddhānta tradition.

The Junvānī record is very valuable, for it does not only provide us with the pedigree of Bhūmasoma, but also traces this pedigree all the way back to Lakuliśanātha, Śiva’s incarnation on earth. The record states that at the time of the Kāli age, Lakuliśanātha descended and was born into the family of a brahmin named Somaśarman. Consecrated by the ‘Great Vow’ (mahāvrata), this Lakuliśanātha is said to have become a ‘moon on earth’ (jagadindu) – a title that likely alludes to the white appearance of his (ash-smeared) body. Similar to the tradition of Lāgudī and his four pupils, Lakuliśanātha initiated a pupil named Mugalisa. Then, ‘in due succession of the lineage that started with the moon’, Bhūmasoma is said to have been raised to the position of sthānaguru. This means that Bhūmasoma’s pedigree stems from Lakuliśanātha through the pupil Mugalisa. According to Bakker, Mugalisa may be derived from Mudgaliṣa or Musaliṣa, both meaning ‘Club-bearing Lord’. He identifies the pupil with Musula or Musulendra who, according to Kṣemarāja, was also a direct pupil of Lakuliṣa and the founder of the Mausula Paśupatas. Thus, he argues that the lineage of Bhūmasoma would be that of the Mausulas and their doctrine came to be referred to as Somasiddhānta.

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298 Bakker 2014a, pp. 143–145: adhunā kalikālam āsādyaya śrīnallakuliśanātho ‘vatīrya somāśarmanāḥyabrāhmanākule bhūtavā mahāvratena dīkṣito jaṇadindus tenāpi mujolisas tataḥ somādipāramparyakramena sthānaguruśrīrudrasomaprasīṣyasīrtejasomaśīsyasbhavyaḥ śrīmadbhūmasomapadebhavya [...]. This is a slightly modified version of an earlier edition, cf. Bakker 2000b, pp. 7–12.

The reference to the ‘Great Vow’ (mahāvrata) underscores the identification of the Somasiddhānta tradition with the later Kāpālikas, who are also known as Mahāvratins. Sanderson 2006a, p. 210 and Sanderson 2009, p. 49. An example for a later source for this identification is the third act of the Prabodhacandrodaya of Kṛṣṇamiśra (ca. 1050–1100 AD), a follower of the Somasiddhānta is introduced ‘bearing the form of a Kāpālika’. The Somasiddhāntin in the play wears a garland of human bones, is dwelling in a cremation ground, eats from a human skull and worships Bhairava (Śiva) with oblations of human flesh. Nambar 1971, pp. 62–91. For the mahāvrata, cf. Bakker 2014a, pp. 151–153. For a detailed account on the ‘Soma-Kāpālikas’, cf. Törzsöök 2011 and Lorenzen 1972. 299 Bakker 2000b and Bakker 2014a, p. 144. Cf. also Sanderson 2006a and Acharya 2005, p. 217–218. There is a clear parallel with the initiation history discussed above in connection with Udbhavarāśī, the Rāśi ascetic of the Gandharveśvara temple. In both cases, the paramparā of the Paśupata branch is traced back to Śiva’s incarnation on earth (Lāgudī/Lakuliśanātha), which gives it a ‘divine status’. Based on the contents of the
In the course of the seventh century, these Mausulas likely became overshadowed by the thriving Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, a development that is already foreshadowed in the records dealing with the Bāleśvara complex.\textsuperscript{300}

In the last pages, we have seen that Śivagupta’s Bāleśvara complex is well documented. From the many grants, it is clear that there were strong ties between Śivagupta and the officiants of the Bāleśvara temple complex. Sanderson has argued that the success of Śaiva officiants in developing such strong ties with the institution of kingship, and thereby with the principal source of patronage, was the most vital reason for the dominance of Śaivism in the early medieval period (ca. 400–900 AD). Śaiva officiants adopted the role as the king’s personal chaplain: the \textit{rājaguru}. They would grant their monarch the Śaiva initiation, followed by a modified version of the brahmanical royal consecration ritual. These rituals legitimized the king’s office and strengthened his rule. Other rituals were performed to empower and protect the king and his kingdom, as well as to secure the prosperity of the realm. They also officiated the establishment of royal Śiva temples. The manifestation of Śiva enshrined in these temples would bear the name of the royal founder as the individuating first half of its name, and in the case of temple complexes the name of the royal founder and his kin. The temple cult in these royal temples was placed under the control of the \textit{rājagurus}, who presided in Maṭhas attached to them.\textsuperscript{301}

The southern part of the excavation site identified as the Bāleśvara complex has indeed revealed two residential structures (see Figure 2.1 and Plate 2.9). The larger one of these two structures has been identified by Sharma as a modest residence of Śivagupta in his temple complex for religious occasions.

\textsuperscript{300} In the course of the seventh century, the Maṇḍula or Somas may have been eclipsed partly (the domesticated wing) by the emerging Śaiva Siddhānta and may have become partly closely associated with a group that produced the non-Saiddhantika texts such as the \textit{Jayadrathayāmala}. (…….) They became associated with a type of ascetic called Kāpālikas, “skull-bearers,” with whom the Soma Siddhānta came to be identified in later sources.' Bakker 2014a, pp. 148–149.

Daksīṇa Kosala

He jumps to this conclusion because of a seal that was found in one of the rooms with the text śivaguptarājas. However, the find of the seal alone is no reason to assume that the structure functioned as the king’s palace, for Śivagupta left his traces everywhere in Sirpur. It is far more likely that the residential structure is the maṭhikā of the Bāleśvara complex. This identification is supported by a very fragmentary stone inscription – the eleventh record referring to the complex – that was found at the site. Among the preserved fragments is an Anuṣṭubh verse that refers to a donation made for the purpose of a sattrā in the maṭha of Śrīpura; the donation included three bhāras of wood, presumably to stoke the kitchen fire, and one hundred ‘oil cakes’ (khallikā).

Presumably, the maṭhikā of the Bāleśvara complex was

Plate 2.9: Maṭhikā and ‘sattrā’ of the Bāleśvara complex

303 Dk45. The identification of this residential structure as the maṭhikā of the Bāleśvara complex is also supported by its position, in close proximity to the temples and facing the temples. Despite being a residential structure, it is part of the sacred space; the monastic part of the complex functioned as a shrine for the guru just as the temples enshrined Śiva. For a detailed study on Śaiva monastic architecture, cf. SEARS 2004; SEARS 2008 and SEARS 2014.


\[
\text{khallikānāṃ satāṃ deyaṃ kāṣṭhabhāratrayaṃ tathā}
\]
\[
\text{maṭhe sattropayogārthaṃ sadā śrīpura – z z ||}
\]

The exact meaning of the plural genitive word ‘khallikānāṃ’ is not quite clear in the present context. According to Monier-Williams’ dictionary, the word khallikā means ‘frying pan’. MONIER-WILLIAMS 1899. It seems most sensible that the object of the donation was to meet the expenses of supplies of some kind (like the wood). In A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages, the word khalī or khali is translated as ‘oil cake’. TURNER
meant here. The word *sādā* seems to indicate that the *sattrā* was perpetual, which agrees with Willis’ notion of *sattrā* as an ‘actual place’ that was connected to temples, where the charitable provision of food, medicine, etc. took place.\(^{305}\) Therefore, the smaller structure next to the *maṭhikā* may have been the building in which the *sattrā* was furnished.

This leads to the question as to whether Śivagupta was an initiated king. Obviously, the case of king Śivagupta and his Bāleśvara complex, presided over by the gurus Vyāpaśiva and Astraśiva, fits the profile sketched above perfectly, but in none of Śivagupta’s inscriptions is reference made to the event that he was granted the Śaiva initiation or the Śaiva consecration ritual. One of the nine copper-plate inscriptions from Sirpur does seem to hold a clue. The common purpose of the grants made in the nine charters is to meet the expenses of the repair of dilapidations, *sattras*, offering ceremonies, worship and the teaching and initiations of the line of pupils and grand-pupils. One exception is Śivagupta’s grant to Astraśiva in his fifty-fifth regnal year. Half of this grant was allocated to the common repairs of the temple, worship, etc. The other half, however, was a so-called ‘*gurudakṣiṇā*’, a payment of the initiate to his preceptor as a token of appreciation for his service as guru.\(^{306}\) Śivagupta paid the *gurudakṣiṇā* on behalf of his *dharmapatnī* Ammādevī, implying that she was the initiate. Based on the fact that Śivagupta’s ‘ritual partner’ was initiated and the circumstantial evidence provided by the construction history of the Bāleśvara complex and the involvement of Vyāpaśiva and Astraśiva therein, I have argued that Śivagupta was indeed an initiated king himself and that Vyāpaśiva and Astraśiva were his *rājagurus*.\(^{307}\)

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1966. An oil cake is made from the sediment that is left after extracting oil from seeds and plants; it can be used as fuel or food. I interpret *khallikānām* to express this kind of meaning here.

\(^{305}\) Willis 2009b. See also Chapter 2, pp. 60–62.

\(^{306}\) See note 281. ‘Kings rewarded their Śaiva gurus for initiations and other rituals with lavish gifts, most notably with grants of the revenue from designated lands and the donation or construction of monasteries (*maṭhah*); and this largesse enabled these gurus to behave like royal patrons themselves, making land-grants to brahmins and founding temples, new settlements, and further monasteries, thus facilitating the expansion of their institutions into new areas.’ Sanderson 2010, p. 15. Cf. Sanderson 2004, pp. 268–270; Sanderson 2009, p. 102, note 214 and p. 271 and Sears 2014, pp. 36–37. The inscription does not inform us whether the *gurudakṣiṇā* was a payment for initiation or for any of the other (post-initiatory) ritual services.

\(^{307}\) Bosma 2013. As a woman, Ammādevi would have received a ‘seedless version’ of the initiation ritual: ‘In the Mantramārga access is extended to Śiva-devotees in all the four caste-classes (*varṇah*), and also to women, though in the last case usually only as
The Śaiva Siddhānta tradition in Senakapāṭ

The presence of the Mantramārgic Śaiva Siddhānta tradition in Sirpur has already been attested above, on the basis of the eleven inscriptions relating to Śivagupta’s Bāleśvara complex. The records underwrite the important role that the gurus of this religious tradition played in his complex, and, therewith, they show the beginnings of the monastic nature that will become the tradition’s backbone. An undated stone inscription from Senakapāṭ (near Sirpur) confirms the prevalence of the Śaiva Siddhānta during Śivagupta’s reign and provides the earliest evidence of this monastic tradition becoming the institutional basis of the Saiddhāntika Mantramārga. Based on the Senakapāṭ record, Sanderson argues that the tradition was already so well-established and successful that it had become a routinized movement.308

The stone slab found in Senakapāṭ bears an inscription of the time of Śivagupta Bālārjuna.309 It was broken into two pieces, but the two parts fit together nicely and there are only a few characters missing.310 A brahmin (dvijamagranīr) named Śivaraksita is mentioned, who ruled the Nāvyāsī district, presumably as a feudatory chief. His son Devaraksita was a friend and confident of Śivagupta’s predecessor Nannarāja II, who put him in charge of part of his kingdom and gave him several districts as a reward for his services.311 Devaraksita’s son Durgaraksita was a ‘brahmin courtier’ of Śivagupta Bālārjuna and a devotee of Śambhu (Śiva). The inscription records that Durgaraksita constructed an abode (āyatana) for Śambhu, evidently the temple to which the inscription was originally affixed, and that he granted two halas of land to this ‘Enemy of Kāma’ (madanārāti) by means of a copper-plate charter. Durgaraksita entrusted the temple to the ācārya Sadāśiva and his spiritual successors.312

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308 Sanderson 2013a, pp. 235–239.
309 Dk52.
311 See Chapter 1, pp. 34–35.
312 Sanderson 2012, pp. 1–8 (edition of the Senakapāṭ record); Sanderson 2013a, pp. 237–238 (discussion of the Senakapāṭ record) and Dikshit & Sircar EI 31 (1955–1956),
Sadasiva was the grand-pupil of the brother (bhratraśisyatilakas) of the ācārya Sadayaśiva, who hailed from the celebrated hermitage (tapovana) Āmardaka (śrīmānāmardakakhyātitapovanavinirgatah). Their names end in śiva, denoting that these teachers were initiates in the Śiva gocara of the Śaiva Siddhānta. The tapovana Āmardaka is well known as a prominent centre of the Śaiva Siddhānta, though despite its fame there has been much discussion about its historical location. Attempts to verify the historicity of Āmardaka and to identify its location have brought scholars to different places spread over the subcontinent. Their search was complicated by the many references of lineages in different locations to Āmardaka as their original matha. According to Sanderson, the Āmardaka hermitage was ‘the mother institution to which all subsequent Saiddhāntika branch-lineages traced their authority’. A similar argument has been made by Davis, who suggests that tīrthas like Āmardaka should be seen as ‘portable affiliations’.

The Senakapāľ stone inscription proves that the authority of Āmardaka as a mother institution was already established in the sixth or seventh century. Other references in both epigraphy and lists of sacred sites support that the Āmardaka tapovana was situated in the Deccan at modern Anuḍī/Aundh in the Parbhani district of Mahārāṣṭra, which is about 580 kilometers south-west of Sirpur (see Figure 2.2). Perhaps Sadayaśiva’s (claimed) origin from such a celebrated place was the reason why his name is mentioned in Sadasiva’s guruparamparā, instead of Sadasiva’s direct teacher and his lineage.

Sadasiva received four halas of land in the village of Koṭāsīmā, two halas...
in the village of Viyänaka and two halas in a locality called Lāṭa in the village of Śrīparṇikā, with the following stipulation: every year on the full-moon days of the months of Āsādha, Kārttika and Māgha they had to perform a ceremony of worship, they had to perform the initiation that has the power to bestow liberation, and they had to expound the doctrine. To annex a condition like this to the grant is very peculiar and goes way beyond the normal recommendations for more or less auspicious moments to perform initiations. An initiation can only take place when the supplicant is ready to receive it, that is to say when he shows ‘signs of spiritual readiness’. As a result, the initiation ceremony by its very nature cannot have a predetermined character (nitya); it is bound by an occasional character (naimittika), depending on the spiritual development of the candidate. Sanderson argues that the stipulation recorded in the Senakapāṭ stone inscription is a symptom of the routinization of the religious movement, ‘in which that which should

\[\text{Sanderson 2012, pp. 1–8, verses 22–23 (orthographic):}\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{āsādhe kārttike māse māghe ca prativatsaram|} \\
\text{paurṇaṁ viḍhātavya viḍhīr yāgaṁ yatnatah || 22||} \\
\text{nirvāṇadakṣadikṣayā vyākhyaṁ samayasya ca|} \\
\text{sattram attra viḍhānīyam annasya ca tapodhanaṁ|| 23||}
\end{align*}
\]
be naimittika became effectively nitya’, for it implies that there was a steady stream of potential initiates and that initiations took place with several people at once. He interprets this routinization as a consequence of the success of Mantramārgic Śaivism in seventh-century Dakṣiṇa Kosala.\textsuperscript{319}

The Śaiva Siddhānta tradition in Malhār

Thus far, we have only seen gurus of the Śiva gocara of the Śaiva Siddhānta in the inscriptions from Dakṣiṇa Kosala. An extremely fragmentary stone inscription from Malhār, however, refers in one of its fragments to a Śaiva saint named Aghorajyoti.\textsuperscript{320} This Malhār inscription is one of the very few references to teachers of the Jyotis/Jyoti gocara of the Śaiva Siddhānta.\textsuperscript{321}

Grants to Buddhism

The presence of Buddhism in Dakṣiṇa Kosala is well attested by the many Buddhist monasteries (vihāras) and images that were excavated in Sirpur.\textsuperscript{322} From these archaeological remains it is clear that Buddhism surely competed with Śaivism for royal support. As discussed by Sanderson and pointed out by Bronkhorst, the Śaivas were not the only ones to attempt to forge strong ties with royalty; the Buddhists tried to do so too. The growing emphasis on originally non-Buddhist practices such as incantations and protective spells and rites enabled Tantric Buddhism to meet the wishes of potential sponsors and therewith to compete with the Śaiva rājagurus.\textsuperscript{323} However, if we look at the epigraphical references to Buddhism in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, it seems that efforts like these were not enough for the Buddhist communities to ensure a position as successful as that enjoyed by the Śaiva teachers and their student entourage. In the collection of epigraphical material, there are only six records pertaining to Buddhism, two of which are so fragmentary that only the word monastery (vihāra) is clearly readable.\textsuperscript{324} The other four records,
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

one copper-plate charter and three stone inscriptions, are in better condition and provide more detailed information about (some of) the privileged monks and monasteries in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. In addition to these inscriptions, there are also several stone images from Sirpur inscribed, as commonly seen throughout South and Southeast Asia, with the famous Buddhist creed on the backside: ‘Of those things that arise from a cause, the Tathāgata has told the cause, and also their cessation – this is the doctrine of the Great Ascetic.’325 An example of these images is the one shown in Plate 2.10, depicting the Buddha in bhūmisparśamudrā.326

Plate 2.10: Buddha image inscribed with epigram on the backside

325 Quoted from Gimello 2004, p. 252, note 10. In the same place:

   ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetum teśāṁ tathāgato hy avadat|
   teśāṁ ca yo nirodha evaṁvādi mahāśramavāḥ

326 This image, together with other examples, is published in Yoritomi et al. 2008. Cf. Hira Lal 1932, p. 111.
2. Religious Profile of Dākṣiṇa Kosala

The Buddhist Temple of Sūryaghoṣa

The earliest Buddhist record is the fragmentary stone inscription from Āraṅg, already mentioned in this book a few times before, in which Indrabala’s ‘fourth son’ Bhavadeva is referred to indirectly in connection to the renewal of a Buddhist temple (*sugatasya sadma*).\(^{327}\) That the content of this inscription relates to Buddhism already becomes clear in the opening lines, where a verse in the Anuṣṭubh metre invokes the protection of the Buddha.\(^{328}\) The genesis of the temple is told in verses 13 and 15 of the inscription, interrupted by a missing fourteenth verse. A king named Sūryaghoṣa, introduced earlier in the record, constructed the temple when he was overwhelmed by grief occasioned by the death of his son, who had fallen from the roof of their palace – for ‘love that is powerful, is practiced in each birth and set foot on (all) the people, attempts to turn even a wise man into a fool’. The king then had the eye-opening recognition that life is transitory and, consequently, he financed the construction of an abode for the great Sage (i.e. Buddha) ‘of which the beauty surpassed the splendor of the Himālaya’.\(^{329}\)

Over the years, the abode of the Buddha fell into decay, for the subject of its history is picked up again in the incomplete verses 33 through 37. Verse 34 introduces a brahmin who was well versed in the practice of medicine and strenuously devoted to the welfare of the whole society. He had studied the teachings of the Buddha and was bound by the Buddhist precepts (*śikṣāpadiṇī*), which indicates that he was a (lay) Buddhist himself. The name of this physician and his role in the activities are not preserved, but the fact that he was ‘an object of Bhavadeva’s deep affection’ (*tasya premadāvihīvāsah*) creates the impression that he was a courtier of the Pāṇḍavas.

\(^{327}\)Dk23.

\(^{328}\)For the text, see Dk23 in Appendix 1.

\(^{329}\)Kielhorn JRAS 37 (1905), pp. 624–629, lines 6–7 (orthographic):

\begin{verbatim}
    bhavanaśikharāt tuṅgāt putre nipatya mṛye priye
    gotarūrāsucā sammadgno ’bhūt sa bhūmipatis tadā|
    prabalam athavā jannābhyastān jayaṣṭa kṛtāspaṇaḥ
    buddham api janaṃ kartum. prema prayasyati bāliṣam || 13 ||
    
    tena vikṣya phaṇībhogabhaṅgurum
    jīvitaṃ bhavasamudralaṅghinā|
    dhāma kārītam idam muneś mahaṃ
dataṃ kāntinirjitaḥimācaudyuti || 15 ||
\end{verbatim}

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and likely sponsored the restoration of the temple.\textsuperscript{330} Verse 35 speaks of a celibate (\textit{brahmacārin}) named Namobuddha, who is described as being equal to a \textit{bodhisattva}. He is said to have renovated a decayed (building) and the next verse (36) continues then with the description of a beautiful monastery (\textit{vihāra}). The text celebrates the brightness of the monastery’s whitewashed walls and lists tanks, wells, gardens, halls, turrets and sanctuaries as embellishments.\textsuperscript{331} From their synopses it is clear that Kielhorn and Shastri both assume that this monastery (\textit{vihāra}), presumably the building renovated by Namobuddha, was the same as the temple of the Buddha referred to in the rest of the inscription (\textit{dhāma munera} in verse 15, \textit{sugatasya sadma} in verse 33 and \textit{veśma mahajjinasya} in verse 37). Another, perhaps more likely, possibility is that the two are not the same and that the Buddhist physician sponsored the restoration of Sūryaghoṣa’s temple, whereas Namobuddha renovated the monastery.\textsuperscript{332} The place where the Buddhist temple was situated is not mentioned, but since the record was found in Āraṅg, this may have been its location.

\textsuperscript{330}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 624–629, line 15 (orthographic):

\begin{verbatim}
tasya premādhivāsaḥ śrutasugatavacā vaidyake cābhīyuktah
śāntāḥ śikṣāpādāḥ svatāt sakalajananahābhāhyadayo yo ‘grajanmahāḥ |
tenālāṃ jīrṇa |...|
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{331}\textit{KIELHORN JRAS 37} (1905), pp. 624–629, line 15–16 (orthographic):

\begin{verbatim}
brahmacāri namobuddho jīrṇaṃ etat tadāśrayat |
punar navatvam anayad bodhisattvasamaḥ kṛti|| 35||
vāpīkūpyānaśālāntacātair
netrānandayaḥ bhūṣito bhūribhūṣah |
ñītvā kāntyā sarvāsobhāṃ vihāro
hāsonmīśro ‘bhūd īvāyaṃ sudhāktaḥ || 36||
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{332}This interpretation was suggested to me by Alexis Sanderson (in a personal communication). For the synopses of Kielhorn and Shastri, cf. \textit{ibid.}, pp. 617–633 and \textit{SHASTRI 1995 Part II}, pp. 95–101.
Monks of the Four Quarters

The copper-plate charter pertaining to Buddhism was found underground near a temple in the village of Malhār and can be dated to Śivagupta’s sixth regnal year. The charter records the king’s grant of the village of Kailāsapura in the Taradāma bhoga to a community of ‘monks of the four quarters’ (cāturdiśāryabhikṣu), on behalf of his maternal uncle Bhāskararman. The monks resided at a small monastery (vihārikā) in the same bhoga, which was constructed by Alakā, the wife of a certain Koradeva. The purpose of the grant is not mentioned, but it was presumably meant to provide sustenance for the monks. Mirashi and Pandeya identify the Taradāma bhoga with the Talahāri maṇḍala mentioned in several later inscriptions, which, according to one of these inscriptions, included Mallāla (modern Malhār). The Buddhist images that are kept at Malhār are reported to have come from the village of Jaitpur, about a mile north of Malhār. Thus, Jaitpur may have been the place where the monastery was situated.

The Monastery of Ānandaprabha

While conducting the first excavations in Sirpur in the years 1953–1956, an inscribed slab of sandstone was found lying upside down on the floor of one of the excavated monasteries. According to the excavator, the stone slab seems

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333 Dk32. The charter is undated, but was issued on the same occasion as one of Śivagupta’s Sirpur plates (Dk31): the solar eclipse of the month of Āśāḍha in his sixth regnal year.

334 Mirashi & Pandeya EI 23 (1935–1936), pp. 113–122. The phrase cāturdiśāryabhikṣusaṅgha may be short for the formula āgaṭānāgatacāturdiśāryabhikṣusaṅgha, which specifies that ‘of all those monks belonging to the monastic community in general, the gift in question is made to those who at present reside in the monastery mentioned and those who will in future times reside there’. Cf. Silk 2008, p. 96, note 100. Mirashi and Pandeya read koradevabhoryyālaka in line 11 of the inscription, which they emend to koradevabhoryyaṭalaka: ‘Alakā, the wife of Koradeva’. Mirashi & Pandeya EI 23 (1935–1936), p. 121, note 1. Shastrī correctly states that the superscript sign for r in ‘bhoryyāṭaḥ’ is absent, and that koradevabhoryyaṭalaka should be read instead. He considers as alternative interpretations that the monastery was built by two persons named Koradeva and Bhanyālakā, or by a single person named Koradevabhanyālakā. Shastrī 1995 Part II, pp. 134–137. The emendation proposed by Mirashi and Pandeya, to identify the donor as ‘Koradeva’s wife’, is followed here, which seems to make good sense in the light of the fact that women were not supposed to be autonomous property owners.

to have been fixed on the wall near the place where it was found.\textsuperscript{336} The inscription contains no date, but Śivagupta is introduced in the second verse of the record and hence it likely dates back to his reign. The protagonist of the inscription is a monk (\textit{bhikṣu}) named Ānandaprabha, who cherished a great devotion (\textit{bhakti}) for the Buddha, the latter being referred to as teacher (\textit{sāstr}), enemy of Māra (\textit{māravairin}) and destroyer of the cycle of rebirth (\textit{bhavacchedin}).\textsuperscript{337} Due to the name of this monk, the monastery is known today as ‘Ānanda Prabhū Kuḍī Vihar’ (see Plate 2.11). The inscription informs us that Ānandaprabha established a \textit{sattra} at the monastery, by financing a sleeping place in the \textit{vihāra} and a daily quantity of two handfuls (\textit{setikā}) of white rice together with an adequate amount of seasoning for every member of the congregation. They could prepare in the mornings the amount of food that was required.\textsuperscript{338}

\textit{The Kailāsabhavana Monastery of Buddhaghosā}

Another stone slab from Sirpur was found in the forest near the famous Lakṣmaṇa temple (see below).\textsuperscript{339} There are no references to the ruling king preserved, but the characters resemble those of the other stone inscriptions discovered at Sirpur and therefore this record can likely be dated to Śivagupta’s reign as well.\textsuperscript{340} A considerable part of the inscription is lost, since the bottom right portion is broken away and the upper and left portions are badly damaged. The remaining contents introduce us to a Buddhist \textit{ācārya} named Buddhaghosā, who was a pupil of the \textit{ācārya} Jinaghoṣa and a grand-pupil of the \textit{ācārya} Ratnaghoṣa. All three officiants have the honorific \textit{pādāḥ} attached to their names. Buddhaghosā, who is

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{336} Dk63. \textsc{Dikshit, M. G. EI} 31 (1955–1956b), p. 197.
  \item \textsuperscript{337} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 197–198.
  \item \textsuperscript{338} Sircar in \textit{ibid.}, pp. 197–198, lines 7–10 (orthographic):
    \begin{verbatim}
    sa vihāra kutem cakre krītvā mūlyena saṅghataḥ
    vyāñjanāṃśena sahitāṃ sitaṇḍalasetikāṃ || 4 ||
    satram\* tayānudinām atra ca kārayitvā
tadvyāñjanāṃśasahītaṃ yatibhiḥ samastaṅk||
    prayekam atmaparipāṭivaśena bojjyaṃ
yāvan nabhaṁ talaṁ ālaṁkurute vivasvān || 5 ||
    *(em.: saṃkṣetā Inscr.)
    \end{verbatim}
  \item \textsuperscript{339} Dk64.
  \item \textsuperscript{340} \textsc{Jain EI} 38 (1969–1970), p. 59.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}

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said to have constructed a *caitya*, was residing in a monastery referred to as Kailásabhavana.\(^{341}\) This monastery has not been identified (yet) among the excavated *vihāras* in Sirpur. The incomplete verses 10 and 11 record that Buddhaghosa received a village with the name Śarkarālaka, although it is unclear who granted the village. Śarkarālaka may be identified with the village of Sāṅkrā, about 13 miles west of Sirpur.\(^{342}\)

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*Plate 2.11: Buddha in Ānandaprabha’s vihāra*
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

GRANTS TO VAIŚÑAVISM

Compared to Buddhism and particularly Śaivism, the kings of Śarabhapura and the Pāṇḍava kings made hardly any grants to Vaiṣṇavism. This may seem a bit counterintuitive, as we have seen several devotees of Viṣṇu among these kings, but considering that they all ruled in the early stage in which royal donations were primarily directed to the long-established brahmanical tradition, this scarcity is not so surprising. An exception is the aforementioned Yajurvedin teacher (upadhyāya) Nārāyaṇa, who received a grant of Nannarāja II and is said to be a devotee of Viṣṇu (bhāgavata).343

Two more bhāgavatas named Vāmana and Śrīdhara show up among the donees in the stone inscription from the famous Lākṣmana temple (see Plate 2.12).344 This Lākṣmana temple is both the best documented and the best-

Plate 2.12: The Lākṣmana temple at Sirpur

343Dk29.
344Dk30. In the inscription, the temple is not referred to by a specific name and there is also no record of when or why the temple came to be called ‘Lākṣmana’. The only connection with this name seems to lie in the motif on the lower lintel of the temple’s doorway, which shows the worn image of Viṣṇu reclining on the coils of the serpent Śeṣa (śeṣaśayana or anantaśayana), for it is Rāma’s brother Lākṣmana who is known to be associated with the serpent Śeṣa in this motif.
2. Religious Profile of Dakṣiṇa Kosala

preserved Viṣṇu temple in Sirpur and beyond (i.e. in Dakṣiṇa Kosala). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the temple was constructed by Śīvagupta and his mother Vāsaṭā in the memory of their father and husband Harṣagupta, and was meant to display Viṣṇu’s Vaikuṇṭha heaven.\(^\text{345}\) On the occasion of the temple’s construction, Śīvagupta ordered the donation of six villages, and the rather complicated division of these villages among the donees of the grant is explained in verses 25 through 36 of the inscription. Five villages, Toḍāṅkaṇa, Madhuveḍha, Nālīpadra, Kurapadra and Nāgapadra, were divided into four equal shares. Three shares were to provide for the maintenance of a sattra, the future repair of the temple’s dilapidations and the support of the temple servants; the fourth share was again subdivided over thirteen brahmin donees and the two bhāgavatas. The sixth village, Vargullaka, was granted separately to the presiding deity, again to meet the expenses of the sattra and to present bāli and caru offerings to the god.\(^\text{346}\)

A second Viṣṇu temple is known from a stray copper plate issued by Narendra of Śarabhapura, which is the earliest reference to Vaiṣṇavism in the epigraphical material from Dakṣiṇa Kosala.\(^\text{347}\) The plate is usually referred to as ‘Rawan plate’ because it was in the possession of an inhabitant of this village in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, but originally the plate was found in a field in the village of Malhār.\(^\text{348}\) Despite being only a single plate from a set of three, the copper-plate inscription is quite informative. It records the donation of the village of Torāmaka in the Maṇṭarāja bhukti to a temple (devakula) of Bhagavat Śrīdharasvāmin at Vaṭāpadraka, to meet the expenses of future repairs, bāli and caru offerings and a sattra.\(^\text{349}\) Narendra granted the village for the benefit of the ‘mātrājakula’.\(^\text{350}\) Usha Jain interprets this mātrājakula to mean ‘the family of Mātrāja’, but Shastri is probably right to suggest that the expression may refer to the (royal) family of Narendra’s mother or, because of the plural, to his mother and (other)

\(^{345}\) For the invocation to Puruṣottama (Viṣṇu) and the following three verses invoking the protection of Viṣṇu in his appearance as a man-lion, see Dk30.

\(^{346}\) HIRA LAL EI 11 (1911–1912), pp. 184–201, verses 25–36. For the names of the thirteen brahmin donees, see Dk30.

\(^{347}\) Dk3.

\(^{348}\) USHA JAIN JESI 6 (1979), p. 44.

\(^{349}\) The village where the Śrīdharasvāmin temple was established, Vaṭāpadraka, may be the same village that was granted by Śīvagupta to a group of thirteen Śaṇavedins in his Bārdulā charter (Dk33). Mahajan identifies Vaṭāpadraka with the village of Barapali in the Raigarh tehsil and district. MAHAJAN 2000, p. 78.

members of the royal family.\textsuperscript{351}

A last and very fragmentary stone inscription can be found on a stone slab built into the wall of the Mahāmāyī temple in Āraṅg.\textsuperscript{352} As mentioned in note 177 of this chapter, the inscription could perhaps be ascribed to Bhavadeva. According to Hira Lal, the inscription starts with an invocation to Viṣṇu,\textsuperscript{353} which means that it may also have reported on a grant of some sort to a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu.

### The Dominance of Śaivism

From the fifth century onward, Śaivism developed into the dominant religious tradition in large parts of India and beyond. Its dominance is well attested by epigraphical evidence, which shows that Śaivism was the ‘major player’ in the field of royal patronage.\textsuperscript{354} Sanderson has discussed Śaivism’s rise to dominance in several of his publications, and, as mentioned above, he points to the religion’s success in forging strong ties with the institution of kingship as the vital factor explaining this development. We have seen an example of this process in the section on Śiṣṭās’ Bālesvara temple complex. On the whole, this chapter has shown that Daksīṇa Kosala followed the general trend in the attribution of endowments. Irrespective of personal religious commitments, the kings still made most land donations to Vedic brahmins. However, the remaining grants clearly show that networking and forging ties with royalty paid off for Śaivism.

The epigraphical records of the kings of Daksīṇa Kosala have provided us only with glimpses of the religious life in the period of the fifth up to the seventh century AD, but they are important glimpses. They show, for example, that Sirpur was in this early period a crucible of different branches of Śaivism that may have interacted with each other. They also show that the religious life in Sirpur at the time of Śiṣṭā was liberal. The king had his own religious affiliation, but he also gave his royal support to other religious movements. Obviously, this does not mean that there was no competition between the different religions, because the grants helped to maintain the temples, to finance the worship ceremonies and provided the means for

\textsuperscript{351}Ibid., p. 44 and Shastri 1995 Part II, p. 13, note 9.
\textsuperscript{352}Dk24.
\textsuperscript{353}Hira Lal 1932, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{354}Sanderson 2009; Bisschop 2010a and Sanderson forthcoming, p. 4.
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charitable activities. As the next chapter will show, these findings are supported by archaeological material. Sirpur has a great collection of ancient monuments, most dating back to Śivagupta’s reign, and the study of these remains will widen the window to the past and give us a better view of the developments that took place.
Chapter 3

The Archaeological Remains of Śaivism

When looking for archaeological traces of Dakaśīna Kosala from the time of Śivagupta and his relatives, one only needs to follow the meandering stream of the Mahānadi. Located on the banks of this river, in the fertile basin, there are several villages with temple ruins and smaller temple fragments (see Figure 3.1). Some villages are hidden in the jungle, like Turturiā, whereas others, like Tāḷā and Sirpur, are out in the open and advertised as being the cultural heritage of Chhattisgarh. The focus in this chapter will be on

![Figure 3.1: Villages with archaeological remains in the Mahānadi basin](image)
the archaeological material that is relevant to the findings in the previous chapter, that is to say on the Śaivite remains. The places to discuss are Malhār, Tālā, Sisadevarī and Sirpur. After an account of the (excavation) history of these sites, combined with an overview of the art and architecture of Dakṣiṇa Kosala, the subject of iconography will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter on the specific iconographic themes represented on the doorways of Śiva’s abodes.

MALHĀR

Malhār is one of the oldest and richest archaeological sites in Chhattisgarh. When walking the streets, the ancient remains cannot be missed, for fragments are built into the walls throughout the village (see Plate 3.1). Malhār already came up in the first chapter as the most likely location of Śarabhapura, due to the many remains indicating that it once was an extensive township (see pp. 11–12). This indication is strengthened by the presence of an ancient mud fortification mound on the western outskirts of the village (see Figure 3.2). The fort is surrounded by a deep and wide living moat for defensive purposes. Within the fortification wall is a second moat, presumably used to hold the water collected during the rainy season for daily purposes. The mound rises about 11 meters above the surrounding plain and measures roughly 520 meters north-south and 540 meters east-west.355

The first excavations in Malhār were conducted at three different locations in the village itself, by the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture & Archaeology of the University of Sagar. They took place during three seasons in the period of 1975–1978 under the direction of K. D. Bajpai, who was

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assisted by S. K. Pandey and V. D. Jha.\textsuperscript{356} These excavations have yielded a large number of sculptures, architectural fragments and ruins of ancient temples, ranging from the second century BC to the fourteenth century CE, which, in the words of Bajpai, ‘bear an eloquent testimony to the developed condition of the religious life and material culture in this town for a very long period’.\textsuperscript{357} Bajpai and Pandey have divided the recovered material over five successive cultural periods, the third of which is dated 300–650 CE and thus covers the time of the kings of Šarabhapura and the Pândava kings. The previous periods are mainly represented by different kinds of pottery, but this third period shows massive building activities; among the remains are Buddhist monasteries and chaitya halls and also the remnants of several temples dedicated to Śiva.\textsuperscript{358}

About thirty years after the first excavations, the Archaeological Survey of India picked up the work again in three sessions in the period 2009–2012. The person in charge was S. K. Mittra, who was the Superintending Archaeologist of the Nagpur Circle at the time. Contrary to the excavation activities of Bajpai and Pandey, which took place in the village itself, Mittra’s work was focused on the fortification mound. Cutting across the different layers of the mound resulted in a consolidation of the site’s antiquity and confirmed that the fortification was likely raised at the beginning of Sātavāhana rule, being repaired and raised on a number of occasions afterwards.\textsuperscript{359}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{357}BAJPAI & PANDEY 1978, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{358}Ibid., pp. 34–35.
\textsuperscript{359}MITTRA 2010, pp. 214–221. Slightly earlier, the Second Orissa Research Project
\end{footnotes}
During surface explorations in the village and in particular near the mud fortification, coins of several dynasties were found, dating from the first century BC onwards. For the earliest cultural periods, these coins are the only source of information aside from pottery and terracotta figurines. After a thorough study of the Malhār coins, Majumdar has argued convincingly that they have a unique feature in common; whatever the differences in layout, the coins all bear a symbol that resembles the Brāhmī character ‘ma’ with a slight variation (see Figure 3.3). The use of this symbol probably began in the first century BC and continued at least up to the fourth or fifth century CE. Majumdar is of the opinion that the symbol represents ‘Malhār’, but this may be questionable since the antiquity of the name Malhār cannot be traced back to this early period. In fact, as was argued in the first chapter, the village of Malhār was the most likely location of the capital city of Šarabhapura. Therefore, another and perhaps more suitable option may be that the symbol represents ‘Mekalā’, the country to which Šarabhapura presumably belonged. Irrespective of the symbol’s meaning, based on its lengthy use over multiple centuries it is reasonable to conclude that the coins were minted for circulation within the Malhār/Šarabhapura region. Given its strategic location, the city was probably part of the trading route between the north of India and the southern regions; coming from the Gangetic Plain, the route would lead to Malhār/Šarabhapura as the principal city in Dakṣiṇa Kosala at the time, before continuing through the Raipur area towards Odisha (east), Andhra coast (south) or Vidarbha (west). The city may have been a trading centre or a resting station for traders.

When we take a closer look at the sculptural material from Malhār, most of the remaining art can be dated to the Kalachuri period from about 900 CE onwards (i.e. the fifth cultural period of Bajpai and Pandey). There

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(1999–2005) already took an interest in Malhār’s mud fortification. One of the objectives of this German-Indian work group, a cooperation between Kiel University (H. Kulke) and Utkal University (P. K. Nayak), was to give a more complete view of the regional tradition of Odisha, by investigating local traditions in the peripheral regions, which included Dakṣiṇa Kosala. With this objective in mind, M. Brandtner conducted research on the early historic fort horizon, incipient urbanization and state formation in regional and subregional centres along the Tel and the middle Mahānadi valleys. Malhār was one of these centers. 

Brandtner et al. 2005 and Brandtner et al. 2007.

Majumdar 2000.

are, however, among the earlier remains some interesting exceptions that could very well belong to the earliest iconographic evidence of Śaivism in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. The report of Bajpai and Pandey is rather silent regarding the sculptures that were recovered – they only published pictures with an approximate date and a short description – but in a separate article, Pandey gives a more detailed account on two large stone images of Śiva that were found at the bank of the Moti Sagar irrigation tank south of the fortification (see Plate 3.2). One of the images measures 1.62 meters in height and shows the upper body of a male figure, preserved from the waist up (see Plate 3.3). The man has a slender figure with strong shoulders, and he wears small earrings in the elongated earlobes that rest on his shoulders. Based on the vertical third eye protruding from the forehead and the matted hair draped on his back and forming a crown on his head, the image can be identified as Śiva.

The other image, also recognizable as Śiva due to the prominent vertical third eye and the strings of matted hair covering the top and backside of

Plate 3.2: Large Śiva images at Malhār

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Plate 3.3: Upper part of the image of Śiva

the sculpture, measures 1.43 meters in height and is identified by Bajpai and Pandey as an early mukhaliṅga ‘depicting the Ardhanārīśvara concept’ (see Plate 3.4). One could indeed argue that the characteristic division of the face into a right male half and a left female half is visible in the dissimilar earrings: a small one in the elongated right earlobe and a heavy cylindrical piece of jewelry in the left ear. In that case, one would presume that the worn hairdo reflected the differentiation in gender as well. The backside view of the image shows no trace of such differentiation, though, and the dissimilarity

Plate 3.4: Ardhanārīśvara-mukhaliṅga?
of earrings is not seen exclusively in depictions of Śiva as Ardhanārīśvara. That it concerns a mukhaliṅga here may follow from the somewhat phallic shape of the sculpture (when viewed from the back) and the way it seems to project from the square pedestal that forms the bottom. It does deviate from the way in which an ekamukhaliṅga is generally depicted, namely with the face emerging from the shaft of the liṅga. On the other hand, as we will see in the rest of this chapter, the early Dakṣinā Kosala style was quite original. The only certain thing we can say about the image is that it depicts Śiva. Although, despite being less refined (as pointed out by Pandey), the face of this ‘Ardhanārīśvara-liṅga’ does in fact remind one of some of the Gupta heads of Ardhanārīśvara from Mathurā.

Both images have rather crude features, with a broad nose and big, protruding lips. According to Bajpai and Pandey, the images can be dated to the fourth century CE based on stylistic grounds; the style of their carving would be rooted in the early Yakṣa tradition. If the images do actually date to as early as the fourth century, then it will be at least a date at the end of that century; the single pearl necklace of the Ardhanārīśvara occurs for the first time at the end of the Kuśāna period, whereas its differentiated earrings, the vertical third eye and the absence of a mustache on the (male half of the) face all point to a date in the Gupta period.

A third Śaivite object, at least according to Bajpai and Pandey, is a life-size sculpture dated to the early sixth century of a female deity carrying a child on her left hip and holding a lotus flower in her raised right hand (see Plate 3.5). In the report, she is identified as ‘Pārvati holding child Skanda in her lap’. The woman is standing under a flowering Aśoka tree, which, together with the lotus flower in her hand, points to an association with fertility. An identification with Pārvatī may be supported by the fact that two of her epithets are Ambā and Ambikā, generally used to address ‘motherly women’. In the Skandapurāṇa, she is not only referred to as the

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362 A similar difference in earrings is used, for example, in the Śiva of Mansar’ and in some of the other Vākātaka images. Bakker has argued that this asymmetry may reflect the contrast between Śiva’s life-granting form versus his world-renouncing form, instead of the distinction between his male versus his female aspect. Bakker 1997, p. 149 and plates xxx b, xxxvi and xxxviii. For another example, cf. Kreisel 1986, plate 99.
366 Bajpai & Pandey 1978, plate xiii.
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Plate 3.5: Pārvatī with Skanda or...

Plate 3.6a: Hāritī from Sirpur

Plate 3.6b: Sirpur images of Hāritī with child
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

mother of Skanda, but is also considered to be the primordial mother of the whole world. When we compare the sculpture with a number of images from Sirpur, however, its Śaivite origins may be questioned (see Plate 3.6). The Sirpur images also show a female deity with a child on her left hip; in one case the woman is standing under a tree, as in the Malhār sculpture, whereas three other images depict her sitting on a lotus flower. They all came from a Buddhist setting and represent Hārīti, mother goddess and symbol of fertility, wealth and prosperity, who became a popular figure with the rise of the Mahāyāna tradition of Buddhism. What the Sirpur sculptures have in common with the Malhār sculpture is particularly the way the child is reaching for the woman’s hair to play with it. Therefore, we may consider identifying the Malhār sculpture as Hārīti as well and to categorize the sculpture among the Buddhist material recovered from Malhār.

The earliest architectural fragments are dated by Stadtner to the sixth century CE. He refers to two pillar fragments, which are beautifully decorated with animal and floral motifs, and compares the style of these fragments with the monuments of Tālā and the early material from Sirpur. What is particularly characteristic is the precision with which the decorative patterns and miniatures are rendered. One of the fragments is built into the wall of a villager’s home (see Plate 3.7). The pillar is completely

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367 According to Yokochi, Pārvatī is called ‘the Mother of the world’ several times throughout the Skandapurāṇa. She is also addressed as mother of spirits by apsarases and she is said to be the mother of Kauśikā, Skanda, Hastivaktra (Elephant-face), Viśākha, Nandin and Naigamesa (SP 32.116.14–21). In addition, she adopts the demon Andhaka (SP Bh 157) and she even adopts an Aśoka tree as her son (SP Bh 158–162). Yokochi 2013, pp. 25–26. For the epithet Ambikā, see also Coburn 1984, pp. 98–106.


covered with detailed decorations and a scene from the *Pañcatantra*, in which two geese rescue a tortoise from a drying pond, is depicted at the bottom (see Plate 3.8). The upper part of the scene shows how the geese carry the tortoise through the sky by means of a stick, whereas the bottom part tells the unfortunate ending of the story in which the townsmen cut the tortoise into pieces after he falls from the sky. A number of architectural fragments

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3. The Archaeological Remains of Śaivism

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Plate 3.8: *Pañcatantra* scene on pillar fragment

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In the story, the townsmen witness the rescue action and start shouting to the animals in the sky. When the tortoise asks what all the commotion is about, he has to loosen his bite on the stick and as a result he falls down to earth. Cf. *Pañcatantra*, Book I, story 8.1 in *Olivelle* 1997, pp. 51–52. A similar fable appears in the birth stories of the Buddha as the *Kacchapa Jātaka* (No. 215). Only in this *Jātaka* version, the tortoise falls into the courtyard of the king of Benares and splits in two. Cf. *Francis & Thomas* 1916, pp. 178–180. According to Bajpai and Pandey, the scene on the pillar fragment depicts the *Kacchapa Jātaka* and a scene next to it would depict the *Ulika Jātaka* (No. 270), in which the owl is proposed as king of the birds, but not accepted because of his sour looks. Bajpai & Pandey 1978, plates xiva and xiiia. For the *Ulika Jātaka*, cf. *Francis & Thomas* 1916, pp. 213–215. Since the people at the bottom of the scene hold oblong (i.e. knife-like) objects in their hand, the *Pañcatantra* version is followed here.
from the seventh century were recovered in 1978 during debris clearance work at a ruined temple locally known as the Deur Mandir. These fragments are also decorated with animal motifs, creepers, garlands and other floral designs, but they lack the refined quality of the earlier material.

The Deur is the oldest remaining ruin of Malhār and was dedicated to Śiva. In a short article, Nagarch refers to the ruin as a ‘Gupta temple’ and he reckons that it was constructed in the early sixth century and that it was contemporary with the Devarāṇī in Tāḷā (see below). However, the iconography of the reliefs on the inner faces of the door jambs, depicting several scenes with Śiva in the lead role (see Chapter 4), and the style of the other architectural fragments make a date in the seventh century more likely. The Deur is situated on the bank of the Moti Sagar irrigation tank, the same bank indeed as where the two large stone images of Śiva were found and are preserved today in the temple’s surrounding garden. As can be witnessed from the pictures, the ruin of the Deur has been restored; most of the doorway is rebuilt and several architectural fragments have found their place in the walls (see Plates 3.9–3.11). In accordance with the ‘Ancient Monuments and Preservation Act’ from 1904, which aims to ensure the proper conservation of cultural heritage without interfering with the original character of the remains, the Deur has been completely cleaned and restored further by the Archaeological Survey of India in the period 2008–2009.

Plate 3.9: First encounter with the Deur

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372 As mentioned in Chapter 1, there is an inscription on the left entrance wall that is paleographically dated to the seventh century. Cf. Majumdar 2000, p. 28 note 2.
373 http://asi.nic.in/asi_cons_prev.asp.
Plate 3.10: The Deur before, during and after conservation
Tālā

The village of Tālā, situated north of the confluence of the rivers Maniārī and Seonath, approximately 25 kilometers from Bilaspur, has been discussed a few times already in the previous chapters as a possible location for the village of Saṅgama mentioned in Śūrabala’s Malhār copper plates. One reason for this identification is the fact that in Tālā one can visit the ruins of two temples that are dedicated to Śiva: the Jethānī and the Devarānī (see Plate 3.12). These ruins are the earliest Śaiva remains in the region, which makes Tālā an important place to search for answers to questions as to how, when and why Śaivism spread to Dakṣīṇa Kosala at some point in history. Visiting Tālā is a memorable event, for the ruins and sculptures of Tālā are not only among the best-preserved remains of Dakṣīṇa Kosala, they are also unique in so many ways that every minute spent on the site is filled with amazement. The site gives a rather authentic impression due to the fact that – unlike Sirpur, for
Plate 3.12: Ruins of the Jeṭhānī and Devarānī
example, where structures are already rebuilt while being excavated – the remains, and particularly those of the Jetthāṇi, are preserved approximately in the condition in which they used to be buried in the ground.

Prior to any excavation activities, the greater part of the Devarāṇī superstructure already projected above the ground, showing a rectangular stone-built temple construction with an eastern entrance, the doorway of which is beautifully decorated with prominent flower and leaf patterns as well as various scenes reflecting the Śaivite nature of the temple (see Chapter 4). The entrance gives access to a small mandapa, followed by a vestibule (antarāla) in front of the sanctum (garbhagrha), where the residing form of Śiva is unfortunately missing. The Jetthāṇi, which can best be described as a huge pile of gigantic stone slabs, is completely ruined and was prior to excavation only identifiable due to a few pillar shafts embedded in the debris. The clearance work in Tālā on both mounds took place in three stages, spread over a period of about ten years.

A first and minor excavation was organized in the years 1977–1978 under the supervision of A. K. Risbud, then Registering Officer of the Department of Archaeology and Museums in Bilaspur. Only the eastern part of the Devarāṇī mound was cleared of debris at this stage, to reveal the flight of steps leading up to the entrance of the temple with a pair of big-bellied gaṇa doorkeepers still in position on either side of the steps (see Plate 3.13). A number of mutilated sculptures and architectural fragments were removed from the debris as well. Near the base of the temple, they came upon an amount of brick and rubble, which Risbud may have taken as a sign that there was nothing more to explore, for it marked the end of the excavation.\footnote{Chakravarty 1992, pp. 23–30 and Raikwar 2000, pp. 144–146.}
It was only after the Tālā ruins became protected monuments in 1984 that the work was picked up again with the Jeṭhānī mound. The project of uncovering the ruined structure was executed by the Registering Officer G. L. Raikwar in cooperation with R. K. Singh, who held the position as curator of the Bilaspur Museum. Once cleared from all the soil and debris, the Jeṭhānī turned out to be a very unorthodox, and probably even experimental, construction. The temple’s orientation was towards the south, where a series of broad steps led to the main entrance. Several massive pillar bases are still present, playfully decorated with load-bearing figures and some topped with equally large makaras (See Plate 3.14). The load-bearers are all different in style and posture, which may imply that their carving was not standardized yet and still experimented upon. Despite the heavy weight of their load,
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

they appear rather cheerfull. Presumably, there were subsidiary entrances at the rear of the temple, where two smaller stairs still face each other on an east-west axis (see Plate 3.15). Chakravarty refers to the Jeṭhāṇī as a ‘sprawling temple’ because of its unbalanced construction. The massive size of the lintels, pillars and other architectural parts scattered all over the platform indeed give the impression that the structure was overburdened by their excessive weight. Brick buttresses were uncovered all along the Jeṭhāṇī’s base (see Plates 3.12 and 3.15) and amidst the brick debris at the northern end are two large stone elephant heads supporting the temple as well (see Plate 3.16). Given these circumstances and the fact that the Tālā temples were built on soft ground, one can presume that these brick reinforcements were an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the temple from collapsing.

One of the best-preserved sculptures from the Jeṭhāṇī mound represents a four-armed Skanda, seated on his peacock vehicle (see Plate 3.17). Skanda is

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375 Some of these load-bearers are reminiscent of gaṇa figures from Nagardhan and other sites in the Vidarbha region. The hint of Vidarbha style (Gupta-Vākāṭaka) in the art of Tālā has been recognized before by others and may be explained by the migration of artists to upcoming areas after the collapse of Gupta-Vākāṭaka hegemony. Bosma 2008. See also Stadtner 1980, p. 38; Williams 1982, pp. 127–128; Bakker 1994, pp. 20–29; Chakravarty 1992, pp. 98–103 and Nigam 2004.

376 Chakravarty 1992, p. 75.

377 Ibid., pp. 23–30 and 75–76; Bakker 1994, pp. 20–21.
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Plate 3.17: Skanda from southern steps
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depicted as a spirited young man, with the tripartition of his hair (triśikhin) clearly visible. The peacock has both its wings and its tail feathers in full spread, thus forming a halo around its rider. Skanda’s front left hand is resting on the peacock’s wing, but the other three arms are unfortunately broken at the elbows. One of the right hands would have held the shaft of his spear, the tip of which is still present at the right side of his head. The sculpture is nowadays part of the collection of the Bilaspur Museum. Due to its characteristic features, the image is easily identified. The opposite is true for several other sculptures from the site, which are unique and lacking any clues to connect them with common iconographic themes. Two of these riddles have been discussed by Bakker, who provides us with a tentative identification by connecting the sculptures to the narrative tradition about Skanda.

One of the sculptures, lying on the eastern part of the Jetāhāni mound, shows the upper body of a large male figure, whose head is missing (see Plate 3.18). He wears a keyūra with a lion’s head on his left arm and his neck is adorned with a necklace similar to the one worn by the aforementioned Skanda from the Jetāhāni. From the pose of the man’s left arm, it appears as if he is holding a second, smaller, male figure positioned to the right of his waist.

Plate 3.18: The ‘splitting of Skanda’ Plate 3.19: ‘Varuṇa from Jetāhāni’

Of this second figure only the head, showing a youthful face, and left arm are preserved. The arm is raised upwards, above his head, supporting the left foot of a third person, the toes of whose right foot are still present too. Bakker suggests interpreting this fragmentary sculpture as the splitting of Skanda in his battle against Indra, after the latter hurled his thunderbolt (vajra) at
him. The thunderbolt struck Skanda’s right side, after which several (groups of) beings were split off from him, beginning with Viśākha. The second sculpture, located on the Jetāhānī’s southern steps, also depicts a group of three figures (see Plate 3.19). The main figure is a male deity who seems to rise up from two makaras. Remarkable are the lotus leaves and buds that form a halo around his head. They serve, as it were, as a pedestal for a smaller female figure, whose upper body is visible behind the man’s head. At the woman’s right side is another male figure, presumably a devotee, who seems to be making an añjali. Considering that the makara is the traditional mount of Varuṇa, lord of the ocean, Bakker conjectures that the sculpture represents ‘the ocean, out of which Śrī arises’. The consecration (abhiṣeka) of Skanda as army general took place at the location where Varuṇa once became consecrated as Lord of the Waters (jaleśvara), which may explain the sculptures’ presence in the Jetāhānī. The absence of any clear evidence makes the identification of these sculptures problematic, but their connection to Skanda may not be too farfetched, for he was certainly a well-represented figure in Tālā; a second Skanda was found on the eastern steps of the Jetāhānī and two more Skanda figures were recovered from the Devarānī mound (see Plate 3.20).

Plate 3.20: Kārttikeya’s from the Jetāhānī and Devarānī

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379 Bakker 1994, pp. 25-26. A few years ago, the face of the main deity has been broken off. The face is kept in a small shed on the site, awaiting restoration.
A third season of clearance work was launched by K. K. Chakravarty in the period 1987–1988. This time the focus was primarily on the southeastern part of the Devarāṇī mound. Chakravarty took up an interest in this part of the mound because of the bricks at the Devarāṇī’s base that were already recognized by Risbud. With the excavation he wanted to further explore the base and provide it with stabilization for conservation purposes. Removal of the debris confirmed that brick retaining walls and brick buttresses reinforced by stone slabs were used to stabilize the foundation of the Devarāṇī as well. These bricks are the same size as the ones used for the Jeṭhānī. In the northeastern part of the mound, the steps leading to the temple’s platform were recovered. They also found elephant images placed against both walls of the main staircase; the southern image is ruined, but the one backed up against the northern wall is clearly recognizable as Ganeśa with the tusk in his right hand and his trunk reaching for a bowl of sweets in his left hand (see Plate 3.21).

While digging further towards the southeastern corner of the Devarāṇī mound, they ran up against an enormous stone slab. After lifting it gently
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with ropes and chains, cushioned with old tyres, the slab turned out to be a sculpture that is truly one of a kind (see Plate 3.22). Over 2.5 meters tall, its size and unique iconographic features make it Tālā’s main attraction. Nigam has described the sculpture in detail with the following words:

It has unusual features depicting various animals along with human and lion heads as body components. A pair of snakes forms the turban. Two snake-hoods are figured above the shoulders. The waistband and fingernails are also designed as snakes. A snake is also shown entwining the left leg. Thus, the serpent seems to be a preferred depiction of the artisans. The head of the icon is very fascinating. A descending lizard forms the eyebrows and nose of the icon. The eyes are bulging and they look like a mouth of a frog or a roaring lion. The moustaches and upper lip are made of twin-fish. A crab forms the lower lip and chin. Ears are represented by peacocks. Shoulders are like crocodiles, from the snout of which the arms of the icon are emerging. Seven human heads form various parts of the body. Of these a pair of small heads may be seen on either side of the chest. A bigger face forms the abdomen. These three faces have moustaches. Each thigh has a pair of heads, of which two smiling faces are carved on the front side in āṅjali (both hands folded) posture, while the other two are carved on the sides. Heads of lions are depicted on each knee. The ūrdhvaretas (penis erectus) is made of head and neck of a tortoise. Two bell-like testicles are designed by the fore-limbs of the same animal. The icon was holding a daṇḍa (baton) in his broken right hand. The rear side of the icon is flat.

The sculpture’s identity has been a riddle from the day it was found. A paper seminar solely devoted to the sculpture has resulted in a collection of papers in which participants from both India and abroad have tried to provide the solution. The local reference is ‘Rudra-Śiva’, indicating that the people consider the sculpture to be an image of Śiva. The fact that the figure is ithyphallic may seem to support such an identification, were it not that the sculpture is devoid of any other characteristic features of Śiva.

The volume was edited by Nigam 2000b.
Srinivasan 2000. The sculpture is reminiscent of two multi-headed figures from Ma-
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Plate 3.22: Devarāṇi’s dvārapāla

ndhal, both identified by Bakker as forms of Śiva. One of these figures has three tiers of heads situated on different parts of the body; the first tier consists of four heads with matted hair protruding from the neck; two bald or shaven heads on the shoulders form the second tier; and the third tier is made up of two heads on the thighs, peeping out from under the dhoti. According to Bakker, who identifies this image as Maheśvara, the three tiers may point to ‘a theological conception that involves a sequential manifestation in three arrays of diminishing subtlety: yogīn, brahmācārin (muṇḍin), and uṣṇīṣin’. BAKKER 1997, pp. 95–97 and plates i–ii. The second figure has an additional tier consisting of four heads with matted hair placed on top of the first layer. This additional tier may represent a fourth array of manifestation, namely Śiva in his all-transcending aspect. Hence, Bakker has identified this image as Sadāśiva. Ibid., pp. 101–107 and plates vii–viii. Including the two crocodile heads (makaras) on the shoulders, the Tālā image has the same number of heads as the Sadāśiva from Mandhal. However, as pointed out by Bakker, an attempt to interpret the Tālā image with a similar hierarchy of emanations in mind seems to be farfetched, for any clear organizational structure between the heads appears to be lacking.
The variety of animals used to compose the body is taken by some as an indication that Śiva is depicted here as Paśupati, i.e. lord of (all) creatures.\textsuperscript{384} This identification fails to be convincing, however, for the term paśu commonly designates domesticated animals (cattle) and sacrificial animals (wild and domesticated) instead of crabs, lizards and the like.\textsuperscript{385} In addition, the identification does not clarify the presence of the different human faces protruding from the body.\textsuperscript{386} Putting aside the option of Śiva, Bakker points out the physical features of Śiva’s entourage as portrayed (primarily) in the Mahābhārata 4.44. The descriptions of Śiva’s multi-figured attendants show many similarities with the Tālā sculpture, except that the latter combines the features in a single figure. Based on these similarities, Bakker tentatively interprets the Tālā sculpture as a Śaiva gana ‘who may have had an apotropaic function, protecting the Devarāṇī temple’.\textsuperscript{387} Assuming the findspot was the place where the sculpture was originally positioned,\textsuperscript{388} its location outside the temple next to the stairs indeed seems to support a function as a dvārapāla. Today, the sculpture is still standing \textit{in situ}, its hands resting on its waistband as if on guard. The only difference is the shed that has been built around it for conservation purposes.

Looking at the other sculptural remains, it is a pity that there are only fragmentary sculptures of Śiva preserved and no complete images showing the god in full glory. The surviving fragments are tantalizing. Amongst them are two body fragments of Śiva dressed in tiger skin, one from the Jetñāṇī and one from the Devarāṇī. The one from the Jetñāṇī (see Plate 3.23) was found at the bottom of the eastern steps. Bakker refers to this

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{386}Cf. Bakker 1997, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{387}Bakker 2000c, p. 105. See also Dhaky 1984 for a summary of the different features listed in the Mahābhārata.
\textsuperscript{388}Raikwar questions the location and wonders whether the sculpture was not brought over from the Jetñāṇī temple, where its size would fit right in with the other enormous sculptures. Raikwar 2000, pp. 146–147. Chakravarty and Singh, on the other hand, assume that the sculpture was lowered deliberately – implying that the findspot was its original location – because it would have suffered far greater damage if it had collapsed by accident. They think the same happened with other images and explain the deliberate action by speculating that the Devarāṇī may have become occupied by followers of a different ideology. Chakravarty 1992, p. 28 and Singh, R. K. 2000.
\end{footnotesize}
image in his book *The Vākāṭakas* and remarks that the scrotum and erect penis are pronounced under the tiger skin. The tail of the tiger dangles down from Śiva’s left thigh, whereas the face flanked by two claws is visible on the inner right thigh. \[389\] The sculpture from the Devarāṇī is larger and more refined (see Plate 3.24). It has been broken at the ankles and a little above the waist, but even with the rest of the body missing, it still measures 1.18 meters in height. The tiger’s face is again depicted on the inner right thigh, but is less pronounced as compared with the previous fragment. Two small tiger paws are visible just below the waistband, while the other two paws together with the tail dangle down between the legs. Śiva does not seem to be ithyphallic here, although his ārdhvaliṅga may be veiled by the positioning of his legs. The tiger skin is also present in a fragmentary sculpture depicting Ardhanārīśvara, pieces of which were found scattered over the southern steps of the Jeṭhāṇī. The division of the body

\[389\] Bakker 1997, pp. 108–109 and plate xliii. Today, the image has been moved to the Jeṭhāṇī’s surrounding fence (east side), where it is fixated with cement. Part of the legs became hidden under the cement surface, therefore only one of the claws and a small part of the tiger’s face remain visible.
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into a right male half and left female half is clearly visible by the tiger skin draped over the right leg and the pleats of the sārī along the left leg (see Plate 3.25). The face of the tiger protruding from the front part of the right leg is very similar to the one used in the above-mentioned ‘Siva dressed in tiger skin’ from the Jeṭhānī, showing that both sculptures are from the same workshop. A devotee who seems to be making an aṅjali is positioned at Ardhanārīśvara’s right side.390

Next to these bodily fragments, there are also a number of interesting heads recovered that were likely part of sculptures representing Śiva. A large head found southeast of the Devarāṇī mound, today part of the collection of the Bilaspur Museum, depicts Śiva with a serene and meditative expression (see Plate 3.26). The strands of his matted hair are bound together in a crown on top of his head, adorned with an ornament in the centre and a string of pearls at the base of the coiffure. The crescent moon is shining at the right side of the ornament and a vertical third eye is, albeit barely, visible on the forehead. Nigam has compared the present piece with a Śiva-head from Ahicchatrā,391 but stylistically, the soft facial features, full lips and rounded jaw line of the Tālā head have more in common with some of the Vākāṭaka sculptures from Mansar.392 The same features, but in an opposite expression, can be seen in Śiva’s head from the Jethānī (see Plate 3.27). Here, the eyes are wide open, perhaps even bulging. The mouth is closed, but the upper lip seems to curl up a bit, as if he is about to show his teeth. Most remarkable are the skulls decorating the matted hair; one is the centerpiece of the headband and a

390 The current whereabouts of this sculpture is unknown, the picture is based on a copy from the office of State Archaeology in Bilaspur. Chakravarty has published a picture of the associated torso in his dissertation. Chakravarty 1992, p. 24, p. 147 and plate 148 on p. 433.

391 Nigam 2000b, p. 51 and plate 18.

392 Bosma 2008.
second one is present at the right side of the crest. The protrusion at the left side of the crest may be a third skull.\textsuperscript{393} Chakravarty refers to the head as Bhairava, and the skulls, which form a chaplet on the head, make this indeed a likely identification.\textsuperscript{394} That Śiva’s destructive aspect had already become associated with the figure of Bhairava at the time is clear from an inscription of Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena I, in which reference is made to a deity 'Mahābhairava'.\textsuperscript{395}

A single skull is present on the fragment of a head that is cemented to the wall in Tālā’s site museum (see Plate 3.28). The only remaining part of the head is the crest of matted hair, including the string of pearls at its base. The right side of the crest is adorned with the rounded shape of a

\textsuperscript{393} The description and picture are based on a copy from the office of State Archaeology in Bilaspur, the whereabouts of the head is unknown.


\textsuperscript{395} Bakker 1997, p. 13 note 23 and p. 96 note 7.
rather large skull, recognizable by the clear eye sockets. The single skull is an insignia of Śiva, commemorating the decapitation of Brahmā’s fifth head. The earliest extant version of this myth can be found in the fifth chapter of the original Skandapurāṇa, the composition of which has been dated to roughly around 600 AD. In this text it is told that Śiva’s proxy Nilalohita commits the brahmanicide with the nail of his left thumb. Afterwards, at the request of Brahmā, he wanders around with the skull as his begging bowl until he leaves it behind at Mahākapāla. Later sources ascribe the deed to Bhairava. Bisschop did a study on the skull in Śiva’s iconography and found that the earliest appearance seems to be in the Vākāṭaka images from Mansar, predating the Skandapurāṇa by more than a century. These images prove that from the beginning, the iconographic tradition deviated from the known written accounts by depicting the skull as an ornament on Śiva’s head instead of as a begging bowl in his hand. According to Bisschop, this deviation may reflect an older variant of the myth. The Tālā fragment

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396 See Introduction, pp. 1–3.
398 Bisschop 2008. There is an even earlier sculpture from Mandhal, dated to ca. 400 AD and identified by Bakker as an andhakāśuravadhamūrti of Śiva, where a skull already seems to be present: ‘the round knob protruding from the left front side of his hair may be a skull (kapāla), which has been eroded almost beyond recognition’. Bakker 1997, pp. 107–109 and plates IX–X. Bisschop is not convinced that the protrusion is actually
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indicates that the decapitation myth was already known in Dakṣiṇa Kosala at this early stage.

In the iconographic program of Tālā, we do not only find Śiva depicted, but also his devotees. A beautifully sculpted head from the Jeṭhānī shows the rather emaciated face of an ascetic (see Plate 3.29), the cheekbones pronounced by the hollow eyes and sunken cheeks. The piercing expression on his face is emphasized by his raised eyebrows.\(^{399}\) Again, a comparison with the Vākṣṭaka art comes to mind; one of the sculptural fragments in the site museum at the foot of the Hidimbā Tekdi in Mansar (i.e. MNS III) also portrays an ascetic. Although far less emaciated and with differently styled

\[\text{Plate 3.29: Ascetic from Tālā} \quad \text{Plate 3.30: Ascetic from Mansar}\]

a skull, and suspects that it may be ‘a broken piece of the extravagant hairdo instead’. BISSCHOP 2008, p. 3 note 5. The two dents on the surface of the protrusion do, however, look like a pair of eroded eye sockets.

\(^{399}\) The whereabouts of this image cannot be confirmed, as was the case with the Ardhanārīśvara and Bhairava from the Jeṭhānī. The picture is based on a copy from the office of State Archaeology. Cf. CHAKRAVARTY 1992, plate 186; NIGAM 2000b, plate 27.
hair, he raises his eyebrows in a very similar way (see Plate 3.30). A large, almost life-size sculpture of an ascetic in a squatting posture was found while excavating the Devarāṇī mound and is now part of the collection exhibited in the site museum at Tāḷā (see Plate 3.31). The face of the ascetic has a serene expression, the strings of his hair are assembled into a crown on top of his head and he wears a knot in his beard. The ascetic was likely paired with a second sculpture depicting the same, the headless body of which is also in the museum. A similar posture is used for fifteen little ascetic figures, forming a medallion on the underside of the Devarāṇī’s lintel (see Plate 3.32). The ascetics are crouching in front of each other and each one raises his disproportionately long right arm over the person in front of him, thus
creating a counterclockwise circle.\textsuperscript{400}

Two wall slabs from the Devarāṇī, also preserved in the site museum, seem to depict officiants of the temple. Based on the decorative pattern on the upper side, which is the same in both slabs, it is likely that the two pieces were part of one larger relief.\textsuperscript{401} On one slab, an officiant is represented in a standing posture (see Plate 3.33). His body is damaged, but the remainder of a garland is still visible in his right hand and his moustached face is well preserved. He receives what seems to be a fruit from a second person standing to his right. This second person, also with a moustache, is described by

\textsuperscript{400}Similar groups of crouching ascetics have, for example, been found on a door jamb of the seventh century Madhukeśvara temple of Mukhaliṅgam in Kaliṅga, and on a pillar fragment from Malhār dated roughly to the tenth century. Cf. Accession numbers 64196 and 45174 in the photo database of the American Institute of Indian Studies. Williams suggests that groups of ascetics like these may be indicative of Brahmin patronage of the temples in question. \textsc{williams 2000}.

\textsuperscript{401}The remains of a pair of feet on top of both slabs indicate that the larger relief functioned as a platform for other figures.
Chakravarty as a ‘shaven headed brahmācāri’, but a view of the back of the figure reveals that he is not actually bald headed. Notwithstanding this difference, Chakravarty’s interpretation of the scene may still be correct, namely that the gift of fruit could be a gurudaksina, expressing a pupil’s gratitude to his teacher. From the other wall slab, only the upper half survived, showing an officiant with a long-handled object over his left shoulder (see Plate 3.34). The object ends in a tear-shaped receptacle, which suggests

403 The surface of the hair may have weathered over the years, but close up one can still detect what may have been strings of matted locks (jatā) hanging down over his back. This would also fit with the man’s seemingly naked body, moustache and elongated earlobes. Cf. for example the matted hair on two Śiva heads in Kreisel 1986, plate 87 and 88, and the hair of two ascetics on a terracotta tile in Harle 1996, plate 144.
that it is a sacrificial ladle (*sruk*). Together, the slabs may illustrate the daily procedures of the officiants in the temple. The use of these scenes in the art and architecture of the Devarāṇī implies that they were a familiar sight at the time of construction.

Together, the ruins of the Jeṭhāṇī and Devarāṇī provide us with a great view into the development of temple construction in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. Both temples needed additional brickwork to provide extra support, which seems to indicate that they can both be dated to an experimental phase in which the use of stone was a new technology for the construction of temples. Stadtner and Williams agree that the architectural forms and the carving of the decorations may reflect wooden archetypes. They differ, however, in their view on where these archetypes came from. According to Stadtner, the architectural forms are borrowed from south India, whereas Williams is of the opinion that they are indigenous to Dakṣiṇa Kosala. Considering that the art and architecture of Tālā can be characterized by the use of some typical local features (see below), the latter view may be more convincing.\(^{404}\) Comparing the two ruins, it is clear that the extra support came too late for the Jeṭhāṇī. The fact that the Devarāṇī is still standing today, however, proves that its construction was far more stable than that of the Jeṭhāṇī and that the brick buttresses were enough to stabilize it. Thus, it seems that the ‘architects’ of the Devarāṇī learned from the flaws in the Jeṭhāṇī’s construction, which is why scholars agree to date the Devarāṇī to a slightly later period. This is also confirmed by the more refined carving of the Devarāṇī’s doorway,\(^{405}\) of which the choice of decorative scenes already appears to be coherent with contemporary iconographic pro-

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\(^{405}\) Ibid., p. 20.
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grams (see Chapter 4). Stadtner was the first person to occupy himself with the question of dating the archaeological remains of Tālā. To this end, he compared the ruins with the temples of Sirpur, beginning with the Lakṣmaṇa temple, and acknowledged that the two styles are separated by a gap of at least fifty years. Assuming that the latter was constructed at the beginning of Śivagupta’s reign (ca. 590–650 AD), this would bring us to a date in the beginning of the sixth century. Taking into account the difference in construction time between the Jeṭhānī and the Devarānī, William’s ‘reasoned guess’ that the ruins date to the period 480–530 AD is a valid one.

Sisadevarī

The small village of Sisadevarī, about 75 kilometers northeast of Raipur and only 8 kilometers from Pālārī, is hardly ever mentioned as one of the archaeological sites of Dakṣiṇa Kosala. That Sisadevarī is often not taken into account may be explained by the scarcity of the remains there. A first inquiry into the archaeological remains at the site in the years 1994 and 1995 resulted in the discovery of several sculptural fragments that were brought to the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum in Raipur (see Plate 3.35).

Plate 3.35: Fragmentary sculptures from Sisadevarī

Among them were the head and body of a beautifully dressed female figure, today restored and exhibited in the courtyard garden of the museum. The woman is looking down with a somewhat thoughtful expression and on her left upper leg are the remaining paws of a small rodent. Another piece consists of three load-bearing gaṇas, now on display near the entrance of the museum. Their shoulders are bent under their burden, but there is still a hint of vice on their faces. The delicately carved face of a woman, looking out at the world with perfectly almond-shaped eyes, is also part of the collection. The woman seems to have curly hair, kept together with a diadem at the base of the coiffure. Her topknot is adorned with small flowers. Except for the nose, the face is unharmed. Nigam mentions that the woman has a ‘honeycomb hairstyle’ and compares her to a female head displayed in the Mansar site museum, which is of a woman with a somewhat tribal appearance and a similar hairdo.\(^\text{409}\) The head from Sisadevarī is not exhibited in the museum; it is, however, used as a model for (not very representative) replicas to advertise the art of Dakṣiṇa Kosala (see Plate 3.36).

It was only in the years 2001–2002 that excavation activities in Sisadevarī started under the aegis of the Archaeological Survey of India. Clearance work was accomplished by G. L. Raikwar in collaboration with, among others, R. K. Singh, both of whom were also involved in the Tālā excavations. The work on the mound, situated right along the main road through the village, revealed only part of a temple’s platform and the eastern steps leading up to this platform, indicating that the temple used to be oriented to the east (see Plate 3.37).\(^\text{410}\) A large heap of minor fragments is preserved in a corner of

\(^{408}\)Raikwar 2004. Six years after their discovery, before the mound was fully excavated, the pieces are briefly mentioned by Nigam in one of his publications, in which he announces Sisadevarī as a new site. Nigam 2000b, p. 38. Cf. Raikwar 2000–2001.

\(^{409}\)Nigam 2004, pp. 154–155. Cf. Bosma 2008, plates 6a and 6b. The same ‘dented’ honeycomb hair is also seen in the coiffure on a woman’s head from Tālā, now preserved in the Bilaspur Museum.

\(^{410}\)Raikwar 2000–2001 and Raikwar 2004. The latter publication is an unpublished excavation report. The picture from the mound before excavation derives from this report.
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Plate 3.37: The Sisadevarī mound before and after excavation

Plate 3.38: Minor fragments still in situ
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the site, some of which are recognizable as architectural parts and others as parts of larger sculptures. On the left side of the stairs there remains a pair of feet, perhaps once belonging to a dvārapāla. The fragment of a jamb lies next to these feet, decorated with a flower and peacock pattern (see Plate 3.38).

The remains discussed thus far give no reason to assume that the original temple of Sisadevarī was dedicated to Śiva. There are, however, three fragments recovered during the excavations that point to such a conclusion. Two of them presumably belong together: the head of Ardhanārīśvara and his headless body, broken at the knees and without arms (see Plate 3.39). The head is damaged at the nose and mouth, but the difference in hairstyle on the right and left side of the head make the partition between male and female half clearly visible. There is actually a shallow line carved medially along the length of the body and head to separate the two halves. The right and male side of the body is covered in a dhotī, whereas the left and female

Plate 3.39: Head and body of Ardhanārīśvara

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side of the body is distinguished by the large breast, the folding of the skin in the waist and the embellished dress. Draped over the ithyphallic penis is what seems to be a snake, the head of which curves up over the upper left leg, with its thin tongue sticking out.411

The third fragment seems to be part of a door jamb and is left more or less in situ at the right side of the remaining stairs (see Plate 3.40). It is very damaged, but there are still traces of different flower patterns in the background. Two pairs of feet are placed on a lotus pedestal in the centre of the fragment, one human-sized pair and one tiny pair. In the foreground, a little under the lotus pedestal, is a dwarfish and pot-bellied figure seated on a lotus seat. The hem of his garment, hidden under his belly, can be traced on his thighs. He is seated in padmāsana with his knees bent and his legs folded underneath of him. His hands rest on his knees. As we will see in the next chapter, this body posture is, except for the position of the hands, almost identical to that of a Kubera figure sculpted on the inner side of the Devarāṇī doorway. It is reminiscent of some of the Yakṣa images. The hairstyle above the rounded face with large, round eyes

Plate 3.40: Door jamb fragment with Agni

411 The current whereabouts of the head and body are uncertain; they may be in storage at the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, since this is where most of the sculptural remains of Sisadevarī were brought. The picture of the body is based on a large framed picture in one of the sheds in the garden of the museum. The picture of the head is copied from the unpublished excavation report, cf. RAIKWAR 2004.
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is particularly remarkable; the strands of hair are divided into three twisted points, one pointing upwards and one pointing to each side. Although not exactly forming a halo around his head (*prabhāmaṇḍala*), the upright hair resembles the hair found in some depictions of the fire god Agni. Hence, the tripartition of the hair may reflect Agni’s threefold nature in the three Vedic sacrificial fires and his three manifestations, namely as fire on earth, as lightning in the atmosphere, and as the sun in the sky.\(^{412}\)

The fragment is too damaged to provide a sufficient basis for a definite interpretation, but the presence of Agni in the scene supports the conjecture that it was part of a scene depicting the wedding ceremony of Śiva and Pārvatī (*kalyānasundara*), where Agni was present to receive the marital offerings.

Two stunning *makara* sculptures were also recovered from the Sisadevarī mound and brought to the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum (see Plate 3.41).\(^{413}\)

The two sculptures both show a horned creature, the heads flanked by large paws. One of the *makaras* has an almost benign expression, whereas the other looks rather frightening due to its large bulging eyes and the display of teeth. They seem to have functioned as a mount for a female figure, likely the river goddess Gaṅgā, for each *makara* still has the feet of the lady in question on top of its head. The expressive carving of these *makaras*, but also of the *ganas* and some of the other sculptures discussed above, is reminiscent of the art of Tāḷā and we see indeed the same flower patterns used on architectural fragments from both sites (see Plate 3.42). The sculptural material from Sisadevarī seems to be more refined, however, and may therefore be dated to a slightly later date. Raikwar assigns the excavated material to the second half of the sixth century,\(^ {414}\) but I would suggest narrowing the gap with Tāḷā a bit more and dating the remains of Sisadevarī to the middle of the sixth century (second and third quarter). In this way, Sisadevarī serves as an indication of the continuation of the artistic tradition of Dakṣiṇa Kosala between Tāḷā and Sirpur.


\(^ {413}\)For incomprehensible reasons these pieces are not exhibited in the museum itself, but hidden in a storage shed in the garden of the museum, amidst a whole lot of rubbish. They are accompanied by a third sculpture from Sisadevarī depicting a *gana*-like figure. Only the head and left shoulder of this figure are nicely preserved, the body is severely damaged. On the shoulder rests the hand of a second person and the head, turned strong to the right, shows a smiling face. The framed picture of Ardhanārīśvara is also kept in the same shed.

\(^ {414}\)Raikwar 2004.
3. The Archaeological Remains of Śaivism

Plate 3.41a: ‘Benign’ makara from Sisadevarī

Plate 3.41b: ‘Frightening’ makara from Sisadevarī
Considering the many copper-plate charters issued from Śrīpura, testifying to the presence of multiple temples and religious organizations at the time of Śivagupta, the expectations for Sirpur as an archaeological site are very high. In the last sixty years, Sirpur has certainly met these expectations. Starting off as a small village surrounded by thick jungle, it has evolved into an open-air museum with facilities to host the tourists who come to witness the glorious past of this ancient capital. According to Sirpur’s most influential excavator A. K. Sharma, now archaeological advisor to the Chhattisgarh government, 184 mounds with archaeological remains have been identified, spreading over an area measuring 6.5 kilometers north-south and 4.5 kilometers east-west.\textsuperscript{415} However, most excavated mounds seem to be confined to a two-kilometer square radius (see Figure 3.4).

Before continuing with an account of the excavation history of Sirpur, a word of caution is in order. As a witness to the transformation of Sirpur from a small village to an open-air museum, I cannot refrain from questioning the authenticity of some of the structures, especially with the more recent excavations. To conserve the archaeological remains and to provide visitors with an impression of what they looked like, the excavated ruins

\textsuperscript{415}Sharma 2012, p. 13.
are reconstructed with the original material as well as with what seems to be newly cut stones.\footnote{The disappearance of original materials has been a problem from early on. Cousens already reported at the beginning of the twentieth century that custodians of the Gandharvesvara temple were ‘purloining’ stones and materials from the old temple sites in the jungle, ‘to build walls and shanties around the temple’. COUSENS 1904, p. 59.} This method is being used more frequently and certainly makes sense from a local point of view, given the increasing stress placed on Sirpur as the cultural heritage site of Chhattisgarh. In the process, the excavators took some artistic liberties, though, for it is rather obvious that not all parts originally belonged together (see Plate 3.43). This does complicate the degree to which the origin of the material used in these reconstructions can be determined, for the only certain statement that can be made is that it comes from Sirpur. The same is the case with the sculptural material. Even at an early stage, before any excavation activities,
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Fragmentary images were collected from ruined sites and brought over to the Gandharvesvara complex. A second collection of sculptures, also coming from different locations, has been assembled in two site museums next to the Lakṣmaṇa temple. Specimens of the art of Sirpur have been sent to the state museums in Bhopal and Raipur and for the last decade or so, sculptures that have been recovered are collected in the residence of the leading excavator A. K. Sharma. The latter presumably knows the original locations of the sculptures in his house, but where the majority of the images were found remains unclear.

Beglar & Cunningham

The earliest account of the archaeological remains of Sirpur dates back to 1873 and is provided by Joseph David Beglar, the assistant of Sir Alexander Cunningham, who was at that time the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India. Beglar reported on the observations he made during his tour through the Central Provinces (1873–1874) and refers to numerous ruined structures that ‘covered the ground’ and, based on surrounding sculptural fragments, belonged to different religious affiliations. He found most of these ruins in the area between the eastern bank of the Mahānadi river and the western embankment of the Raikera irrigation tank. According to Beglar, the ruins shared the common feature of being built on cell foundations, presumably to raise them above ground level as a precaution against occasional flooding of the Mahānadi.\footnote{Beglar 1878, pp. 168–193.} Beglar’s explorations were followed up by Cunningham himself when he visited Sirpur in 1881.\footnote{Cunningham 1883, pp. 23–31.}

The reports of both Beglar and Cunningham were (obviously) most detailed about the best-preserved ruins at the site, namely the Rāma temple.
and the ruin of the Lakṣmaṇa temple in particular. The name ‘Ram Mandir’ actually refers to a pair of east-facing brick shrines standing side by side on the same mound a little southeast of the Lakṣmaṇa temple. The northern shrine is almost completely ruined, with a small portion of the brick plinth as the only surviving part. The southern shrine still has its platform and foundation (see Plate 3.44), made of light-coloured slabs of slate, and part of its brick sanctum manifesting the beginning of a stellate plan. The shrines were meant to compliment one another, thus forming a unit. The presence of sculptured pilasters, mentioned by Beglar to have adorned the maṇḍapas, could not be confirmed by Stadtner, who only found pilaster bases indicating the original positions of the pilasters.419

The Lakṣmaṇa temple, constructed by Śivagupta and his mother Vāsaṭā in the memory of Harṣagupta, is also facing east and is by far the best-preserved temple of Sirpur (see Plates 2.13 and 3.45). Little is left of the maṇḍapa, but the brick sanctum with the greater part of its tower (śikhara) is still standing and the stone doorway is still intact, decorated with the avatāras of Viṣṇu. Restorations took place in the period 1904–1911, during which the foundation was reinforced, the maṇḍapa was cleared of debris and repairs were done on the brickwork.420 Beglar photographed a large statue of Viṣṇu lying outside the temple, which is believed to have been the residing deity.421 This image is exhibited nowadays in the site museum set up in the temple’s western garden. Cunningham believed that the pillars of the

plate 3.44: southern shrine of the Rāma temples

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419 Beglar 1878, pp. 185–186; Cunningham 1883, p. 29 and Stadtner 1976, pp. 65–72.
Lakṣmaṇa temple, once supporting the roof of the maṇḍapa, were all brought to Rājim by boat to become part of the Rāmacandra temple, which was said to be constructed roughly 250 years before his visit there.\textsuperscript{422} This theory was not corroborated by Stadtner’s later study.\textsuperscript{423}

\textsuperscript{422}CUNNINGHAM 1883, pp. 27–28.
\textsuperscript{423}Stadtner argues that the Rāmacandra temple may even have been constructed between Beglar’s visit and Cunningham’s tour, for Beglar does not mention the temple in his account on Rājim. STADTNER 1976, pp. 135–148.
The Gandharveśvara temple, situated directly on the bank of the Mahānādī, is also mentioned by both Beglar and Cunningham as a relatively modern temple built up of old materials; pillars and sculptural fragments of different origins were incorporated during its construction. At the time of their visit, it was the only active temple in Sirpur and sculptures from ruined temples in the vicinity were brought over and collected within the temple’s enclosure, making it nearly impossible to trace back their original setting. Beglar refers to a large pipal tree next to the Gandharveśvara temple, under which fragments were preserved. Presumably he was referring to the same tree that is still present in the enclosure today and serves as a repository of ancient remains (see Plates 2.7 and 3.46).\textsuperscript{424}

\textsuperscript{424}Beglar 1878, pp. 168–170; Cunningham 1883, pp. 25–27 and Stadtner 1976, pp. 72–76.
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Dikshit’s Excavations (1953–1956)

After the first inquiries of Beglar and Cunningham, for a long time the interest in Sirpur’s hidden treasures remained dormant. In fact, it would take over half a century before the first excavations took place. In the season of 1953–1954, a team from the University of Sagar started to clear a mound in the southwestern quarter of the village under the direction of M. G. Dikshit. They found the remains of a Śiva temple and fragments of sculptures and architectural parts (see Plate 3.47). Apparently, no proper steps were taken to conserve these remains, for the ruin fell into decay again and had to be re-excavated years later (2004–2005).

In the following season, Dikshit and his university team continued the work in the same quarter of Sirpur with financial support from the Government of Madhya Pradesh. They excavated two prominent mounds, revealing a large Buddhist monastery complex that could be connected with the monk Ānandaprabha based on epigraphical evidence and hence was named after him. The shrine of the complex contained a statue of the Buddha in his earth-touching (bhūmisparśa) posture (see Plate 2.11) and a large number of beautiful bronze figures were found as well, casted with the cire perdue technique. The recovery of a set of goldsmith’s tools in one of the chambers in the monastery seems to indicate that the figures were manufactured locally (see Plate 3.48).

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425In the intervening period, Sirpur is only briefly described by Henry Cousens in the Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey of Western India (1904) and from 1907 onwards the site is mentioned regularly in the Progress Reports for the Eastern Circle, edited by Bloch and Longhurst. There were, however, no developments to explore any of the numerous mounds. STADTNER 1976, pp. 4–7.
427Dikshit excavated a second Śiva temple north of the Laksmana temple. This structure also fell apart again and is now completely ruined. SHARMA 2012, p. 69.
428See Chapter 2, pp. 95–96.
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In a third and final season, the excavations were resumed by the Department of Archaeology of Madhya Pradesh, again led by Dikshit. He explored the so-called ‘monastery area’ even further and recovered a second large Buddhist monastery a little west of the Anandaprabha complex. The courtyard of this monastery was arranged, presumably, in the shape of a svastika and it is therefore known as ‘Śvastik Vihāra’. The shrine of the monastery houses a similar statue of Buddha touching the earth.\(^{430}\) While excavating the monasteries, some plaques were found, depicting Gaṇeśa and Śiva with Pārvatī. Based on these, Dikshit argued that the Buddhist monasteries were disturbed by a ‘Śaivite intrusion’, thus giving the distorted impression that Sirpur developed from a Buddhist centre into a centre dominated by Śaivism.\(^{431}\) Epigraphical evidence has already shown that different religious traditions existed side by side at the time of Śivagupta’s reign,\(^{432}\) and this is supported by plenty of material evidence unearthed during later excavations.

\[\text{Plate 3.48: Anandaprabha monastery and a bronze of Tarā}\]

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also called lost-wax casting, is a process in which the castings are produced by using a very detailed mould that was carved in wax and then coated with clay. Hunt 1980. Buddhist metal images started to appear regularly from the sixth century AD onwards. According to Brown, the portability of these icons ‘allowed Buddhism to prosper outside of the monastic institutions that dominated Buddhism at this time’, and may have created the opportunity for a popular Buddhism. Brown 2014.


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Sharma’s Excavations (1999 onwards)

After Dikshit’s last season, the work in Sirpur came to a halt again. Perhaps the location of the village played a role here, as it was surrounded by jungle and at the outer boundaries of Madhya Pradesh. It was only after Chhattisgarh became an independent state in 2000 that excavation activities really took off and this time they continued until today. The key figure in these activities has been A. K. Sharma, who resided at Sirpur and was in charge from day one. In collaboration with J. P. Joshi, he resumed the clearance work in Sirpur in the season of 1999–2000 by exploring two mounds on the eastern side of the village, just south of the Raikera tank. They worked under the aegis of Bodhisattva Nagarjuna Smarak Sanstha Va Anusandhan Kendra from Nagpur, who was likely attracted by the predominantly Buddhist remains revealed in Sirpur thus far, and it may therefore not be surprising that they started with a mound that already contained a large statue of a headless Buddha on the surface. The head was later retrieved and placed back on the body. After removing the debris of broken pillars and sculpture pieces,

Plate 3.49: Buddhist nunnery

they found the remains of the monastery in which the Buddha used to be enshrined (see Plate 3.49). Based on the fragments of glass bangles in various colours and with embossed designs found in almost all the rooms, Sharma

These mounds were numbered SRP1 and SRP2.
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and Joshi assumed that the monastery was inhabited by nuns (*bhikṣunīs*) and thus they refer to it as a nunnery.\(^{434}\)

The second mound appeared to be a Śiva temple, however, and was the first of a whole series of Śiva temples recovered by Sharma. As with most of these temples, the plinth was built of slate slabs, with a brick superstructure on top of it. According to Sharma and Joshi, the slate was mined from local quarries in and around the Mahānadi. The ground plan of the temple, which was facing west, consisted of a *maṇḍapa*, followed by an *antarāla* (vestibule) leading to the *garbhagrha*. In the centre of this sanctum, they found a 1.20-meter-high *liṅga* made of polished black granite, on a white circular *yonipītha* with a diameter of 1.80 meters (see Plate 3.50).\(^{435}\) The *liṅga* is carved in the three common sections: a square base (*brahmabhāga*), an octagonal central part (*viṣṇubhāga*) and a spherical cylinder projecting above the *yoni* (*rudrabhāga*). The front view of the *liṅga* is recognizable by two incised lines, one to distinguish the tip from the rest of the shaft.


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(brahmasūtra) and one to mark the frenulum (pārśvasūtra).

Among the antiquities recovered from the site, Sharma and Joshi mention a stone slab bearing a relief of Śiva as Naṭarāja, king of dance. They do not provide information about the whereabouts of this piece, but it may be identifiable with a doorway fragment in the site museum on which Śiva is represented as an eight-armed Naṭarāja (see Plate 3.51). The details have been worn down beyond recognition, but Śiva’s dance posture is clearly recognizable, with one of the left arms characteristically stretched out across his breast in gajahasta. The attributes in his right hands cannot be identified, but in one of his left hands he seems to hold a trident and another left hand may have reached for Pārvatī, who is sitting at his feet in the lower right corner of the stone slab. In the fourth left hand, held upwards, is the remainder of a cobra snake, which he probably raised above his head, as is the case in a large sculpture of Naṭarāja within the enclosure of the Gandharvesvara temple (see below).

In the following years, Sharma cleared over forty different mounds in Sīrpur, from 2008 onwards in close collaboration with his assistant P. K. Singh. The financial support from Nagpur continued for another four seasons, after which Sharma worked under the auspices of the Department of Archaeol-

436 Kreisel 1986, pp. 44–53.
437 IAR (1999–2000), p. 98; Joshi & Sharma 1999–2000, p. 113 and Sharma 2002, p. 807. Cf. Sharma & Misra 2003, p. 211. Sharma and Joshi do refer to a six-armed figure, but they may have been confused as some of the arms are barely visible in the Naṭarāja from the site museum.
438 The name of this arm gesture is derived from its resemblance to the trunk of an elephant (gaja) in the way it is stretched out across the chest: to make the gajahasta gesture, the arm and hand are ‘thrown forward and held straight like a stick or like the trunk of an elephant’. Rao 1968 Volume I Part I, p. 16. Cf. Zimmer 1974, p. 153 and Rao 1968 Volume II Part I, pp. 262–264.
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ology and Culture of the Government of Chhattisgarh. Among the resulting remains are the ruins of at least six additional Buddhist monasteries in the centre of the village, two of which are likely contemporary with the Laksmana temple and date to the beginning of Śivagupta’s reign based on iconographic features. While clearing some small-scale monastery ruins, Sharma and Singh found a collection of seventy-nine bronze Buddhist figures. The extensive size of this hoard supports the assumption that there used to be a workshop in Sirpur where bronze casting was practiced. Sharma’s Buddhist discoveries culminated in the find of a stūpa, located on the eastern embankment of the Raikera tank (see Plate 3.52). This stūpa was supposedly constructed in the third century BCE and enlarged at a later date. There are serious doubts about its authenticity, however, as local sources could not confirm a pre-existing mound.

The prevalence of Jainism in Sirpur can be attested by some fragmentary Tīrthaṅkara sculptures in the courtyard of the Gandharvesvara temple and

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439 The six ruins are SRP4, SRP5, SRP10, SRP31, SRP32 and SRP37. Cf. Sharma 2004a; Sharma 2007a, pp. 20–30; Yoritomi et al. 2008, pp. 23–36; Sharma 2009a, pp. 79–80 and Sharma 2014, pp. 60–84. A distinctive feature of the early art of Dakśina Kosala is the playful use of animal motifs. This characteristic is found in the doorway of the Laksmana temple as well as in the entrances of the two monasteries. The entrance of SRP4 is only partially preserved, but it is decorated with a snake chasing a mouse through the plinth, a motif that can also be found in Tālā on the steps leading to the Devarāṇi’s platform. SRP5 has a beautifully carved entrance, depicting loving couples, a story from the Pañcatantra about a crocodile and his monkey friend (cf. Pañcatantra, Book IV in Olivelle 1997, pp. 146–151.) and various other animal scenes. Sharma 2004a. No other doorways in Sirpur are preserved in similar condition, so it cannot be confirmed whether the feature persisted in Śivagupta’s time. Sharma even ascribes SRP5 to the reign of Tīvaradeva, based on the recovery of four fragments of inscriptions engraved on red sandstone. Supposedly, one of the fragments contains the name of Tīvaradeva and another fragment contains the name of Haṃsaṅgupta. Sharma 2007a, p. 26. If this dating is correct, it means that the monastery may be the oldest extant structure in Sirpur. The information cannot be ascertained, however, as the fragments have never been published except for a short reference, and the names alone are insufficient for dating. After all, Tīvaradeva and Haṃsaṅgupta are also mentioned in records of Śivagupta.

440 The bronzes were found at SRP31 in 2008. Earlier, in 2004, Sharma already recovered seven bronzes from Buddhist site SRP10. Records also state that in 1939 a hoard of nearly sixty bronze figures was found near the Laksmana temple by the chief priest of the Gandharvesvara temple. Of this last hoard, only a few pieces can be located, the remaining lot is missing. For a detailed description of the bronzes, cf. Singh, P. K. 2008 and Sharma & Singh 2010.

441 The stūpa is SRP35. Sharma 2009b and Sharma 2014, pp. 49–55.
in the excavation reports, reference is made to a few Jain monasteries that have been unearthed.⁴⁴²

One of the more recent excavations, east of the Raikera tank, revealed a temple with Cāmuṇḍā in the sanctum as the presiding deity (see Plate 3.53). The temple is facing west and is built on a large base with a rectangular maṇḍapa and a vestibule preceding the garbhagrha. A pradakṣiṇa path leads around it. The 0.90-meter-high sculpture shows a ferocious Cāmuṇḍā, seated on a corpse with her left knee raised (ardhaparyānikā). Her body is emaciated, she has bulging eyes and her mouth is opened in a scary grin. She wears a garland of skulls and there are skulls and snakes in her matted hair and snakes as jewelry around her upper arms and ankles. A vertical third eye is depicted on her forehead. The sculpture is eight-armed, but three of the arms

⁴⁴²These excavated Jain monasteries are SRP25 and SRP30. SHARMA 2007a, p. 30; SHARMA 2009a, pp. 80–81 and SHARMA 2015.
are damaged. The back right and left hands carry respectively a large cobra and a staff topped by an owl. In a second left hand she carries the severed head of the corpse. With the remaining right and left hand she seems to put the intestines in her mouth that spill out from an opening in the corpse. At her feet two jackals and a vulture await to join her in her meal. This sculpture is one of the best-preserved pieces from Sirpur and it represents Cāmuṇḍā in such a refined and vivid manner. It likely reflects the way a

Plate 3.53: Cāmuṇḍā (SRP-38-A)  Plate 3.54: Damaged Cāmuṇḍā

443 The Cāmuṇḍā temple is numbered SRP38-A, the same mound contained the fragments of two totally plundered shrines on a shared base that are labeled SRP38-B. SHARMA 2011a and SHARMA 2012, pp. 90–91. Based on the pictures in the publications, it seems that the sculpture is no longer in situ. It may be brought to the residence of A. K. Sharma in Sirpur, where a collection of the most beautiful sculptures is kept, awaiting the construction of a third site museum additional to the two within the enclosure of the Laksmana temple. Plate 3.54 is based on a picture provided by G. L. Raikwar, cf. RAIKWAR 2011.
damaged sculpture of Cāmunḍā, which is cemented into the enclosure of the Gandharveśvara temple, once may have looked (see Plate 3.54).

Remains of Śiva-related temples were found in at least seventeen different locations in Sirpur. This makes Śaivism by far the most represented religious tradition based on the excavated material, a pattern that was already reflected in the analysis of the epigraphical material in the previous chapter. The temples range from simple structures with a single *garbha-grha*, like the one described above that was excavated by Sharma and Joshi in their first season, to temples with more complicated plans, combining multiple shrines.

Plate 3.55: Temple with single *garbha-grha*
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on the same platform. They are brick-built structures on a stone platform (adhisṭhāna), accessed by a few steps (see Plate 3.55). The platforms provide enough space to circumambulate the shrines (pradaksīṇa). Small maṇḍapas and antarālas precede the garbhāgrhas, in which a liṅga was installed. Most liṅgas are still present, and sometimes a lonely pillar or architectural fragment is left, but mostly the ruins are devoid of any sculptural remains.

Five other excavated ruins have a temple plan with two garbhāgrhas. The sanctums are arranged side-by-side and are of equal size, indicating that the presiding deities were of equal importance. In one case, the two garbhāgrhas are adjoining a single maṇḍapa and antarāla, whereas in the other plans the two sanctums both have their own maṇḍapa and antarāla. Sharma refers to these ruins as Hari-Hara temples because in most of them they found a liṅga in one shrine and the other contained fragments of a Viṣṇu image. One of the best-preserved examples of such a Hari-Hara temple, showing more than just a stone-built outline of the temple plan, can be found within the Suraṅga Tīla complex in the centre of Sirpur (see below). The garbhāgrhas, both facing north, are preceded by very small antarālas (see Plate 3.56). The western shrine was dedicated to Śiva, represented by the liṅga on a sixteen-sided yonipītha. The eastern shrine only contains a pedestal today, but during the excavation they did find the Viṣṇu statue that used to be installed. At the backside of the temple, the little space between the two garbhāgrhas and antarālas forms a small niche in the shape of a T. Coming from the liṅga shrine, the water chute (pranāla) that drains the ablution water runs through this niche towards the border of the platform. According to Sharma, the niche can be interpreted as a ‘womb’ and would thus symbolically represent the presence of Brahmā, the creator god of the trinity. This idea seems to be a bit too far-fetched, however, for if the temple actually represented the trinity, Brahmā would have had a proper shrine equal to the other two gods and would not be written off with this small southern niche above Śiva’s ablation

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444 This latter practice is typical in the Deccan. For a description of different kinds of plans, see Hardy 2007, pp. 90–105.
445 The temple in the picture is SRP11, other temples with a single garbhāgrha are SRP2, SRP7–9 of the Bāleśvara Complex (see below), SRP15, SRP17 and SRP26. Sharma 2007a, pp. 16–20 and Sharma 2012, pp. 73–80 and pp. 83–84.
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Plate 3.56: Trinity temple in the Suraṅga Tīla complex

water. We have seen in the previous chapter that Tīvaradeva and Nannarāja II, though coming from a family of staunch Śaivas, likely adapted to the local state religion revolving around Viṣṇu. Śivagupta started to publicly announce his adherence to Śiva and perhaps the construction of the Hari-Hara temples are an expression of this period, in which both gods are still equally important and therefore reside next to each other.

The next step may have been the construction of a temple housing three deities, the ruin of which is excavated east of the Gandharveśvara temple (see Plate 3.57). Here we see three garbhagrhas interlinked by one large twelve-pillared mandapa. In the central shrine, being the most important, was installed a liṅga on a three-layered round yoni-pīṭha. The two outer shrines
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Plate 3.57: Trideva temple

contained a badly damaged Viṣṇu statue and, based on the lion at her feet, the broken image of Durgā. The temple is fronted by a free-standing Nandi mandapa with a worn sculpture of Śiva’s bull.\textsuperscript{447}

Finally, there are five excavated ruins with a five-shrine plan. Four of them have a pañcāyatana ground plan with one main temple in the centre surrounded by four minor shrines at the corners, grouped together by an enclosure wall (prākāra). This type of plan originated in the Gupta period and is a predominantly northern concept.\textsuperscript{448} The fifth temple is quite special, mainly because of its enormous size (see Plate 3.58). The so-called Suraṅga Tīla in the centre of Sirpur was already noticed by Beglar, who remarked that the name alludes to the deep cells that used to form the foundation of the temple.\textsuperscript{449} Excavations have indeed uncovered a nearly fourteen meter tall structure. A broad flight of steps reaches the top of the adhiśṭhāna from the west, to lead further upwards to the mandapa platform that is raised over eight meters above the ground. This mandapa, containing the fragments of thirty-two pillars, adjoins five shrines of equal size; the one on the north and the three on the eastern side house a liṅga, whereas an image of Gaṇeśa is installed in the southern shrine (see Plate 3.59). The temple and some accompanying structures were surrounded by an enclosure.

\textsuperscript{447}The Trideva temple is SRP33. Cf. Sharma 2009a, pp. 77–79 and Sharma 2012, pp. 98–100.

\textsuperscript{448}Hardy 2007, pp. 101–103. The four ruins with (according to Sharma) a pañcāyatana plan are SRP21, SRP36-B and SRP8 and SRP9 of the Bāleśvara complex (see below).

\textsuperscript{449}Beglar 1878, p. 192.
wall (prakārā) and could be accessed by a passageway (toranadvāra) that is fronting the stairs of the temple. According to Sharma, the four liṅgas had four different colours, to represent that they were installed by the four different varṇas: a white liṅga by a brāhmaṇa, red by a kṣatriya, yellow by a vaiśya and black by a śūdra. His source for this concept is the thirty-third
chapter of the *Mayamata*, a South Indian text on architecture.\textsuperscript{450} The verses 1–19a of this chapter deal with the characteristics of the stones from which the *liṅgas* are to be made, and refer indeed to the above-mentioned division of colours (verses 4–5a).\textsuperscript{451} Whether this theory should be applied to the *liṅgas* of the Suraṅga Tīla is questionable, however, for the different sizes of these *liṅgas* give the impression that they could be from different locations, and given that the composition of the *Mayamata* has been dated by Dagens to sometime between the ninth and twelfth centuries, this text cannot be taken as a source for the set-up of a seventh-century temple.\textsuperscript{452} Whatever the original setting of the *liṅgas* may have been, at least one of the pedestals is a modern addition (see Plate 3.60), perhaps to conform the *liṅga* to the other three.

For the study of the development of Śaivism in Sīrpur, Ṣivagupta’s ‘Bālesvara-bhaṭṭāraka’ temple complex can be considered as the most valuable discovery. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the hoard of nine copper-plate charters was found while digging a small mound. Excavations conducted at this site in the season of 2003–2004 have revealed several structures that could indeed be identified as part of the Bālesvara temple complex (for an

\begin{center}
Plate 3.60: One of the Suraṅga’s *liṅgas* with altered *yonipīṭha*
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{450}Sharma 2012, pp. 112–120. The Suraṅga Tīla temple is numbered SRP18.
\textsuperscript{451} *Mayamata* 33.4–5a in Dagens 1994 Volume II, pp. 738–739.
\textsuperscript{452} Dagens 1994 Volume I, p. xliii.
The ruins of the Bāleśvara complex are numbered SRP6–9: the mathikā is SRP6, the main twin temples are SRP7 and SRP8, the sattra is included in SRP7 and the third temple structure is referred to as SRP9.
3. The Archaeological Remains of Śaivism

Plate 3.61: Main temples of the Bāleśvara complex
Plate 3.62: Śivagupta’s palace complex

Plate 3.63: Market area and residential excavation
One of Sharma’s first excavations in 2000 was an area of nearly 2400 square meters, located southwest of Sirpur, right on the bank of the Mahānadi. The excavation revealed the remaining brick walls of a large structure, measuring 60 by 40 meters, with several rooms of various sizes and an open court on the ground floor (see Plate 3.62). It was identified as Śivagupta’s palace complex by Sharma, who ascribes rooms to the king and his queens, the king’s officials and staff as well as to the king’s security and guards. Among the debris they found the charred remainders of teak wooden pillars, indicating that there may have been wooden verandahs on the second floor. During the more recent excavations, Sharma and Singh cleared an area measuring about 2800 square meters, located to the east of the Gandharveśvara temple. The result was a township that appeared to be systematically laid out; with rows of shops alongside a main street, incorporated temple structures and a performance platform (see Plate 3.63). Sharma and Singh are of the opinion that the main street originated from the Suraṅga Tīla temple and, after passing the township, would reach a Śiva temple with access to the riverfront (ghat).

Based on the material used and the style of construction, the township does seem to be contemporaneous with the Suraṅga Tīla temple.

Sirpur Sculptures

When we look at representations of Śiva in Sirpur, it is clear that his first and foremost manifestation was the līṅga. In this respect, Sirpur forms a significant contrast with Tālā, where not even a single līṅga is among the excavated material. We find līṅgas scattered all over Sirpur, for practically every Śiva temple

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457 The whole township area includes SRP24, SRP29 AND SRP30. Other residential structures are SRP12–SRP14, SRP16, SRP18, SRP20, SRP22 and SRP39. Sharma 2009a, pp. 81–82; Sharma 2011b and Sharma et al. 2014.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

had one installed in the sanctum. There is also a four-faced liṅga exhibited in the site museum (see Plate 3.64), which was recovered in the season of 1960–1961 during clearance work on a pile of debris near the Laksmaṇa temple. But except for the doorways that will be discussed in the following chapter, there are not too many sculptures that can be recognized as iconic depictions of Śiva. An important factor here is that a very soft and flaky sandstone was used to carve the sculptures. Therefore many images are worn beyond recognition and the ones that can be identified are often badly damaged.

The best-preserved pieces are a depiction of Śiva as Naṭarāja (mṛttamūrti) and several sculptures of the umāmaheśvaramūrti of Śiva and Pārvatī within the enclosure of the Gandharvesvara temple (see Plate 3.65). The Naṭarāja shows an ithyphallic Śiva, dancing on a lotus pedestal. He has eight arms and with the two back arms he raises a cobra snake above his head, thus forming a halo around him. The attributes in the two middle left hands are difficult to discern, but he may have a rosary in the upper one. With the front left hand he touches Pārvatī’s cheek, who is sitting on a lotus pedestal.

Plate 3.65: Naṭarāja and Umāmaheśvara from the Gandharvesvara complex

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459 See also Stadtner 1976, p. 42.
next to his left knee. In his upper and lower middle right hands are a drum \((damaru)\) and what seems to be a trident. The front right arm is held in the \(gajahasta\) gesture, which, in addition to the pose of the legs with one leg firmly on the ground and the other resting upon the toe, forms the \(lalita\) dance mode.\(^{460}\) Between his legs, Śiva is accompanied in his dance by the figure of Bhringin. In the background, at Śiva’s right and left side, are the little figures of his sons, namely the elephant-headed Gañeśa and Kārttikeya on his peacock. These two are also present in the Umāmaheśvara sculptures that depict the divine couple in a close embrace; Śiva is sitting on his bull mount with Pārvatī on his lap and they have an arm wrapped around each other’s shoulders. With his back left hand, Śiva is again raising a cobra snake above their heads. He is holding a trident in his back right hand and a little ‘lotus of dalliance’ \((līlākamala)\) in the front right hand.

In the site museum, we find a worn fragment of Śiva in his aggressive Bhairava form (see Plate 3.66); the vertical third eye on his forehead is barely visible, but his gaping mouth is clear enough. He also wears skulls in his matted hair and there are still traces of the trident on his left armand above the corresponding shoulder. Another fragmentary sculpture of Śiva, preserved from the waist up, is placed in the newly excavated township area (see Plate 3.67). At first glance, the represented male figure does not seem to have any of Śiva’s distinctive features; after all, the matted hair and slightly bulging eyes could fit any other ascetic figure. Upon closer inspection of the shoulder and upper arms, however, one will notice that the man is four-armed. Having multiple arms, that is to say more than two, is strictly reserved for gods, and therefore we can conclude that the represented man is Śiva. The object held in front of his chest may be a snake.

There are four sculptures in Sirpur that represent Śiva in the act of killing the demon Andhaka: one within the enclosure of the Gandharveśvara temple, one in the site museum and two in Sharma’s residence. The story of the great war between devas and asuras, ending in the battle between Śiva and Andhaka evolved to become one of the most popular stories in Śaiva mythology and a well-known motif in Śaiva iconography. The oldest extant and very detailed account of the Andhaka myth is given in the Nepalese recension of the Skandapurāṇā, and the four sculptures from Sirpur show that the local artists were already acquainted with the story around the same time. As we will see in the next chapter, it was a well-represented motif on the doorway to Śiva’s abodes in Daksīṇa Kosala as well. The Gandharveśvara sculpture is small (circa 45 centimeters in height), but it is by far the best-preserved one; the top fragment is missing, but most details are clearly visible (see Plate 3.68). Śiva is eight-armed, ithyphallic and a third eye is present on his forehead. With the two back hands he raises an elephant hide above his head, which is a characteristic feature of the iconographic type. Due to

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462 Melzer convincingly explains the elephant hide in the andhakāsuraṇevadhamūrti iconographic type, by the fact that Śiva assumes his Bhairava form before killing Andhaka in the battle. The aggressive elements often seen in these images – open mouth, fangs, weapons, snakes, a chain of skulls – are all attributes of Bhairava. The elephant hide, which presumably was dripping blood, definitely belongs to Śiva’s ferocious form and in iconographic texts from northern India, the elephant hide is mentioned as one of Bhairava’s terrifying attributes. Melzer 2002 Teil 1, pp. 145–146.
Plate 3.68: Andhakāśuravadhamūrti I
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

the damage, only the trunk of the elephant is still present above Śiva’s left shoulder. The two front hands are holding the weapon, either a lance or a trident, with Andhaka pierced on top. With the cup in his upper middle left hand, Śiva catches the blood dripping from the demon, while the lower middle left hand is resting on Pārvatī’s head. In the two middle right hands are a cobra snake and a drum (damaru). Śiva’s bull is looking up towards him from under his left foot.

The sculpture exhibited in the site museum is large; even with the lower part missing, its height is still about 1.30 meters (see Plate 3.69). The flaky sandstone is eroded in the way characteristic for Sirpur and no details are

Plate 3.69: Andhakāsurasuravadhamūrti II Plate 3.70: Andhakāsurasuravadhamūrti III
preserved. The large elephant hide above Śiva’s head is held upwards with the two back hands, whereas the two front hands hold the lance or trident with which he pierces Andhaka, whose upper body is still recognizable. A protrusion above the right shoulder is a remainder of an object held by a third (middle) right hand. The middle left hand is lowered and rests on a rounded object that may have been Pārvatī’s head, as was the case in the previous example.

During a visit to the house of the leading excavator A. K. Sharma, I came across another fragmentary sculpture that likely represented Śiva in the act of killing Andhaka (see Plate 3.70). The height of this sculpture is about 1.20 meters and it is badly damaged. Despite the fact that almost all of the arms are broken, it is still visible that Śiva was eight-armed here. Two hands again raise the elephant hide above his head and two hands rest on the upper legs. In the right hand near his hip is the remainder of either a lance or a trident and there are also traces of this weapon on Śiva’s chest, so he was probably piercing Andhaka with two hands as well. A cup is held in the fourth left hand, to catch the drops of Andhaka’s blood. Under the cup, a blood-thirsty female figure is looking up from behind Śiva’s left leg with an ugra expression on her face. She can be identified as a yogeśvarī or Mother, who sits there ready to eat the clones born from the drops of Andhaka’s blood that fall on the ground, and therewith to stop the demon’s multiplication. Śiva is depicted as ithyphallic and with a third eye on his forehead. The aggression of his appearance is well expressed with the wide open mouth.

Plate 3.71: Andhakāsuravadhamūrti IV

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463 Yokochi has informed me that the goddesses who drink Andhaka’s blood are called yogeśvarīs in Skandapurāṇa SP Bh. 155.15b, while they are called the Mothers (mātr/mātar-s) twice in SP s 155.12c and 13b according to S3 (lost in Bhāṭṭarāṛī’s edition). Cf. also BISSCHOP 2009, p. 748. Cf. RAO 1968 Volume II Part I, pp. 192–194.
showing his fangs, the bulging eyes, the chain of skulls around his neck and
the little skulls in his hairdo. He also wears a little cobra snake around his
ankle.

On the same occasion, I noticed the remainder of a fourth andhakāśura-
vadhamaṃḍūṭi. The elephant hide is not present anymore, but the posture of
the legs is similar to the other examples and the lance or trident, firmly held
in both hands, is piercing Andhaka, who is barely visible (see Plate 3.71).

To finish, there are also two sculptures of Śiva’s sons (see Plates 3.72 and
3.73). The pot-bellied figure of Gaṇeśa was brought over from Sirpur to the
Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum in Raipur, where it is exhibited in the
courtyard garden. A badly worn image of Kārttikeya on his peacock can be
found among the images placed within the Gandharveśvara enclosure. For
both sculptures the origin is unknown.
Chapter 4

Iconography of the Doorway to Śiva’s Abode

Both from a devotional and an iconographical point of view, the doorway of a temple is of great importance. Entering the temple is a transition from public to sacred space; the doorway leads the devotees to the heart (garbhagrha) of the temple, the place where they can meet and communicate with their god, manifested in the sanctum image. To stress its importance as a religious threshold and to frame, as it were, the sanctum image, the temple doorway is commonly adorned with beautiful images of river goddesses, guardians, celestial beings and representations of the residing deity.464 These doorway carvings are particularly interesting in the case of temples dedicated to Śiva because the jambs and lintel show Śiva in his iconic forms, whereas the central image in the garbhagrha is usually a liṅga, Śiva’s aniconic manifestation. Thus, the choice of the particular representations used in the doorway iconography can inform us about Śiva’s manifestation in the temple, and, based on that, may say something about the specific cult that was present. Furthermore, on a more general level, the doorways provide insight into the iconographic motifs that were known to the artisans and people living in the area at the time the temple was constructed.

There are various iconic representations of Śiva that can be found on the doorways giving access to his temples. He is often depicted in dalliance with his wife Pārvatī (umāmaheśvaramūrti), or in the company of his divine family and their entourage of gaṇas. Equally common are the motifs of Śiva in the act of destroying someone (saṁhāramūrti) and Śiva in the act of bestowing favor on someone (anugrahamūrti). Other aspects of Śiva that have been expressed in doorway carvings are Śiva in the act of dancing (nṛttamūrti), Śiva receiving the heavenly Gaṅgā river in his hair (gaṅgādharamūrti), the marriage ceremony of Śiva and Pārvatī (kalyānasundaramūrti), Śiva as a skull-bearing wanderer, et cetera.465 Contrary to the doorways of temples


465 For an extensive overview of all Śiva’s representations, cf. RAO Volume II Part I & II.
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dedicated to Viṣṇu, which are commonly adorned with Viṣṇu’s incarnations and therefore more or less follow the order in which these avatāras made their appearance, there is no apparent order in which the iconic representations of Śiva are depicted on the doorways. The artists must have had a reason to follow a specific order while designing the doorways, but since the same

Plate 4.1: Devarāṇi doorway in Tālā

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motifs do not always appear in the same order, the underlying connection between the decorative scenes is not quite clear yet.

**Tālā: the Devarānī Doorway**

In Dakṣiṇa Kosala, the oldest extant doorway of a temple dedicated to Śiva is the one giving entry to the sixth-century Devarānī temple in Tālā (see Plate 4.1). The delicate decorations of this doorway survived through the centuries rather well compared to the rest of the temple’s construction, thus making the lintel and door jambs a real eye-catcher. Remarkable are the floral and foliate patterns that are prominently present in many aspects of this doorway. The built-in columns left and right of the doorway are covered with seven slanted and vertical bands of leaf and flower patterns (see Plate 4.2). These carved bands, the sākhās, may simulate the bundled wooden branches that were used as doorposts (Lat. antepagmenta) in earlier wooden constructions. Similar flowers and leaves are used to separate the images on the jambs and the lintel, which are carved in high-relief and in such a refined and expressive manner that Stadtner correctly states that they ‘must be counted among the finest sources of sixth-century Indian art’.\(^{467}\)

The jambs of the Devarānī doorway mirror each other in their division into four unequal registers. The upper register on the left (southern) door

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\(^{466}\)The name for the antepgments of the door-jambs is ‘sākhā’, meaning ‘branch’. A number of branches were fixed in the ground, tied and bundled together originally: 3, 5, 7, or 9 contribute their stems to the varied vertical mouldings of the door-jambs (Bṛhat Saṃhitā LV. 14). KRAMRISCH 1976 Volume II, p. 313. Williams remarks that the way the doorway of the Devarānī is cut diagonally from a single massive slab of stone, ‘conceivably reproduces a kind of veneer, which might be appropriate to wood’. She also sees the remarkable three-dimensionality of the carving as an indication that the sculptors may have been originally trained in a wood-working tradition. WILLIAMS 1982, p. 127–128.

\(^{467}\)STADTNER 1980, p. 42.
jamb shows the dwarfish and pot-bellied figure of Kubera, guardian of the northern direction, king of the *yakṣas* and lord of the riches (see Plate 4.3). Kubera is seated in the centre of the panel, with his knees bent and his feet presumably folded below his body. His hands are held in a reassuring gesture (*abhayamudrā*) with the palms facing outwards, but from these palms there appear to spring leaves. Similar leaves form a halo around Kubera’s head, partly covered by a damaged object that is resting on the head. The object has traces of petal-like shapes; taking this into account along with the halo of leaves and the leaves from his palms, the crowning object may be a lotus flower. Despite sitting so prominently in the centre, Kubera is not the main focus of attention in this register. As can be inferred from the body language of the surrounding attendants, that position is taken up by the *liṅga* above Kubera’s head, of which only part of the shaft remains. Six attending figures are positioned in the background, carrying a flower garland and other treasures. Three on the left side are clearly preserved. At the right side, not
many details have survived, but one can still recognize the upper body of one attendant and the feet of the two others. The attendants have their head tilted upwards, looking, as it were, towards the point where the tip of the liṅga used to be. Slightly behind Kubera’s shoulders, two more attendants are sitting in a kneeling position with their backs towards the public, paying homage to the liṅga. Perhaps the panel expresses Kubera’s devotion to Śiva, as was concluded by Chakravarty. The Kubera register is separated from the one below by makaras with elephant trunks and fish-like bodies.

Opposite Kubera, on the right (northern) door jamb, there is a scene of Śiva and Pārvatī on Mount Kailāsa (see Plate 4.4). In the centre of this panel, Śiva is sitting in a posture of royal ease (ardhaparyāṅka) on one of the mountain peaks. Pārvatī sits on his lap, with her upper body in the embrace of his arms (umāmahēśvaramūrti). Unfortunately, both their heads are missing, but the way Pārvatī leans backwards gives the clear impression that she looked up at him. Śiva is four-armed here; one of his right arms

Plate 4.4: Śiva and Pārvatī on Mount Kailāsa

is resting on his knee, the other is curled around Pārvatī’s shoulders. He keeps his balance by leaning on the rocks with one of his left hands, while holding an attribute that could be an axe in the other. At their right side stands a female attendant who carries a fly-whisk made of a yak’s tail. Śiva’s humped bull lies next to her on the rocks of the Kailāsa Mountain. The divine couple is surrounded by cheerful gaṇas and, on the far right of this entourage, one can find a tiger’s head with a flower cap, perhaps representing Pārvatī’s mount (vāhana).

\footnote{Chakravarty 1992, pp. 129–130.}
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

The two second registers both have a large kūrtimukha, face of glory, projecting far out from the background (see Plate 4.5). Their location just above eye level increases their impressiveness. Facing each other and looking deep into each other’s piercing eyes, the kūrtimukhas make their appearance from an intricate foliate pattern; every detail, from the bulging eyes to the monstrous snout, consists of small leaves. This latter aspect makes them truly extraordinary and Stadtner is right in stating that there is no match for these kūrtimukhas in contemporary northern India.469

On both jambs, the register below the kūrtimukhas is subdivided into three parallel compartments: small frames on the outer sides and a larger panel in the middle. The compartments are separated by bands of leaves and flowers. The figures that occupy the compartments on the left door jamb are usually

![Plate 4.5: Southern (left) kūrtimukha](image)


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described as depicting seated loving couples (*mithunas*). The small outer frames do indeed show a loving couple, embracing and touching each other (see Plate 4.6). They are seated on small round stools, again adorned with leaves and flowers. The right frame is severely damaged, but all details of the left frame are still visible. The larger panel in the middle shows a similar scene, but here the amorous couple is surrounded by three more figures. The woman is sitting at the man’s right side and he has his arm wrapped around her shoulder, while touching her breast with his left hand. The woman makes a modest gesture with her right hand and her left hand rests on the man’s shoulder. In the background, two more women seem to be engaged in the love scene: the man is held from behind by one of them and the other one looks upon the amorous gestures of the couple from behind the seated woman’s right shoulder. The damaged lower body of a small fifth figure is visible in the lower right corner of the frame.

The small outer frames on the right jamb are packed with *gaṇas* (see Plate 4.7). There are five *gaṇas* in the left frame and six in the right frame. The *gaṇa* in the upper right corner of the left frame is holding a chowrie; the others seem to hold several objects as well, but the details are not clear. The

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gañas on the right are taking care of Śiva’s bull, who is cuddled and appeased in the foreground of the frame. What they all have in common is the way they look attentively at what is happening in the middle compartment. A man is sitting there in ardhaparyaṇka pose on a small platform. His front left arm rests in his lap and with the remains of a back left arm he leans on a small table in the back. Thus it appears that the man originally was

Plate 4.7: Šiva and Pārvatī playing dice
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four-armed. A lady sits at his left hand with her legs folded to the right and she leans on the same small table in the back. On the floor, in front of them, is a more or less square object that seems to be subdivided. The panel depicts Śiva and Pārvatī playing dice. Behind Pārvatī stands a female attendant with a fly-whisk in her right hand, perhaps to collect Pārvatī’s profit.

The large registers at the bottom of the two door jambs are quite intriguing. Although they are badly damaged, what remains is enough to see at first glance that the central figure on both jambs is a woman standing elegantly with her entourage (see Plates 4.8 and 4.9). This feature, together with the figures’ location at the base of the doorway, has caused people to identify them as the river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā guarding the entrance.\(^{471}\) The only different view is held by Chakravarty, who argues that the two female figures both represent Gaṅgā, only not in her function as door guardian. According to him, the two bottom registers show episodes from the myth of Gaṅgā’s descent to earth.\(^{472}\) The mythology tells us that she was brought down from heaven to earth by the prayers of Bhagiratha, to cleanse the ashes of the 60,000 sons of Sagara, king of Ayodhyā, and to revive them. To protect the earth from the impact of her descent, Śiva cushioned Gaṅgā’s fall by catching her in his hair.\(^{473}\) Chakravarty ‘reads’ the registers from right to left. The woman on the right door jamb, surrounded by several gaṇa-like figures, would show Gaṅgā when she revives Sagara’s sons from their ashes. They tumble around her, elated because of their revival. The small figure standing slightly behind Gaṅgā, partly hidden by the object in his arms, would be Bhagiratha with the widening column of water from which the goddess appeared in his hands. The male figure on Gaṅgā’s left side would be Bhagiratha again, this time guiding her to Pātañla, where she could find the ashes of Sagara’s sons. According to Chakravarty, the procession of Gaṅgā, Bhagiratha and the sons of Sagara (sagaraputrakas) continues on the left


\(^{472}\) Chakravarty 1992, pp. 133–134.

\(^{473}\) Sagara’s sons were reduced to ashes in the netherworld by the angry glance of the sage Kapila, who was disturbed in his meditation by their impious and disrespectful behavior. Bhagiratha was Sagara’s great-grandson and he performed his austerities because Kapila had told, that he would be able to lift the curse from his ancestors if he convinced the gods to let Gaṅgā flow on earth to purify their souls. See for example Skandapurāṇa SPa, 126–128 in Törzsök 2001 and Mahābhārata 3.105–108.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Plate 4.8: Female figure at the left (southern) base
Plate 4.9: Female figure at the right (northern) base
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

door jamb. Here, the female figure is standing in the centre, accompanied by a female attendant at her left side. She is dressed in a garment, part of which is visible on her left shoulder. The female attendant also wears a long garment and her bun is adorned with small flowers. The women are surrounded by several smaller and presumably male figures. The garland of flowers above their heads is carried by flying vidyādharas that accompany them.474

Chakravarty’s view on the iconography of the bottom registers is coloured by his interpretation of the doorway’s lintel. The scenes at the base of the doorway would culminate in the lintel’s depiction of Śiva receiving Gaṅgā in his hair (gaṅgādharamūrti). Hence, the whole doorway would basically revolve around this myth. As we will see below, however, Chakravarty’s interpretation of the scene on the lintel is questionable and, therefore, one may also question his view on the bottom scenes. Setting aside for now the overall theme of Gaṅgā’s downfall, a river goddess could still be what is depicted on the left jamb. It is unfortunate that the lower half of the compartment is too damaged to recognize anything, let alone provide any insight in the potential presence of a mount (vāhana). There is, however, a branch of leaves at the left of where the woman’s head used to be, and the presence of a tree is an original element of the iconography of river goddesses (see Plate 4.8).475 An identification of the woman as ‘just’ a river goddess would only make sense, however, if a second river goddess is represented in the mirroring compartment.

Looking at the right jamb, a flaw in Chakravarty’s interpretation is that the two figures he identifies as Bhagıratha are completely different in their appearance, which makes it rather unlikely that they indeed represent the same person (see Plate 4.9). As for the identity of the woman, the male attendant at her left may hold a clue. Upon closer inspection, his head seems to be that of an animal; the shape of the ears and the elongation of the lower part of the head give the impression that he could be goat-headed. Among the animal-headed figures in Śiva’s entourage, Naigesamā is the one with the goat’s head.476 In the narrative of Skanda’s birth, there is a

476 The splitting of Skanda into various forms has already been mentioned in the context of Tāla in the previous chapter (p. 119). Naigesamā is one of the beings that was split off from him. A second goat-headed figure related to Śiva is Dakṣa, the father of Śiva’s first wife Satī. He insulted his son-in-law by not including him in his sacrifice and ended
moment in which Skanda is approached by Śiva, Pārватī, Agni, Gaṅgā, Svāhā and the Krśṭikās. He uses his different forms to greet them simultaneously and Naigameśa is the one who greets Gaṅgā.477 Could this doorway frame represent Gaṅgā with Naigameśa? And instead of a ‘widening column of water’, could the object in the arms of the small figure behind the woman be a cornucopia (horn of plenty), to symbolize Gaṅgā’s fertility?478 We know that the figure of Naigameśa was familiar to the artists of Tāḷā, for another image of him, bearing a staff, is still in situ at the left side of the steps leading up to the Devarāṇī’s entrance (see Plate 4.10). In the doorway scene, the object in the hands of ‘Naigameśa’ is damaged and difficult to discern, but it could be a (crooked) stick on which he leans.479 Lacking further support, the questions remain loose ends, but clearly there is more going on here – and therefore presumably also in the left compartment – than a river goddess guarding the doorway.

The lintel of the Devarāṇī doorway is divided into an upper and lower half by an intricate pattern of leaves and flowers (see Plate 4.1). In the centre of the upper half of the lintel, a woman is sitting in a lotus seat (padmāsana) up with the head of the sacrificial goat after he was decapitated by Vīrabhadra. For a full account on this myth in the different Puraṇas, cf. Kramrisch 1981, pp. 301–340. Daksā does not seem to be a likely option here, however, for one would expect him to be accompanied by Śiva or Vīrabhadra instead of by a prominent female figure.


478 The cornucopia or ‘horn of plenty’ (nīḍhiśṛṇga) refers to a horn filled with grain, fruit and flowers. It is a shared symbol of goddesses related to fertility, fortune and abundance. Hārīti is for example often depicted with a cornucopia in her arms, and a female figure with a cornucopia on some of the Gupta coins is identified by Raven as Śrī-Lakṣṇī, goddess of royal fortune. Raven 2010. According to Chandra, the horn may have symbolized water as well. Chandra 1966, p. 11.

479 There are also traces of a staff-like object on the upper body and right shoulder of the woman.
on a lotus flower (see Plate 4.11). She wears ornaments around her neck and upper arms, and the remains of a lotus stalk are visible in her left hand. She is flanked by four elephants, two of which are facing towards her with uplifted trunks. Details are missing, but presumably the elephants sprinkle her with water from vessels held in their trunks. The other two elephants are facing away from her, to receive the new jars of water carried by female attendants. The woman is Laks̄mī, goddess of fortune and prosperity. The motif of her consecration (abhiṣeka) by elephants is called gajalaks̄mī. Laks̄mī’s abhiṣeka is witnessed by heavenly creatures carrying flower garlands on the outer sides of the scene.

The lower half of the lintel has led to several very different interpretations, though none have been argued convincingly. In the centre stands a four-armed man, who seems to touch the woman standing on his left side (see Plate 4.12). On his right side he is accompanied by a man who bears a staff in his left arm and makes a giving (varadā) gesture with his right hand. The three are flanked by two male attendants, who carry staffs in their right arms. They are standing in an ābhāṅga posture, with the left hand on their waist,
4. Iconography of the Doorway to Śiva’s Abode

and have the locks of their matted hair tied up in a crown. The two men and
the woman in the centre are separated from the flanking attendants by the
protomes of two elephants. The tails of the elephants seem to grow upwards,
into the stalks of the flowers and leaves
that divide the upper and lower part of
the lintel. On the outer sides of the
male attendants are the protomes of two
makaras, with bulging eyes, claws and
bared teeth (see Plate 4.13).

Stadtner was the first who gave an
interpretation of this part of the door-
way’s lintel. According to him, the four-
armed man in the centre is Śiva in his
kaṅkālamūrti, Śiva in penance for killing
a brahmin.480 As mentioned in the previ-
ous chapter, the earliest extant version of the story of Śiva as a brahmin-slayer
is told in the ‘Kapālin Cycle’ of the original Skandapurāṇa. In response to
Brahmā’s boast that he is the source, the creator and the controller of the
world and all beings, Śiva’s proxy Nilalohita chops off Brahmā’s fifth head
with the nail of his left thumb. After his decapitation, Brahmā asks Nilalohita
to take the skull of the severed head with him on his wanderings, which he
does using the skull (kapāla) as a begging bowl.481 In the Kūrmapurāṇa
the story continues with Śiva going on a pilgrimage to Vārānasī. On the
way he kills the doorkeeper of Viṣṇu named Viṣvaksena. He carries the
corpse of Viṣvaksena and the skull of Brahmā with him to Vārānasī.482 The
kaṅkālamūrti of Śiva refers to the part of the story where Śiva is carrying
the corpse (kaṅkāla). So far, the earliest examples of the use of this icono-
graphic form of Śiva occur in Pallava monuments dating to around 700 AD
and later.483 If Stadtner’s interpretation is correct, the lintel of the Devarāṇi’s
doorway would be the earliest example. However, since there is no recogniz-
able corpse on the shoulders of the four-armed man, his interpretation is
questionable.484

Chakravarty connects the lower part of the lintel to the myth of Gaṅgā’s

481 Bakker 2014a, pp. 166–167. See also Chapter 3, p. 129.
482 Kūrmapurāṇa II.31.
484 Stadtner 1980, p. 44.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala
descent to earth. He identifies the four-armed man in the centre as Śiva in his gaṅgādhamūrti, Śiva controlling the downfall of the Gaṅgā river with his hair to protect the earth from the shock of her descent. According to Chakravarty, the lintel depicts the part of the story where Śiva releases Gaṅgā and she appears as a column of water from his locks of matted hair. The man on Śiva’s right side would be Bhagiratha, whose prayers are the reason why Gaṅgā falls from heaven to earth. Pārvatī is standing on Śiva’s left side and needs to be appeased because she is jealous of Śiva’s affection for Gaṅgā. When Śiva is depicted in his gaṅgādhamūrti, he usually holds one lock of his matted hair in one of his hands. From this lock in his hand, Gaṅgā appears. The four-armed man in the centre of the lintel does not hold a lock of hair in his hand. Also, the object extending on both sides of the man’s head does not seem to appear from his hair, and it does not look like a column of water.

Nigam propounds yet another, third, interpretation. According to him, the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (kalyāṇasundaramūrti) is engraved in the lower portion of the lintel. The four-armed man would be Śiva, with Pārvatī as his wife-to-be on his left side. Nigam does not specify the reasons behind his identification, but perhaps he thought that the man with the varadā gesture at Śiva’s right side was giving away the bride. However, an interpretation of the scene as Śiva and Pārvatī’s wedding ceremony also does not explain the object on both sides of the four-armed man’s head. To render justice to this latter detail, a fourth interpretation is required.

It is quite obvious that the four-armed man in the centre is Śiva, since the iconography of the whole doorway is Śaivite in nature. The arms of the god are all damaged, but enough traces remain to see that he reaches for the woman on his left side with his front left arm (see Plate 4.14). The back left arm is lifted up towards the object next to his head. His front right hand is placed on his waist and the back right arm, presumably, also reaches for the object near his head. Upon closer inspection of the part of the object above Śiva’s left shoulder, one can identify the head of an elephant. The protuberance on the elephant’s forehead (kumbha) is visible and also

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485 Chakravarty 1992, p. 133.
486 Nigam 2000b, p. 51. In representations of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, the bride is often depicted at the right side of the bridegroom, whereas Pārvatī’s normal (married) position is at Śiva’s left side. As we will see below, however, this does not seem to be a fixed rule and there are examples of the marriage scene with Pārvatī standing at Śiva’s left side.
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the first part of the trunk (see Plate 4.15). The head of the elephant dangles above Śiva’s left shoulder and the hide disappears behind his head, to become visible again at the right side of the head.

A (blood-dripping) elephant hide in Śiva’s arms raised victoriously above his head is the common characteristic of two iconographic types: the depic-

Plate 4.14: Central figure on the lower lintel
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Plate 4.15: Śiva’s elephant hide trophy

The image shows a sculptural representation of Śiva in the act of killing the demon Andhaka (anḍhakāśurasamhāramūrti) and Śiva as slayer of the elephant demon (gajasamhāramūrti). The first type is a familiar one, for it has already been discussed at the end of the previous chapter in connection with the four sculptures from Sirpur depicting this type. Starting with the famous Elephanta sculpture, the Andhaka motif became very popular in northern India from the sixth century onwards.

There are also a very few images of a dancing Śiva with the elephant hide, but the normal attribute for Śiva to raise above his head in the nṛttamūrti is a cobra snake. Cf. Melzer 2002 Teil 1, p. 105.

Melzer 2009. For a complete study on this motif, cf. Melzer 2002. Melzer refers to, but does not include, a Vākāṭaka image from Mandhal, dated to ca. 400 AD. Bakker has conjectured to identify this image as an anḍhakāśurasamhāramūrti, which would mean that it would be the oldest extant example. Bakker 1997, pp. 107–109 and plates ix–x. The main reason for Melzer not to include the Mandhal image was that this image is very different in appearance compared to all the others, and the fact that it’s not complete and therefore only a tentative identification is possible. Melzer 2002 Teil 1, p. 63 note 293. However, the fact that this image is different in appearance is no reason to rule it out, for given the date, the image would really be the result of experimenting with a new motif, whereas it seems that beginning with the Elephanta panel, the iconographic scheme...
That it was a well-known and often used motif in Daksīṇa Kosala as well, will be clear from the remainder of this chapter. The second type is confined to the iconographic tradition of southern India and areas influenced by the south. It is also a relatively late type, for the first examples only start to appear from the eight century onwards. Śiva is usually depicted in a dancing posture; he holds the hide of the defeated elephant demon as a trophy in his uplifted arms, while his dancing feet trample on the elephant’s head.\(^{489}\) Contrary to the Andhaka myth, there is no evident mythological precedent that explains the iconographic type. There are references to stories in several later Purāṇas,\(^ {490}\) but due to their inconsistency van Buitenen suggests that these stories may be a reanalysis of an existing icon.\(^ {491}\)

Going back to the image on the Devarāṇī lintel, and considering the different use of the elephant hide in the two iconographic types, the distinctive feature seems to be that the elephant’s head is still attached to the hide raised above Śiva’s head and not trampled under his feet. Taking this into account, together with the different developments of the two iconographic types geographically and temporally, an identification as gajāsurasamhāra-mūrti is ruled out. An identification as andhakāsurasvadhamūrti is problematic as well, however, for there is no trace of the demon Andhaka pierced on Śiva’s weapon and Śiva is not standing in the characteristic posture, with a stretched right leg and a bent left leg, as if ready to attack. So the question remains, what is represented on the lintel?

The fifth-century poet Kālidāsa draws a powerful image of Śiva with a bloody elephant hide raised above his head in the Meghadūta, without explicitly relating that image to one of the two iconographic types. When

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\(^{489}\) Melzer 2002.

\(^{490}\) In the Kūrmapurāṇa I.32.15–18 it is told that a demon assumed the form of an elephant near a linga of Śiva and attacked the Brāhmaṇas who were worshipping Śiva there. To protect the Brāhmaṇas, Śiva appeared out of the linga and he killed the elephant demon with his trident. He made a robe of the elephant hide, and therefore Śiva was called Kṛttivāsēvara. In the Varāhamūrti 27.15–19 it is told that – when Śiva was preparing himself for his battle against the demon Andhaka – an asura named Nīla secretly planned to kill Śiva and appeared in the form of an elephant. Nandān came to know the evil plans of the demon and he warned Śiva’s army chief Virabhadra. This Virabhadra took the form of a lion and killed Nīla. He handed over the hide of the elephant to Śiva. In the Padmapurāṇa I.25.16 Śiva is referred to as someone who caused the destruction of the demon Gaja (elephant).

\(^{491}\) Van Buitenen 1963.
the Yakṣa describes the view of Ujjayini to the Cloud, he compares the red twilight glow of the cloud settling above the lofty trees of the forest with the blood-red elephant hide in Pasupati’s uplifted arms. By creating the red nimbus, the cloud would take away Śiva’s desire for fresh elephant hide and remove the fear from his consort’s eyes.⁴⁹² According to van Buitenen, the reference to Śiva’s elephant hide connected to the description of Ujjayini could perhaps indicate that there was a relation between Ujjayini and the gajasurasamhāramūrti of Śiva.⁴⁹³ Based on what is said above about the geographical and temporal development of this iconographic type, it would make more sense if Kālidāsa had an image in mind of Śiva destroying Andhaka when he composed the poem. Or perhaps even more likely, an image of Śiva’s ferocious form (Bhairava) unconnected to either iconographic type.⁴⁹⁴

The elephant hide is also used to emphasize the differences between Śiva and Pārvatī in Kālidāsa’s Kumārasambhava 5.66: Śiva’s elephant hide, which showers drops of blood, forms a great contrast to Pārvatī’s bridal garment made of fine cloth and beautifully adorned with swans.⁴⁹⁵ This verse is part of the episode in which Śiva, disguised as a brahmin ascetic, puts Devī through a test, asking her how Śiva and Pārvatī could ever match. It was suggested to me by Peter Bisschop (in a personal communication) that the scene on the Devarāṇi lintel may be connected to this episode. The person on Śiva’s right side with the matted hair (jaṭila) and the staff would then be Śiva in the disguise of an ascetic (as described in Kumārasambhava 5.29) pointing out Śiva’s strange features to Pārvatī on Śiva’s left side. Taking all the elements of the scene into account, the connection with the episode from the Kumārasambhava seems to fit very well indeed, and in my opinion this is the best identification of what is represented on the Devarāṇi lintel.

⁴⁹² Meghadūta 36.
⁴⁹³ Van Buitenen 1963.
⁴⁹⁴ This could even have been a dancing image of Bhairava, for the reference to the elephant hide in the Meghadūta is mentioned at the scene of Śiva’s dancing. Images of a dancing Śiva with the elephant hide are rare (see note 487) and the four examples mentioned by Melzer all date to a later period, but perhaps the sculptors were inspired by an earlier source. Cf. Melzer 2002 Teil 1, pp. 105–106 and Teil 2, plates N1–N4.
⁴⁹⁵ Two more references can be found in Kumārasambhava 5.77 and 7.32.
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MALHĀR: THE DEUR DOORWAY

Among the heap of rubble and architectural fragments of the ruined Deur temple in Malhār, the conservators found pieces of the doorway that were rather intact. In addition to the lintel and both door jambs, there are sculpted images of male door guardians and the river goddesses Yamunā and Gaṅgā, all standing on fat-bellied load-bearers. These fragments, dated tentatively to the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century, were rebuilt into the ruin during the restoration activities (see Plate 4.16). The last piece added was the lintel, which is carved with a row of small figures. There is some slight damage to the right half the lintel, but since the decorations are symmetrical, it does not cause any difficulty for the viewer. The small figurines of Śiva and Pārvatī, sitting arm in arm on the Kailāsa mountain, are depicted in the middle of the lintel. They are flanked by gaṇa-like load-bearers and heavenly creatures (vidyādharas or gandharvas) alternately; the

Plate 4.16: Doorway of the Deur ruin

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Plate 4.17: Left door jamb of the Deur ruin
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Plate 4.18: Right door jamb of the Deur ruin
load-bearers face forward, whereas the heavenly creatures float sideways towards the divine couple. The outer ends of the lintel both show a pair of amorous mithunas.

The decorative reliefs on the Deur door jambs are organized in a similar way as the Devarāṇī door jambs (see Plates 4.17 and 4.18); the inner faces are covered from bottom to top with panel reliefs of diminishing size, framed by floral and foliate patterns. The right jamb is more deteriorated than the left, especially towards the top, where the first panel is badly worn (see Plate 4.19). No details are left, but the overall scene is still recognizable; it shows Śiva and Pārvatī on Mount Kailāśa. They are sitting in ardhaparyāṅka pose on the rocks of one of the mountain peaks, rendered by the checked pattern in the lower right corner. Pārvatī sits on Śiva’s left thigh and she leans back against his shoulder (umāmaheśvaramūrti). The bull mount lies on Śiva’s right side, in the lower left corner of the frame.

The next panel has also lost most of its details (see Plate 4.20). Śiva is depicted here in the act of killing the demon Andhaka (andhakāsurasuravadhamūrti). He is standing in the centre of the frame with the elephant hide raised high above his head. The elephant’s head and front legs dangle on the god’s right side, near his waist. Just above his left shoulder, one can still

Plate 4.19: Śiva and Pārvatī on Kailāśa

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see the outline of a small human figure; this is the demon Andhaka pierced on either a lance or the trident. On Śiva’s damaged chest there is a barely visible trace of the shaft of this weapon. He likely held it firmly in two of his four arms, the other two stretching upwards to hold the hide. The fierceness of Śiva’s appearance is emphasized by his dynamic posture; he holds his right leg steadily on the ground and the left raised a bit to let his foot rest on the back of the dwarfish figure crouching on the ground, representing the demon of ignorance (apasmāra) and therewith Śiva’s supremacy. At the right side of the relief, Pārvatī is sitting on the rocks with her hand pressed to her breast, while gazing at her spouse in awe.

Pārvatī is again a witness to Śiva’s actions in the middle panel, in which he is represented as Naṭarāja, the great king of dance. He is depicted in the centre of the scene with his right knee slightly bent and his left leg raised at the heel, to create the well-known dance posture (see Plate 4.21).496 In the lower left corner of the frame, a little drummer brings forth the rhythm

496 The dance mode exhibited here by Śiva is called the kaṭisamam in the Nāṭyaśāstra. Rao provides a description of this dance mode in connection with the image of the dancing Śiva in Cave 14 at Ellora, depicted in a way similar to the one discussed here. RAO 1968 Volume II Part I, pp. 259–262. According to Williams, this iconographic type became popular in the western Deccan during the sixth century. WILLIAMS 1982, p. 123. For a detailed classification of the different dance modes of the Naṭarāja images, cf. GASTON 1990, pp. 22–46.
to which Śiva can perform his dance, while he looks up at the impressive figure. Between Śiva’s dancing legs, he is accompanied by Bṛṛgīn, whose emaciated body is lost for the greater part, with only his skull-like head and skeletal right arm preserved. Siva’s upper limbs are all badly damaged and their exact number is therefore hard to determine; there are traces of at least six arms, but there may have been up to eight. One of his right hands was placed at his thigh, where still a few fingers can be discerned. He held the cobra snake in the upper left corner with another right hand. With one of his left arms he reaches out to soothe Pārvatī, who sits at his feet in the lower right corner. They are observed by two heavenly creatures, floating above her head.

The next panel is divided in two by a horizontal crack that runs through the entire width of the door jamb (see Plate 4.22). We have seen that the images discussed thus far have suffered quite some damage, but everything depicted beneath the crack is very detailed and well preserved. The fractured panel shows Śiva and Pārvatī in their wedding scene (kalyāṇasundaramūrti). The bride and bridegroom stand side by side in the centre, turned slightly towards each other. They are holding hands, indicating that Śiva already accepted Pārvatī as his bride (pañigrahaṇa). The marital fire is burning between their feet, which may indicate that they are in the process of the saptapadi ritual of circumambulating the fire. Śiva is four-armed, ithypallic (ūrdhvaliṅga) and dressed in a garment of tiger skin, of which the head and claws are visible on his right upper leg. In his back right hand, he holds a serpent, of which only the tail can be seen due to the crack, and he lifts

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497 Pārvatī is standing at Śiva’s left side in this wedding scene, whereas she is commonly depicted at Śiva’s right side in representations of their marriage. This does not seem to be a fixed rule, however, for there are more examples where Pārvatī is depicted at Śiva’s left side. Cf. RAO 1986 Volume II Part I, p. 340 and DONALDSON 2007 Volume 1, p. 127. One example from Daksīṇa Kosala is the kalyāṇasundara frieze on the lintel of the Siddheśvara temple at Palāri, dated to the end of the seventh century. For more examples and a complete overview of representations of the kalyāṇasundara motif, cf. DONALDSON 2007 Volume 1, pp. 124–150 and Volume 2, figures 23–77 and C-8–C-16.

498 In the saptapadi ritual, the bride and bridegroom circumbulate the marital fire in seven steps. Images that depict Śiva and Pārvatī while performing this ritual either show Pārvatī standing in front of Śiva, or depict Śiva and Pārvatī standing side-by-side. In the latter case, the lower body of Śiva is often turned away from Pārvatī, indicating that he is about to lead her in the circumambulation. DONALDSON 2007 Volume 1, pp. 146–150. This is not the case here, though, for the Malhār door jamb shows Śiva and Pārvatī still turned towards each other. According to Donaldson, however, the pāṇigrāhaṇa and saptapadī are not always distinguished that well in sculpture. Ibid., p. 127.
his sacred thread (yajñopavīta) with his front right hand. His back left hand seems to have rested on Pārvatī’s shoulder, while the front one is holding her hand. Pārvatī is dressed in a beautiful sārī and her circular mirror is held up by a dwarfish female attendant standing on her left side. She is given away in marriage by Viṣṇu, who is depicted at Śiva’s right side. Viṣṇu’s role in the wedding is illustrated by the water vessel in his hands, from which he would pour out a libation during the ceremony to symbolize the giving away of the bride. He is only shown from the waist up, with the lower body replaced by a lotus flower. In the foreground, in the lower left corner of the frame, the four-headed Brahmā is kneeling in front of a fire-altar (kuṇḍa). As the officiating priest, he is making the homa sacrifice.\footnote{Cf. Rao 1968 Volume II Part I, pp. 337–352.}

At the bottom of the right door jamb, the ‘divine family’ is gathered on one of the peaks of the Kailāsa mountain (see Plate 4.23). Śiva is sitting on the rocks in a pose midway between ardhaparyāṇka and lalitāsana, with Pārvatī on his left thigh (umāmaheśvaramūrti). She leans back in a relaxed ardhaparyāṇka pose, with her left leg tucked up and her right hand resting on his lower leg. Śiva embraces her with his front left arm, he raises a serpent with the back left hand and carries the trident in the corresponding right hand. With the front right hand, he is again lifting his sacred thread (yajñopavīta), as in the scene before. Śiva’s bull mount is resting with his head on Śiva’s right upper leg. Flanking him on the right side is the small figure of Skanda, Śiva and Pārvatī’s son, sitting on his peacock vehicle. A heavenly creature floats in the sky above Skanda’s head. In the lower register,
a group of *ganas* is playing on the rocks (the one holding his axe up high may be Caṇḍeśa). They are accompanied by Bhrṅgin, who is depicted here four-armed as a deity, perhaps to imply his position as leader of the *ganas*.

He is sitting in the lower left corner of the frame with his legs tucked up and two of his skeletal arms folded around them. The other two arms are raised next to his head, with an unidentified object in each hand.

Moving to the left door jamb of the Deur, there is an important difference in the organization of the iconographic content compared to the right one. Instead of independent representations of Śiva’s different iconographic types, the five panels of the left door jamb together depict one story. By ‘reading’ them from bottom to top, they tell the story of Śiva’s visit to the Pine Forest (Devadāruvana). Mythology tells us that this pine forest was inhabited by many sages and their families. One day, Śiva enters the forest and visits the hermitage disguised as a naked mendicant, besmeared with ashes and with an erect penis, holding out his begging bowl for alms. The women and daughters of the sages become attracted to the stranger and start following him everywhere. Furious with envy, the sages cause Śiva’s penis to fall off by cursing it. When the penis hits the ground, the whole universe becomes disarranged. After seeking help from Brahmā, the sages realize their mistake and they start to praise Śiva and propitiate him by installing a *liṅga* and worshipping it. Śiva is pleased

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500 For a preliminary account on the references to Bhrṅgin as gan- leader (*ganēśa*) in several early sources, cf. BISCHOP 2010b, pp. 243–246.

501 The object in his left back hand looks like a kris, but could also be a bone, since it is shaped similar to Bhrṅgin’s collarbones. In the corresponding right hand, he may hold a *khaṭvāṅga*. 
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Plate 4.24: Śiva entering the Devadārwana
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

with this turn of events and the order of the universe becomes restored. The above is only an outline of the story, for, as is usually the case with myths, there are many different versions. What is important in the present context, however, is that the earliest surviving version of the myth can be found in the Nepalese recension of the Skandapurāṇa.

Turning to the representation of the myth on the door jamb, it begins at the bottom with a panel showing Śiva’s entrance into the Pine Forest (i.e. the Devadāruvana). Śiva is depicted on the left side of the scene (see Plate 4.24), wandering about for alms (bhiksātanamūrti). In his left hand he holds out an alms bowl and he carries a brush made out of peacock feathers in his right hand. His penis is erect (ārdhvalīṅga), but he is not completely naked; the head, tail and claws of his tiger skin garment are visible on his upper legs. Two women of the hermitage come from between the trees on the right side of the scene. They seem to be intrigued by Śiva’s appearance and especially the woman on the right may have assumed a somewhat enticing pose by grasping the tree. The left woman is accompanied by a small figure, presumably one of her children.

The next panel shows Śiva in the same posture, again ithyphallic and with the same attributes (see Plate 4.25). This time, however, he is confronted with a group of angry sages instead of a couple of beautiful women. The sages, sculpted with emaciated bodies, approach Śiva aggressively; two of them raise their arms to chase him away and the one in the upper right corner even holds a stick to throw at him.

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503 Bisschop 2004, p. 72 and Bisschop 2006, pp. 11–12 & 195–196. In this S recension of the Skandapurāṇa, the Devadāruvana is listed as one of Śiva’s sanctuaries on earth, and the myth is only touched upon in that context (SPs 167.72–80). A much longer account is given in the Revākhandā and Ambikākhandā manuscripts, where it takes up sixty-four verses instead of nine (SPs 3.36–109). The myth also features prominently in most of the later Purāṇas, which provide different and often conflicting versions. In the end, though, they all explain the origin of līṅga worship at the site. Bisschop 2009, p. 750. Cf. Donaldson 1987 Volume III, pp. 1098–1099 and Donaldson 2007 Volume 1, pp. 51–55.

504 This brush made out of peacock feathers was one of the few common possessions carried by mendicants and, presumably therefore, it is a common attribute for Śiva when he is depicted in his bhiksātanamūrti. Donaldson 1986 and Donaldson 1987 Volume III, pp. 1099–1102. Cf. Bakker & Bisschop 2016, pp. 230–231, note 24.
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The same sages are depicted in the third panel with a completely changed attitude (see Plate 4.26). They have their hands folded in a respectful āñjali gesture and seem to be praising the male figure in front of them. This figure can, presumably, be identified as Śiva and the woman behind him as Pārvatī.

![Plate 4.25: Śiva assaulted by the sages](image1)  ![Plate 4.26: Śiva praised by the sages](image2)

The rocks underneath Pārvatī’s feet indicate that they are on the Kailāṣa mountain; Śiva likely returned to his home when he left the Devadāruvana after his penis had fallen off. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Śiva is no longer depicted (ithy)phallic. The sages have come to honor him in the hope that he will restore the order of the universe.

The following panel is a bit of a puzzle; two big elephants move about in what seems to be water and the sages from the previous scenes surround them (see Plate 4.27). They seem to touch the legs, trunk and head of the front elephant. A solution may be found in the version of the myth as told in the Vāmanapurāṇa. According to this text, the sages, after propitiating Śiva, were instructed to return to the Devadāruvana and to reestablish Śiva’s penis (liṅga) at Lake Sannihatya, where they should worship it. But the sages were unable to move the liṅga from the forest, so they come back to the Kailāṣa mountain to seek Śiva’s help. When they can’t find him, Pārvatī directs
them to a lake where Śiva is immersed in the form of an elephant. In this
form he joins the sages to the Devadāruvana, where he places the liṅga on
the western side of the lake.\footnote{Vāmanapurāṇa Saromāhātmya 22.41–86 and 23.1–34. DONALDSON 1986, pp. 53–54.} The panel may represent the moment when
the sages come to seek help from Śiva, who is immersed in the lake.

The fifth and last panel, at the top, is divided in two halves by a pattern
of rocks and water (see Plate 4.28). In the lower half the sages bid farewell
to Śiva and Pārvatī, who are seated on the humped bull, ready to leave the
Devadāruvana. The upper half shows that liṅga worship (liṅgapūja) has been
established at the site; three sages pay their respect to the installed liṅga by

\textit{Plate 4.27: Śiva in Lake Sannihatya}
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bringing offerings. Therewith, the story is completed. Donaldson identifies an image at the base of the spire on the south side of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple in Bhubaneswar to be the earliest representation of the myth of Śiva’s visit to the Devadāruvana (bhiksātanamūrti). This Paraśurāmeśvara temple is dated to the second quarter of the seventh century, which makes it either slightly later than or approximately contemporaneous to the Deur temple (end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century). Bakker and Bisschop have identified another early representation of the myth on the eastern face of the sixth-century architrave of the Mahādeva temple at Nagarī. This representation, which is divided over four panels, is very similar to the one found in Malhār. This means that the five scenes on the Deur’s left door jamb are among the earliest expressions of the myth in art.

Plate 4.28: Establishment of liṅga worship

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508 BAKKER & BISSCHOP 2016.
The arrangement of the scenes on the left door jamb, to be read as a narrative from bottom to top, raises the question as to whether a similar arrangement can be found on the right one. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any clear-cut answer. The scene at the bottom of the right door jamb represents the ‘divine family’ gathered on the Kailāśa mountain and the scene above that depicts the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī; therefore no logical order can be found from bottom to top, for we would expect the marriage to take place before any family-related event. Another option would be an ordering from top to bottom, which is quite an attractive option, for it opens up the possibility to read the entire doorway as an arch: beginning with the left door jamb from bottom to top, then via the lintel from left to right and ending with the right door jamb from top to bottom. If we leave the lintel and the top right panel out, this actually appears to be a plausible arrangement; it begins with Śiva’s visit to the Devadāruvana, followed by two of his ‘heroic’ representations (slaying Andhaka and dancing), again followed by the marriage scene and then finally the family gathering. However, the plausibility of this arrangement is greatly reduced by the lintel showing Śiva and Pārvatī surrounded by heavenly creatures and a representation of them in love dalliance (umāmaheśvaramūrti) in the top right panel. Consequently, the logic behind the arrangement of the scenes, at least of the right door jamb, remains a puzzle to be solved.

SIRPUR: DOORWAY FRAGMENTS

At an excavation site as extensive as Sirpur, where a staunch supporter of Śaivism held sway for nearly sixty years and numerous temples from this period have been unearthed, one would expect to find at least a few Śaivite doorways. The result is therefore disappointing, for Śivagupta’s heritage did not yield even a single intact doorway of a Śiva temple.509 The only material to work with are a few loose door jambs and some doorway fragments scattered over the site. Notwithstanding their limited number, however, they add to our knowledge of the preference for certain iconographic types in the iconography of the doorway to Śiva’s abodes in Dakṣiṇa Kosala.

509 There are only two complete doorways in Sirpur. One gives access to the Lakṣmaṇa temple and is sculpted with images of Viṣṇu, and the other one is the entrance of the SRP4 monastery discussed in Chapter 3, p. 153, note 439.
4. Iconography of the Doorway to Śiva’s Abode

The Gandharvēśvara Door Jambs

Two of the three loose door jambs can be found in the Gandharvēśvara temple; they are built into the doorway leading to the temple’s inner sanctuary (see Plate 4.29). As this relatively ‘modern’ temple was built and repaired with materials from different ruined temples in the vicinity, the original setting of the door jambs cannot be ascertained. They may have been part of the sixth-century Gandharvēśvara temple referred to in Śivagupta’s stone inscriptions at the same location, but they could just as well have been removed from another deteriorated temple. They could even slightly predate Śivagupta’s reign (ca. 590–650 AD), although on stylistic grounds I would place them around the turn of the sixth century. This dating is based on the

Plate 4.29: Entrance to the sanctum of the Gandharvēśvara temple

\(^{510}\) See Chapter 3, p. 147. The two door jambs could also originate from two different temples for that matter, but considering that they match each other quite perfectly in style, this is very unlikely.
similarities in style and design compared to the doorway of the Lakṣmana temple, which was likely constructed at the time Śivagupta ascended the throne. The two door jambs are organized differently from each other; the one built into the left wall is divided into three small separate frames, whereas the door jamb in the right wall is basically one large frame. Both are supported at the bottom by a load-bearer (see Plate 4.30). The comparison with the Lakṣmana doorway shows that it is likely that the representations on the two door jambs were facing front, with the round floral band that rises from a ‘vase of plenty’ (pūrṇakuṁbha) at the inner side. This means that in their original setting, the two jambs were the other way around; the one built into the right wall was the left door jamb and the one in the left wall was the right door jamb when entering the temple.

The left door jamb (i.e. in the right wall) represents the myth of Rāvana, king of the rākṣasas, shaking the Kailāsa mountain with Śiva and Pārvatī on it (rāvaṇānugrahamūrti). According to mythology, Rāvana once came to this mountain when he visited the place where Skanda was born (Śaravaṇa). When he tries to cross it, he is halted by Nandiśvara, a dwarfish and bald-headed figure with the face of a monkey. Nandiśvara tells him that he is not allowed to continue his travels, for Śiva and Pārvatī are frolicking on the mountain and therefore nobody is allowed to go up there. Rāvana is furious and asks what exactly the nature of this god is, to order him around. Nandiśvara is offended by this and curses Rāvana that he will be destroyed by monkeys like himself. Terribly annoyed, the king of rākṣasas lifts up the mountain and shakes it violently, causing Pārvatī to flee into Śiva’s arms out of fear.
4. Iconography of the Doorway to Śiva’s Abode

Śiva then presses the mountain back down with his great toe, thus capturing Rāvana underneath it. Only after Rāvana sings Śiva’s praises for a thousand years does the god finally let him go.\footnote{This version of the myth is told in the Uttarakaṇḍa of Vālmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa, chapter 7.16. Cf. Nath Sharma 1973 and Donaldson 2007 Volume 1, pp. 44–46. The story is part of Agastya’s narrative on the previous exploits of Rāvana and his ancestors (sargas 1–36), which is considered to be an interpolation. Brockington 1998, pp. 377–397. There are also references to the myth in the works of Kālidāsa, namely Meghadūta 58, Raghuvamśa 4.80 & 12.89 and Kumārasambhava 8.24. In the Skandapurāṇa, the monkey face of Nandiśvara is mentioned in a myth that explains how Amrātakēśvara became a sanctuary. It is said that when the goddess turned Nandin’s face into that of a monkey, Bhava, Ambā and Nandin all laughed. From their triple laughter, a woman was born with the lustre of the full moon. The event took place at Amrātaka, where her moonlight will always be present. Skandapurāṇa SPra 4.27–52 in Bisschop 2006.}

The representation of the narrative covers the whole door jamb (see Plate 4.31). The upper half shows Śiva and Pārvatī on a mountain peak, accompanied by their sons and Śiva’s mount. Śiva sits in the familiar ardhaparyaṇka pose with Pārvatī on his left thigh, thus creating an image similar to the umāmahēśvara scenes discussed in this chapter. What is different here is the manner in which Pārvatī has both arms around Śiva’s neck; in an umāmahēśvara context, this could be a loving embrace, but in the rāvaṇānugrahamūrti the gesture is usually ascribed to Pārvatī’s fearful reaction when the mountain starts to quake.\footnote{Cf. Rao 1968 Volume II Part I, pp. 217–220, Kala 1988, pp. 38–42 and Donaldson 2007 Volume 1, pp. 171–195 and Volume 2, figures 95–134 and C-26–C-29.} Śiva is four-armed and he carries two attributes in his back hands; they are worn and difficult to recognize, but the one in his right hand may be the trident and the one in his left a cobra snake. His right foot rests on the back of the bull that lies beneath him on the rocks. Skanda on his peacock and the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa are depicted respectively below Pārvatī and the bull. In the middle register, an ascetic figure with a beard and matted hair is looking up towards Śiva while folding his hands in an aṇjali gesture (see Plate 4.32). This suggests that he is one of Śiva’s devotees, paying homage to the god. Opposite him, a small and bald-headed figure carries a stick-like object over his right shoulder. My first inclination was to identify this figure as Nandiśvara, whose dwarfish appearance is emphasized by his small size relative to the ascetic figure.\footnote{The figure is not obviously monkey-faced, but his mouth seems to be a bit pronounced and his ears may be rather large for a human face.} Another identification was suggested to me by Hans Bakker (in a personal communication), namely that the figure may represent a second type of Śaiva ascetic referred
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Plate 4.31: Rāvana shaking Kailāsa

to as dīṇīn or dīṇīka. The ascetics of this latter type have been described as cynic and roguish mendicants, quite unlike the venerable devotee type described above. They have a shaved appearance and carry a stick (daṇḍa)
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Plate 4.32: Detail of the Rāvana story

Plate 4.33: Rāvana under Kailāsa

as an attribute, which would correspond to the figure in Śiva’s entourage on the door jamb. In Rāvana is depicted again at the bottom as a multi-headed and multi-armed demon (see Plate 4.33). He has at least three heads and there are four arms visible. With the two back arms he is trying to lift the mountain above his head and he carries a sword diagonally in front of his chest with the two front hands.

As mentioned above, the right door jamb (i.e. the one built into the left wall in the Gandharvesvara temple) is organized in a different way. It is


515In the Rāmāyaṇa myth Rāvana receives this sword from Śiva after he was released from underneath the mountain. The manner in which he is holding the sword in this image, that is to say with both hands, may seem atypical, but a comparison with other images that represent the rāvaṇāṇugrahamārti shows that it may actually be a rather characteristic element of the motif. Cf. Donaldson 2007 Volume 1, pp. 171–195 and Volume 2, figures 106, 108, 113, 114, 116–121 and 129.
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divided into three frames of equal size, separated by a band of flowers (see Plate 4.30). The top frame shows the six-armed figure of a dancing Śiva (nr-ttamūrti). He is depicted in the lalita dance mode (see Plate 4.34), with his front left arm in the characteristic gajahasta. This posture is a familiar one, for we already saw it in the previous chapter in the two Sirpur images of the dancing Śiva. The details of the image are worn, but Śiva may be ithyphallic (ūrdhvalīṅga) and he is performing his dance on a lotus pedestal. With both back arms he raises a cobra snake in the air, where it forms a halo around his head. Pārvatī is looking up at her spouse from the lower right corner of the frame. She is sitting on a lotus pedestal and Śiva gently touches her cheek in a soothing gesture with the hand of his middle left arm. Except for the one holding the snake, the right arms are worn beyond recognition and no objects or hand gestures can be discerned. On the ground, between the two lotus pedestals, a little figure can be distinguished; this may be the demon of

Plate 4.34: Dancing Śiva
Plate 4.35: Śiva slaying Andhaka

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ignorance (*apasmāra*). Skanda, on his peacock is also present, he is depicted above Pārvatī’s head.

In the middle frame, a four-armed Śiva is depicted in the act of slaying the demon Andhaka (*andhakāsuravadhamūrti*). He has the demon pierced on the tip of his lance, with the hands of his two front arms firmly around the shaft (see Plate 4.35). With the two back arms he raises the elephant hide above his head. Śiva’s left foot is placed on the back of his bull mount, who lies beneath him at his feet and looks up at him. Slightly behind the bull, in the lower right corner of the frame, a little female figure also has her face turned upwards. Based on the fact that her attention is focused on Śiva, and not on the pierced demon, it is likely that this woman is Pārvatī, looking at her fierce spouse in awe.\(^{516}\)

At the bottom of the door jamb, Śiva is accompanied by two female figures (see Plate 4.36). The women are standing on the right side of the frame, one slightly behind the other. The woman in the back is peeking over the front woman’s shoulder. Based on their body language, they seem to be interested in Śiva’s appearance. He is depicted on the left side of the frame with his left hand held out a bit towards the women. In his right hand he holds a mendicant’s brush made out of peacock feathers, which he carries over his shoulder. The composition of the scene resembles the one at the bottom of the left Malhār door jamb; the one showing Śiva’s entrance into the Devadārūvana disguised as a mendicant and attracting the local women. Moreover, due to the disguise, the *bhiksāṭanamūrti* is one of

\(^{516}\) If her attention was focused on the pierced demon above her, she should be identified as a *yogeśvarī* or Mother, like we saw in the image of Śiva slaying Andhaka from the house of excavator A. K. Sharma (see Chapter 3, p. 170, Plate 3.70).
the few iconographic types in which Śiva is depicted with only two arms.\textsuperscript{517} Therefore, I propose that the scene be likewise identified as a representation of Śiva’s visit to the Devadāruvana.\textsuperscript{518} This Sīrpur image may therefore be one of the earliest expressions of the myth in art, for the door jamb certainly predates the Malhār door jamb and the image in the Paraśurāmeśvara temple in Bhubaneswar, and it may either predate or be contemporary with the representation on the architrave from Nagari.\textsuperscript{519}

\textit{The Suraṅga Tīla Door Jamb}

The third door jamb is similar in style to the two built into the Gandharveśvara temple, and therefore likely dates to the same period as well. It has been recovered during the more recent excavations performed by Sharma and is placed today on the \textit{adhiṣṭhāna} of the Suraṅga Tīla (see Plate 4.37).\textsuperscript{520} The door jamb is again divided into three equally sized frames, separated by a band of flowers. If we follow the comparison made above with the Lakṣmaṇa temple, and assume that the representations were facing front with the floral band on the inner side of the doorway, then the door jamb will have been positioned left of the entrance.

The frame at the top shows an image of Śiva and Pārvatī, standing side by side (see Plate 4.38). Śiva is depicted in \textit{tribhaṅga} stance, with his head, upper body and lower body curving in opposite directions. With his front left arm he casually leans on Pārvatī’s right shoulder, who is standing in \textit{dvibhaṅga} pose on his left side. The hand of his back left arm is visible on her left shoulder, indicating that he has that arm draped around her. Pārvatī’s upper body is slightly turned away from Śiva as she looks up at him. With her lowered right hand she touches the garment on his thighs in a somewhat enticing way. Based on this element, the image can be identified as an \textit{āniṅgana-candraśekharamūrti} of Śiva and Pārvatī, in which the grasping of

\textsuperscript{518}Śiva’s figure is too worn to recognize whether he is ithyphallic, but that is what one would expect, since it is an essential element of the story.  
\textsuperscript{519}Cf. Bakker & Bisschop 2016. The resemblance to the Malhār doorway may be extended to the arrangement of the scenes as well. If we read the present door jamb from bottom to top, we first have the representation of Śiva’s visit to the Devadāruvana, followed by the ‘heroic’ representations of Śiva slaying Andhaka and Śiva dancing. This corresponds to the suggested arrangement of the Malhār doorway, although interrupted there by representations of Śiva with Pārvatī. See Chapter 4, p. 206.  
\textsuperscript{520}It is not registered from which excavation site in Sīrpur this door jamb is taken.
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Plate 4.37: Suravīga Tīla door jamb
Śiva’s lower garment by Pārvati is a characteristic feature (see, for example, the fifth-century doorway fragment from Sondni near Mandasor in Plate 4.39, which represents the same motif).\textsuperscript{521} Śiva’s bull mount is standing next to Śiva on his right side, with its head turned towards the divine couple. The triangular-shaped object in the upper left corner of the frame is probably what remains of Śiva’s trident, held in his back right hand. The object in his front right hand cannot be distinguished, but in (contemporary) images of the ālīṅgana-candraśekhara motif he holds a ‘lotus of dalliance’ (līlākamala), which would add to the sensuality of the overall image.

We find another depiction of Śiva killing the demon Andhaka in the middle frame. This time it is a six-armed version (see Plate 4.40). Both front hands are resting on Śiva’s thighs, while he is raising the elephant hide above his head with the two back hands. The perfect arch of the elephant hide emphasizes the halo it forms around Śiva’s head. A peculiar deviation from

\textsuperscript{521}The term candraśekhara refers to the moon ornament on Śiva’s crest and the addition ālīṅgana indicates that Śiva and Pārvati are depicted ‘embracing’ (the umāmahesāvara images also belong to the category ālīṅgamārti). For an overview of the ālīṅgana-candraśekhara motif in art, cf. Donaldson 2007 Volume 1, pp. 313–335 and Volume 2, figures 255–291 and C-88–C-103.
the normal iconographic design of an andbakasuravadhamurti is the absence of a lance/trident. Instead of piercing the demon, as in the previous examples, Siva holds Andhaka’s upper body in a tight grip in his middle left hand. The presence of the demon’s helpless body in Siva’s hand is not unique, for we see this element in a few of the earliest representations of the motif. In these other representations, however, Siva lifts the body upside down by one leg as an additional element to the piercing of Andhaka, whereas the present image lacks the piercing. The image cannot be considered a one-time deviation because the Trideva doorway fragment that will be discussed below follows the same design. In both cases it seems that Siva only holds Andhaka’s upper body with his left hand, whereas the lower body is missing. Hypothetically, the unidentified object in Siva’s right middle hand could be

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Plate 4.40: Siva slaying Andhaka  
Plate 4.41: Siva releasing Ganga

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\(^522\)The representations of Siva killing Andhaka in which Siva holds the demon’s body as an attribute in one of his right hands are the ones from Elephanta, Ellora cave 14, Ellora cave 29 and Aihole temple 15. In the Elephanta image, the body can no longer be distinguished, but its original presence can be inferred from an eighteenth-century copper engraving of Carsten Niebuhr. Cf. Melzer 2002 Teil 1, p. 67 and Teil 2, plates A2–A5.
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Andhaka’s lower body, which for some reason became separated from the rest, but this possibility remains speculative for now. Pārvatī is squatting in the lower right corner of the frame with her right hand pressed to her chest; her body is turned away from the scene, but she looks up at the fearsome appearance of her spouse in awe from over her right shoulder.

At the bottom of the door jamb, Śiva controls the downfall of the river Gaṅgā from heaven to earth (gaṅgādharamūrti). He holds out a lock of his matted hair (jaṭā) to release her flow with his uplifted back left hand (see Plate 4.41). With his front right hand, Śiva makes a giving gesture (varudā) to a small figure standing on his right side, who may best be identified as Bhagīratha. Śiva carries a lance in his back right hand and his front left hand seems to rest on his lower garment.

The Trideva Fragment

One more image of Śiva in the act of slaying the demon Andhaka (andhakā-suravādhamūrti) is to be found on a doorway fragment that has been rebuilt into the entrance of one of the shrines of the so-called ‘Trideva temple’ (see Plate 4.42). The fragment follows the same design as the one on the Suraṅga Tīla door jamb, except that Śiva is depicted here with eight arms. The image is badly damaged, though, and therefore not all objects and hand gestures can be discerned. Śiva is standing in the characteristic dynamic stance with both front hands on his thighs and the two back arms lifted upwards to hold the elephant hide above his head. The upper body of the demon Andhaka is held in a tight grip in one of the middle left hands, and if we continue the speculation above, his lower body may have been held in the corresponding right hand. With another middle left hand, Śiva is making a reassuring gesture with his palm facing outwards (abhayamudrā). The remaining arms are too damaged to recognize anything. Śiva is ithyphallic (ūrdhvalīṅga) in this image and his crown of matted hair is decorated with a little skull. Pārvatī is depicted in the lower right corner of the frame, again in a squatting posture. She has her back turned away from the fearsome scene behind her, but with her left hand on the ground to keep her balance, she looks up at her spouse in awe with her right hand pressed to her chest.
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Plate 4.42: Śiva slaying Andhaka
Site Museum Fragments

To make the picture (more) complete, there are a number of Śaivite doorway fragments collected in the local site museum. All of these fragments have, despite their wear, enough details preserved to recognize the overall theme. One of the fragments, showing a dancing Śiva, has already been discussed in the previous chapter (see Plate 3.51). A second fragment depicts Śiva and Pārvatī in love dalliance on the rocks of the Kailāsa mountain (*umāmaheśvaramūrti*). Śiva is sitting in *lalitāsana* pose with his right leg pendant and the left leg bent at the knee (see Plate 4.43). Most details are worn away, but he may have been six-armed. The only attribute that is clearly visible is the trident in one of his right hands. With his front right hand he may have made a gesture of some kind (*mudrā*). One of his left arms would definitely have been draped around Pārvatī’s shoulders; she is sitting at his left side, with her right hand on his left thigh. They are surrounded by an entourage of figures.

Rāvanā shaking the Kailāsa mountain (*rāvaṇānugrahāmūrti*) is depicted on a third fragment, of which only the lower part is preserved (see Plate 4.44). Rāvanā has assumed the same kneeling posture as in the Gandharveśvara image, ready to lift the mountain. There are traces of at least twelve arms, two of which are holding his sword and ten more are ready to do the heavy lifting. The number of heads cannot be distinguished with certainty, but they are at least three in number. The upper part of the scene, with Śiva and Pārvatī sitting on top of the mountain, is missing.

Plate 4.43: Śiva and Pārvatī on Kailāsa  
Plate 4.44: Rāvanā shaking Kailāsa
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The fourth and last fragment is a complete lintel piece, covered with small figures (see Plate 4.45). In the centre of the lintel, Lakulīśa is sitting in padmāsana on a double-layered lotus flower. One can recognize him by the club (lakula) carried in his left arm. He has a halo behind his head and with his hands he appears to be making the ‘teaching gesture’. He is accompanied by four little figures, two on either side, who can be identified as his four pupils. Moving from the centre scene to the outer ends, the image of Lakulīśa with his entourage is flanked by an attendant figure on either side, followed by the images of Brahmā to Lakulīśa’s left and Viṣṇu to Lakulīśa’s right hand. Both gods are seated in padmāsana, also on a double-layered lotus flower (see Plate 4.46). Brahmā can be identified by his four heads, three of which are visible. Viṣṇu is four-armed, holding a conch shell (śaṅkha) in his back left hand and the discus (cakra) in his front right hand.
Plate 4.46: Viṣṇu and Brahmā (top) and Skanda and Gaṇeśa (bottom)
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hand. With the front left hand he is touching his knee and the object in his back right hand is damaged beyond recognition. The images of Brahmā and Viṣṇu are again followed by an attending figure, and then on the outer ends we find the images of Gaṇeśa to Lakulīśa’s left and Skanda to Lakulīśa’s right hand. The figure of Gaṇeśa is worn and only his trunk and potbelly can be traced. Skanda’s figure is better preserved and it is clear that he rides on his peacock mount and bears the lance in his right arm. From the sixth century onwards, the inclusion of Lakulīśa became increasingly widespread in the iconography of the doorway to Śiva’s abodes, and in Dakśina Kosala he is depicted on the lintel of several temples dating to the period after Śivagupta’s reign. A number of authors have convincingly argued that this development coincided with the rapid spread of the Pāṣupata movement throughout India and that the image of Lakulīśa may have been a successful emblem that worked to unite the different divisions among the Pāṣupatas. The Sirpur lintel is likely the earliest image of Lakulīśa in the Chhattisgarh region and shows once again that Dakśina Kosala fully took part in these religious and cultural developments in the heyday of Śivagupta’s reign.


\[524\] Images of Lakulīśa surrounded by his four pupils are shown on the lintel of the Siddheśvara temple in Palāri, on the left door jamb of the Kuleśvara temple in Rājim and on the left door jamb of one of the subsidiary shrines of the Rājvalocana temple in Rājim.

Conclusion

The Case of Daksīṇa Kosala

The developments outlined in the introduction, concerning Śaivism’s rise to dominance in the early medieval period and the circumstances that helped to make that possible, may best be characterized as a ‘positive momentum’. There were different factors in play at once, reciprocally strengthening each other and thus creating a strong impetus. The successful strategy to forge strong ties with royalty put Śaiva officiants in influential positions, and as recipients of land donations they had the means to flourish at their disposal. At the same time, the officiants made it possible for the royal family to undergo an ‘easy initiation’ (the seedless version), and they offered religious protection to the court and kingdom by means of rituals, spells, et cetera. As a token of their commitment, the royal family invested in the construction of temples and other religious facilities, which supported the lay devotion to Śiva and therewith helped to popularize the Śaiva religion as well.526

The analysis of Daksīṇa Kosala as a case study of the early development of Śaivism has shown that all these elements were at work in the area at the time of Śivagupta’s reign. We have seen their positive interaction at work throughout the chapters of this book; this is quite clear in the case of Śivagupta’s Bālesvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple complex, but the many other donative inscriptions and temple remains related to Śaivism also reflect the same process. It is apparent that Śivagupta actively facilitated the development of Śaivism in Sirpur and beyond. The positive momentum described above provides a partial answer to the question as to what fostered the dominant rise of Śaivism in Daksīṇa Kosala in the period under study. It does not account for the whole picture, though, for there are local factors that should be taken into account. If we look at the interplay of political, social, economic

526 Similar factors were likely also in play in the development of Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism, but what seems to have made Śaivism more successful, as recently has been argued by Bakker, was the concept of the guru’s embodiment of Śiva. This concept may have made the Śaiva rituals, in the eyes of the believers, more powerful than the Buddhist or Vaiṣṇava rituals, causing the Śaiva officials to gain a decisive edge over their rivals. Bakker 2017, pp. 38–39, note 94.
and geographical circumstances that set the scene, they all came together in a favourable way when Śivagupta started to rule the kingdom.

First of all, if we look at the political developments in the Daksīna Kosala region, the timing of Śivagupta’s accession to the throne seems to have worked out perfectly for the development of Śaivism. In the decades before him, the kings of Śarabhapura stepped in to fill the power vacuum that the Guptas left behind; they (presumably) made southern Mekalā into their own kingdom and either Jayarāja or Sudevarāja annexed Kosala (south of the Seonath river) in the process. They subsequently lost their control over the region again to the Pāṇḍavas when Indrabala managed to acquire a good position at Sudevarāja’s court as his representative in Sirpur, where he married a local princess and thus created a supportive network that helped him to undertake a successful coup d’état after the king’s death. Indrabala’s successors consolidated the Pāṇḍava kingdom and they even seem to have further expanded it. This succession of political developments culminated in the reign of Śivagupta; the activities of the earlier generations of kings had already resulted in a solid kingdom that was ready for him to rule.

Another factor to take into account is that Śivagupta had a very long and prosperous reign, in which the country seems to have been devoid of any political instabilities for roughly sixty years. Due to the length of his reign, there were no succession crises and with Śivagupta’s maternal relatives in the north as an impressive ally, there was no need for military campaigns. Instead, the numerous donative inscriptions and archeological sites indicate that it was a period of stability and economic prosperity; time and money were invested in religious and cultural activities, such as large-scale temple construction and the provision of charity, et cetera. Particularly the ruins and sculptural remains of Tālā and Sisadevarā and the early material from Sirpur seem to indicate a period of experimentation, in which common iconographic themes are merged with distinctive local features to create decorations that are remarkably detailed and playful (see Plate C.1).

We may also add the geographical location of Daksīna Kosala to the factors that facilitated the early development of Śaivism in this specific area. The motifs depicted on the doorways of Śiva’s abodes indicate that the artists were up to date with the iconographic trends at the time. Representations of Śiva in the act of killing the demon Andhaka were already quite commonly used, although they were still at the beginning of their rise to popularity in (northern) India, and there are two of the earliest representations of Śiva’s visit to the Pine Forest (Devadāruvana) among the motifs. The stipulation
recorded in the Senakapāṭ inscription, demanding regular initiations on fixed days in the year, also shows an early routinization of Śaivism in seventh-century Dakṣiṇa Kosala. The country’s location, at the crossroads from north to south and east to west, likely helped to keep its inhabitants abreast of trends in the developing religion with the influx of new elements. It is the interplay of all these local circumstances, in combination with a (presumably) charismatic king who publicly demonstrated his devotion to Śiva, that contributed to making Dakṣiṇa Kosala a fertile breeding ground for the development of Śaivism.

As mentioned in the introduction, Śaivism’s growing popularity also triggered the production of an array of religious scriptures. The myths revolving around Śiva that were narrated in these texts served as sources of inspiration for the artists involved in the construction of the many temples dedicated to Śiva. This development explains why depictions of myths like the slaying of Andhaka and Śiva’s visit to the Devadāruvana started to play a role in Śaiva iconography in precisely this period of Indian history. The Skandapurāṇa is mentioned on several occasions throughout the chapters of this book as an important example of such a scripture and we have seen some interesting parallels between this text and the Dakṣiṇa Kosala region.

The most striking parallel has already been discussed in Chapter 2, in the context of Śivagupta’s Junvāṇī copper-plate charter dated to his fifty-seventh
regnal year. Both this record and the *Skandapurāṇa* contain a narrative that tells the origination story of (a branch of) the Pāśupata tradition, in which the pedigree or *paramparā* of the movement is traced back to Lakulīśa – Śiva’s incarnation on earth. The two narratives both tell the story of Śiva’s descent to earth in the Kali *yuga* and they both include a man named Soma-śarman in the event, but they differ in the following initiations. The Junvānī inscription records that one pupil named Mugalisa was initiated, who has been identified with the founder of the Mausula Pāśupatas. The *Skandapurāṇa*, on the other hand, continues by telling that Śiva sets off and initiates four pupils at four different locations – an episode that becomes reflected in images of Lakulīśa surrounded by four pupils, like the one found on the Sirpur lintel – and thus explains the divine origin of four (different) branches of Pāśupata Śaivism. The two origination myths can both be counted among the first textual appearances of the figure of Lakulīśa. Śiva is mentioned as the divine progenitor in the *Skandapurāṇa* story by the name Lāgudi, which is the earliest purāṇic reference to Lakulīśa, whereas the Junvānī inscription mentions him by the name Lakulīśanātha, which is the earliest epigraphic reference to Lakulīśa.⁵²⁷

A related parallel may be found in the presence in Daksīṇa Kosala of the ascetic Udbhavarāṣī, who is known to have resided in Sirpur during the reign of Śivagupta. He may have been connected to the Gandharvēśvara temple, for his presence is attested in one of the stone inscriptions at this site. As mentioned, the suffix *rāṣī* at the end of Udbhavarāṣī’s name indicates that he was one of the Rāṣī ascetics that likely trace their origin back to Rāśikara, who was the fourth teacher in the Kuru lineage of the Pāśupata tradition. According to the *Skandapurāṇa*, the fourth pupil that was initiated by Lāgudi came from the ‘Kuru country’ and this Kuru lineage of the Pāśupata tradition can therefore be ascribed to him. The Gandharvēśvara inscription would be the earliest epigraphical attestation of such a Rāṣī ascetic.

The mythological themes behind the iconographic representations of Śiva that are used in Daksīṇa Kosala are indicative of another parallel between the region and the text. For one thing, we have seen that the representations of Śiva’s visit to the Devadāruvāna on the doorway fragments in Sirpur and Malhār are among the earliest extant artistic expressions of this myth, whereas the earliest extant textual version of the myth is narrated in the *Skandapurāṇa*. We have also seen that the Andhaka myth, which would evolve

Dakṣiṇa Kosala
to become one of the most popular stories in Śaiva mythology and a well-known motif in Śaiva iconography, was already a familiar theme in the art of Dakṣiṇa Kosala at the time of Śivagupta. In the Skandapurāṇa, it likely became incorporated in the text around the same time and this Skandapurāṇa narrative is, in fact, the oldest extant (and very detailed) account of the myth.\textsuperscript{528}

It is tempting to ascribe the parallels listed here to a connection of some kind between the Dakṣiṇa Kosala region and the Skandapurāṇa, and the research for this book was indeed partly based on an attempt to answer the question as to whether the Skandapurāṇa was part of the religious life in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. One line of thought was, for example, that the stories of the Skandapurāṇa could have traveled to this part of India in a cultural exchange with Kanauj, following the marriage of Śivagupta’s parents. Unfortunately, the question raised in the introduction does not seem to have a clear-cut answer and there is only circumstantial evidence to rely on. The region is not mentioned in the list of Śiva’s sanctuaries (āyatana) in the Skandapurāṇa, in which the nearest āyatana is Ekāmra (present Bhubaneswar) in Odisha,\textsuperscript{529} and no reference to the text is made in any of the epigraphical records from Dakṣiṇa Kosala. What we do have is a pedigree in the Junvānī inscription that shows a remarkable family resemblance with the tradition of Lāgūdi and his four pupils in the Skandapurāṇa. We also have some very early depictions of myths of which the earliest extant version is told in the Skandapurāṇa. This is not enough to make any solid statements; the artists of Dakṣiṇa Ko-

\textsuperscript{528}The incorporation of the Andhaka myth cycle in the Skandapurāṇa seems to be illustrative of another effective strategy used in the popularization of Śaivism, namely the strategy to encompass other traditions and therewith to include more people. In the Skandapurāṇa, Andhaka is born from the complete darkness (andha) in the world that occurred when Pārvati once blindfolded Śiva in jest. Śiva then gives the newborn Andhaka to the demon Hiranyākṣa, who was longing for a child and therefore already had practiced tapas for a long time. Cf. Bakker 2014a, pp. 69–70. With this act, Andhaka is placed in a demon genealogy that is connected to several originally Vaiṣṇava myths, such as Narasimha killing the demon Hiranyakāśipu, Varāha killing the demon Hiranyakṣa, Viṣṇu fighting with the demon Prahlāda, et cetera. By making Śiva’s son Andhaka part of this demon genealogy, the composers of the Skandapurāṇa explicitly linked the story to the Vaiṣṇava corpus and incorporated the well-known stories into Śiva mythology. Cf. Granoff 2004, pp. 133–134 and Yokochi 2009. Bakker has described this process as a ‘shift of religious paradigm, from a religious world dominated by Viṣṇu to one in which the Śiva religion takes pole position’, which is exactly the shift we have seen in Sirpur when Śivagupta ascended the throne. Cf. Bakker 2014a, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{529}Cf. Bisschop 2006, pp. 3–19.
sala may have been inspired by the Skandapurāṇa as a mythological source, but they may just as well have been inspired by a common oral tradition or another shared mythological source. The only thing that can be concluded is that the artists of Dakṣiṇa Kosala and the redactors of the Skandapurāṇa demonstrate (nearly) the same stage of the narrative development of the Śaiva mythology. The resulting images can still be witnessed today and are the cultural heritage of what once was Dakṣiṇa Kosala, a rich centre of early Śaivism.
Appendix 1

Copper-plate Charters and Stone Inscriptions

This appendix contains a brief description of the copper-plate charters and stone inscriptions issued by the kings of Dakṣiṇa Kosala from the second half of the fifth century until the first half of the seventh century. These kings include the kings of Sarabhapura, the Pāndava kings of Mekalā and Sirpur and their contemporaries of the family descending from Amara and the Śūras. Each inscription is given a ‘Dakṣiṇa Kosala number (Dk)’ and the inscriptions are numbered, as accurately as possible, chronologically. There are, however, several undated charters and none of the records in stone have a reference to the duration of the king’s reign. At the end of Appendix 1, the provenances of all the different copper-plate charters and stone inscriptions are marked by pins on a map (Figure A.1). Assuming that the distribution of these provenances corresponds to some extent with the scope of political influence of the issuing kings, this map provides us with a rather good indication of the core area that was Dakṣiṇa Kosala at the time of the kings of Sarabhapura and the Pāndava kings.\footnote{For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 1, pp. 39–42.}

DK1: Pīpardūlā Plates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provenance:</th>
<th>Pīpardūlā, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Script:</td>
<td>box-headed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynasty:</td>
<td>Kings of Sarabhapura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King:</td>
<td>Narendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issued from:</td>
<td>Sarabhapura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>third regnal year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening:</td>
<td>Success! Hail!\footnote{Siddham (symbol) svasti.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant:</td>
<td>the village of Śarkarāpadraka in the Nandapura bhoga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1

Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyya) Svāmippa/Svāmyātman of the Ātreyagotra
Donor: on behalf of Rāhudeva
Engraver: Śrīdatta

DK2: Kurud Plates

Provenance: Kurud, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Narendra
Issued from: the camp of victory inhabited by Tilakesvara532
Date: twenty-fourth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: confirmation of the earlier donation of the village of Keśavaka in the Cullādasimā bhoga
Donee: Śaṅkhasvāmin, son of Bhaśrutasvāmin/Bhaśrutasvāmin of the Dhāranigotra
Donor: on behalf of the Paramabhaṭṭāraka, who was the first donor
Executor: ‘ministry of agriculture’ (adhikaraṇa)
Engraver: Śrīdatta

DK3: Stray ‘Rawan’ Plate533

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Narendra

532See Chapter 1, pp. 13–14.
533This is the first copper plate of a charter and therefore it does not contain any information about the grant and the date.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Issued from: Śarabhapura
Date: undated
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Torāmaka in the Maṇṭarāja bhukti
Donee: the temple (devakula) of the god Śrīdharasvāmin (i.e. Viṣṇu) constructed at Vaṭapadraka; to meet the expenses of repairs, offerings and a free food facility (sattra)
Donor: on behalf of the (royal) family of the king’s mother (mātr-rājakula)

DK4: AMGURA PLATES

Provenance: Amgura, Kalahandi District, Odisha
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Jayarāja
Issued from: Śarabhapura
Date: third regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Rājayagrāma in the Sāmparāja bhukti
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaney) Viṣṇusvāmin of the Kauśikagotra
Executor: ‘ministry of agriculture’ (adhi karana)
Engraver: Acalasimha

DK5: MALHĀR PLATES

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura

Appendix 1

King: Jayarāja
Issued from: Sarabhapura
Date: fifth regnal year
Opening: Hail!\textsuperscript{535}
Grant: the village of Kadambapadrullaka in the district Antaranālaka
Donee: Kapardisvāmin of the Kautsagotra
Occasion: a lunar eclipse
Engraver: Acalasimha

Dk6: Āraṅg Plates

Provenance: Āraṅg, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Sarabhapura
King: Jayarāja
Issued from: Sarabhapura
Date: fifth regnal year
Opening: Hail!
Grant: the village of Pamvā in the Pūrvarāstra
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaney) Brahmadevasvāmin of the Kauṇḍīnyagotra
Engraver: Acalasimha
Reference: Shastri 1995 Part II, pp. 20–23

Dk7: Malhār Plates

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Sarabhapura
King: Jayarāja
Issued from: Sarabhapura
Date: ninth regnal year

\textsuperscript{535} svasti.
**Dakṣiṇa Kosala**

Opening: Hail!
Grant: the village of Mokkeppikā in the Nagarottarapatṭa district
Donees: the Rgvedins (Bahvrīca) Maheśvarasvāmin (1) and Śabarabhogika Rudrasvāmin (2) of the Bhārgavagotra
Donor: on behalf of Vatsa, officer in charge of tracing stolen goods (ḥṛtapragrāha)
Engraver: Acalasimha

**DK8: Nahna Plates**

Provenance: Nahna, Kalahandi District, Odisha
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Sudevarāja
Issued from: Śarabhapura
Date: second regnal year
Opening: Hail!
Grant: the villages of Navannaka and Śāmbilaka in the Kṣitimaṇḍa āhāra
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyā) Viṣṇusvāmin of the Kauśikagotra
Engraver: Dronasimha

**DK9: Dhamatari Plates**

Provenance: Dhamatari, Dhamtari District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Sudevarāja
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: third regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Appendix 1

Grant: the village of Khalapadraka in the Dakari bhoga
Donee: the Vājasaneyin Mādhavacaturvedasvāmin of the Kāśyapagotra
Executor: Mahāśāmanta Indrabalaraja
Engraver: the goldsmith (akṣaśālika) Golasiinha

DK10: Sirpur Plates

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Sarabhapura
King: Sudevaraaja
Issued from: Sarabhapura
Date: seventh regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: renewal of an earlier grant: a village of which the name is uncertain
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Taittiriya) and Karanikaka Kansippasvāmin of the Pārāśaragotra
Donor: the previous granter was a certain Nanna
Engraver: Droṇaśimha

DK11: Āraṅg Plates

Provenance: (presumably) Āraṅg, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh

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536 The king was Sudevaraaja, but the plates were attached to a seal of Jayaraja.
537 The first plate of this charter is damaged and therefore only the first character of the name of the district and the last two characters of the name of the village are left: ‘cu. . . . . . . vake’. Shastri suggests reconstructing the missing part as ‘cullādasimabhagīya-keśavake’: the village of Keśavaka situated in the Cullādasimā bhoga. Cf. Shastri JESI 2 (1976), pp. 50–52. The same village is mentioned in Dk2; in that record it is stated that Keśavaka was originally granted by ‘the Paramabhaṭṭāraka’, whereas the present charter mentions a certain Nanna as the original donor.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Sarabhapura
King: Śudevarāja
Issued from: Sarabhapura
Date: seventh regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Śivalingaka in the Tosaḍḍa bhūti
Donees: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyya, Mādhyandina) Yajīnasvāmin of the Kātyāyanagotra (1); Kumāravatsa of the Bhāradvājagotra (2); the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyya, Kāṇva) Yajīnasvāmin of the Ātreyagotra (3); Viśākhasvāmin of the Kātyāyanagotra (4); the Yajurvedins (Mādhyandina) Golasvāmin (5), Dāmodaravāmin (6) and Dāmasvāmin (7) of the Kauśika gotra; Paṇcālisvāmin (8) and Dīkṣita Āyanīka (9) of the Bhāradvājagotra
Donor: on behalf of the Pratihuṇa Bhogilla
Engraver: Dronāṣṭampīha

DK12: Kauvatal Plates

Provenance: Kauvatal, Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Sarabhapura
King: Śudevarāja
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: seventh regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Sunikā in the Hakiri bhoga
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyya) Bhaṭṭa Purandaravāmin of the Pārāśaragotra
Executor: Mahāśāṃanta Indrabalarāja
Engraver: Golasīṇīha

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Dk13: Raipur Plates

Provenance: Raipur, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Sarabhapura
King: Sudevarāja
Issued from: Sarabhapura
Date: tenth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Śrisāhika in the Pūrvarāṣṭra, together with a well
Donees: Nāgavatsāsvāmin (1) and Bandhuvatsāsvāmin (2), belonging respectively to the Aupamanyavagotra and Vatsagotra
Donor: on behalf of the father-in-law of the donees: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyā) Savitrsvāmin of the Kaundinyagotra
Occasion: start of the northward journey of the sun (uttarāyana)
Engraver: Dronasiṃha

Dk14: Sāraṅgarh Plates

Provenance: Sāraṅgarh, Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Sarabhapura
King: Sudevarāja
Issued from: Sarabhapura
Date: undated
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Cullanḍaraka in the Tuṇḍaraka bhukti
Donees: Bhāskaravāmin (1), Prabhākaravāmin (2), Barbbarisvāmin (3), Boṭasvāmin (4), Dattasvāmin (5), Viṣṇusvāmin (6), Phalgusvāmin (7), Svāmin (8), Kṛittisvāmin (9) and Śaṅkarasvāmin (10) of the Kausikagotra
Donor: on behalf of the chief queen (rājyamahādevī) and the royal family (rājakula)
Dakṣīṇa Kosala

DK15: Ṭhākuriyā Plates

Provenance: Ṭhākuriyā, Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Pravararāja
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: third regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Āśadhaka in the Tuṇḍarāṣṭra
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyya) Bhaṭṭaka Purandarasvāmin of the Parāśaragotra
Engraver: Golasīniha

DK16: Malhār Plates

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Pravararāja
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: third regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Mitragrāmaka in the Śaṅkacakra bhoga
Donee: the Rgvedin (Bahvīca) Śubhacandrasvāmin of the Bhāradvājagotra, son of Dāmodaragana
Engraver: Golasīniha

DK17: Stray Pokhra Plate\textsuperscript{538}

\textsuperscript{538}This is the second copper plate of a charter and therefore it does not contain any information about the issuing king or the date. The stray plate was found in the possession of an inhabitant of Rājim, but originally the plate was unearthed in Pokhra as part of a
Appendix 1

Provenance: Rájim (Pokhra), Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: unknown
Issued from: unknown
Date: undated
Grant: a village of which the name is lost
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyā) and Dīkṣita Anantasvāmin of the Bhāradvājagotra
Donor: on behalf of Danḍacakra and members of his family

DK18: Malgā Plates

Provenance: Malgā, Shahdol District, Madhya Pradesh
Script: nail-headed
Dynasty: Kings of Śarabhapura
King: Sāmanta Indrabala
Issued from: Manḍaka
Date: eleventh year (presumably of Indrabala’s feudatory reign)
Opening: Success! Hail!

complete set of copper plates. The other two plates and the ring were melted. Shastri 1995 Part II, p. 59.

Based on the mode of drafting, Dikshit reckons that the plate may have belonged to a charter of Sudevarāja. Dikshit, M. G. IHQ 33 (1957), p. 84–85.

Indrabala likely issued this charter before he was appointed chief minister in Śrīpura (see Chapter 1, pp. 22–24).

There is uncertainty about the reading of the year. The inscription ends with two slightly curved horizontal strokes, together expressing the number ‘eleven’. Shastri argues that the second stroke could also be taken as a punctuation mark. In the latter case, the charter would have been issued in the first regnal year. Shastri 1978–1979, p. 20 & note 3. In the case of a punctuation mark, one would expect the second stroke to be curved stronger than the first, and to be placed in the lower part of the text line (for example the final punctuation marks in Dk19 and Dk20). Since both strokes are practically the same in the present charter, and in line with the other characters, the reading of ‘eleven’ is accepted here.

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**Dakṣiṇa Kosala**

| Grant: | the settlements of Sālagrama and Mantamaraka or Ama-
| | ntamaraka in the village of Gulgāmaka, situated in the
| | Chenuḍaparāṅga viṣaya of the Ākāśaraśtra |
| Donee: | the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyya, Mādhyanādīnā) Bhavasvāmin of the Śaṇḍilyagotra, son of Nāgasvāmin |
| Author: | Rājaputra Deva |
| Engraver: | Droṇāka, son of the goldsmith (suvarṇakāra) Īśvara |

**Dk19: Bamhanī Plates**

| Provenance: | Bamhanī, Rewa District, Madhya Pradesh |
| Script: | nail-headed |
| Dynasty: | Pāṇḍava kings |
| King: | Śurabala Udīrṇavaira |
| Issued from: | not mentioned |
| Date: | second regnal year |
| Opening: | Success! Hail! |
| Grant: | the village of Varddhāmānaka situated in the Paṇḍhagarttā |
| | viṣaya of the Uttararaśtra of Mekalā |
| Donee: | the Yajurvedin (Mādhyanādīnā) Lohitasaravāmin of the Vatsagotra |
| Author: | Śiva, son of the ‘privy counsellor’ (rāhasika) Īśana |
| Engraver: | Mihiraka, son of the goldsmith (suvarṇakāra) Īśvara |

**Dk20: Malhār Plates**

| Provenance: | Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh |
| Script: | nail-headed |
| Dynasty: | Pāṇḍava kings |
| King: | Śurabala Udīrṇavaira |
| Issued from: | not mentioned |
| Date: | eighth regnal year |

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Appendix 1

Opening: Success! Hail! This charter of the illustrious Jayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka (i.e. Śiva) — the god (bhagavat) who is furnished with unlimited qualities, who carries the trident in his hand, who has an excellent bull for his vehicle and quivering snakes for his retinue, who destroyed the body of Kāma, and whose pair of lotus-like feet are praised by the Lord of the gods (Indra) — is written with the permission of the illustrious Udīrṇavaira (i.e. Śūrabala).

Grant: the village of Saṅgama in the Daksīṇarāṣṭra of Mekalā
Donee: the god Jayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka
Donor: on behalf of Narasiṃha, son of Boṭa and grandson of the merchant (vanik) Manoratha

Author: Śiva
Engraver: Mihiraka

DK21: STRAY BŪRHIKHĀR PLATE

Provenance: Būrhiḵār (Malhār), Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: nail-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: presumably Śūrabala Udīrṇavaira
Issued from: unknown
Date: presumably eighth or later regnal year
Grant: unknown
Reference: Bajpai 1978, pp. 433–437; see also Appendix 2


siddham svasty aparimitagun. asamudayasya bhagavatas trīsūlapāner varavṛṣabhavāhānasya sphuradbhujagaparikarasūnaṇaṁ gāyavedhavaṃsinah tridāsapatinutacaravṝjayaṅyabdasya śrījayeśvarabhāṭṭārakasyaṣadyāram śāsanāṁ likhyate śrī-udīrṇavairānumatayā

543 This is the second copper plate of a charter and therefore it does not contain any information about the issuing king or the date. For the edition, see Appendix 2.

544 The script and draft of the plate are very similar to those of Dk19 and Dk20, both of which were issued by Pāṇḍava king Śūrabala, which makes it likely that the current plate was part of one of his charters as well.

545 Compared to the contents of Dk19 and Dk20, the eulogy to Nāgabala is expanded in this plate with one more verse. This may indicate that the charter to which the plate belonged was issued at a later date. See Appendix 2.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

DK22: Kharod Lākṣmaṇeśvara Temple Stone Inscription

- Provenance: Kharod, Janjgir-Champa District, Chhattisgarh
- Script: early Nāgarī
- Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
- King: Īśānadeva
- Date: undated
- Grant: several villages, including the village of Sāṭṭhapadraka
- Donee: presumably the original temple to which the inscription belonged; to meet the expenses of the maintenance of the temple
- Donor: presumably on behalf of Īśānadeva, son of king Indrabala
- Occasion: perhaps the establishment of the temple

References:

DK23: Āraṅg Buddhist Stone Inscription

- Provenance: Āraṅg, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
- Script: early Nāgarī
- Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
- King: Nānnarāja I
- Date: undated
- Opening: Success! Obeisance! Victorious is the bow bearer Jina (i.e. the Buddha) who – with the arrow of compassion fixed on the bow of unsurpassed knowledge – has conquered the invincible army of Māra.
- Grant: unknown

References:
- Kielhorn JRAS 37 (1905), pp. 127–128; KIELHORN JRAS 37 (1905), p. 618. Mirashi and Pandeya argue that Bhāndak is an unlikely provenance, for it is outside the limits of Dakṣiṇa Kosala. They are the first to suggest that the stone slab originally came from Āraṅg, in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, and was brought from there to Ratanpur. MIRASHI & PANDEYA EI 23 (1935–1936), pp. 116–118. This suggestion is supported by Deshpande, who points out that the inscription originally came from Āraṅg. SHASTRI 1995 Part I, pp. 134–136.
- KIELHORN JRAS 37 (1905), pp. 624–629, lines 1–2 (orthographic):

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546 See Chapter 2, pp. 67–69.
547 There has been uncertainty about the provenance of the inscription. Cunningham writes in his report that the stone slab came from Bhāndak, whereas Kielhorn in his edition connects the inscription with Ratanpur. CUNNINGHAM 1879, pp. 127–128; KIELHORN JRAS 37 (1905), p. 618. Mirashi and Pandeya argue that Bhāndak is an unlikely provenance, for it is outside the limits of Dakṣiṇa Kosala. They are the first to suggest that the stone slab originally came from Āraṅg, in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, and was brought from there to Ratanpur. MIRASHI & PANDEYA EI 23 (1935–1936), pp. 116–118. This suggestion is supported by Deshpande, who points out that the inscription originally came from Āraṅg. SHASTRI 1995 Part I, pp. 134–136.

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Donee: presumably a Buddhist temple (*sugatasya sadma*), founded earlier by king Sūryaghoṣa in memory of his son, and the (accompanying) monastery (*vihāra*); to meet the expenses of a free food facility (*sattra*)

Donor: on behalf of Bhavadeva, brother of king Nannarāja I

Occasion: restoration of the temple by a Buddhist physician whose name is lost and renovation of the monastery by the student Namobuddha

Author: Bhāskarabhaṭṭa

References: Kielhorn *JRAS* 37 (1905), pp. 617–633; Shastri 1995 Part II, pp. 95–101

DK24: Āraṅg Mahāmāyī Temple Stone Inscription

Provenance: Āraṅg, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh

Script: early Nāgarī

Dynasty: Paṇḍava kings (presumably)

King: unknown

Date: undated

Opening: Invocation to Viṣṇu

Grant: unknown

Donee: presumably the temple of Viṣṇu into which the inscription was built

Donor: Bhavadeva, brother of king Nannarāja I?\(^{549}\)


\[^{549}\] The name Raṅakesarin is mentioned in line 13 of the inscription. Shastri 1995 Part I, p. 136. The same name is used as a description of Bhavadeva in line 13 of Dk23. Perhaps Bhavadeva was also the donor of the present record; if the same author was used, this would explain the word Raṅakesarin in the same line in both records.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Dk25: Bondā Plates

Provenance: Bondā, Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Tīvaradeva
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: fifth regnal year
Opening: Success!
Grant: the villages of Bondaka and Avadika in the Piharāja bhukti
Donees: the Sāmavedins (Chandoga) Gopendrasvāmin (1), Vāmanasvāmin (2), Somasvāmin (3), Yajñasvāmin (4) and Unnatameghasvāmin (5); and the Yajurvedins (Maitrāyanīya) Bhaṭṭa Madhusūdanopādhyāya (6), Trivikramopādhyāya (7), Devasomopādhyāya (8), Svāmidattopādhyāya (9), Viṣṇuḥgosopādhyāya (10), Sthāvaropādhyāya (11), Bhaṭṭa Kamalapakṣasvāmin (12), Bhaṭṭa Ravināgasvāmin (13), Śambhubhavasvāmin (14), Bandhudeva (15), Yorāṅgaviṣṇusvāmin (16), Lāṭaphalihasvāmin (17), Aśokasvāmin (18), Śrīdharabhūtisvāmin (19), Śilapakṣasvāmin (20), Śāppūpakṣasvāmin (21), Vāmanasvāmin (22), Nāgaśarmaśvāmin (23), Golacandrasvāmin (24) and Bhadrasvāmin (25)
Engraver: Boppanāga, son of the goldsmith (akṣaśālika) Yotranāga

Dk26: Rājim Plates

Provenance: Rājim, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Tīvaradeva
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: seventh regnal year
Opening: Success!

References:

550 siddham (symbol).
Appendix 1

Grant: the village of Pimparipadraka in the Penṭhāma bhakti
Donees: the Yajurvedins (Vājasaneyya, Mādhyandina) Bhaṭṭa Bha-
vadatta (1) and Bhaṭṭa Haradatta (2) of the Bhāradvāja-
gotra, sons of Bhaṭṭa Gauridatta
Occasion: twelfth day of the month of Jyeṣṭha
pp. 107–111

Dk27: Sirpur Plates (hoard 2009)
Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Tīvaradeva
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: seventh regnal year
Opening: Success!
Grant: the village of Paṅcakuṭī in the Anaṅgapalla bhoga
Donee: the brahmin Maṅdevopādhya of the Bhāradvāja-gotra

Dk28: Baloda Plates
Provenance: Baloda, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Tīvaradeva
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: ninth regnal year
Opening: Success!
Grant: the village of Meṅkiḍaka in the Sundarikāmārga
Donees: a group up to thirty brahmins and others who might turn
up in the village Bilvapadraka; to meet the expenses of a
free food facility (sattra)
Donor: on behalf of Nannarāja, son-in-law of king Tīvaradeva

551The phrase ‘jāmātṛ’ (son-in-law) could be a misinterpretation of the relationship be-
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Engraver: Boppanāga, son of the goldsmith (arkaśālīka) Yotranāga

DK29: Aḍbhār Plates

Provenance: Aḍbhār, Janjgir-Champa District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Nannarāja II
Issued from: Śrīpura
Date: undated
Opening: Success! Hail!\(^{552}\)
Grant: the village of Kontiṅika situated in the Aṣṭadvāra viṣaya
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyā, Mādhyanā) Nārāyaṇopaṇḍhyāya of the Kaunḍīnyagotra, who was a devotee of Viṣṇu (bhāgavata)
Occasion: a samkrānti on the twelfth day of the dark half of the month of Bhādrapada

DK30: Sirpur Lākṣmaṇa Temple Stone Inscription

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Opening: Success! Obeisance to Puruṣottama (i.e. Viṣṇu)! May the foot of the discus-bearer (i.e. Viṣṇu) protect you; [the foot] that – comparable to a lion – treads on stars like the pearls scattered around (from the temples of the elephants), after having torn into pieces the gathering of clouds – the abodes tween Nannarāja and Tivaradeva, for Tivaradeva’s son is also named Nannarāja.

\(^{552}\) siddham (symbol) svasti.
Appendix 1

of darkness – in the air as if killing the elephants, furnished with toes/claws that are terrifying due to a sound like that of a bunch of guñja berries when the strong wind is rubbing the inner intervening parts against each other, and that (look) dreadful, like tusks, conspicuous due to the jagged rays of the nails when lifted up! [1] May that Man-Lion (i.e. Viṣṇu) protect you; who – having turned his glance to the nails (of the one hand that has seized the enemy) out of the urge ‘these (nails) are unable to tear the enemy apart’, and having beheld (the demon) who is hiding out of fear in the cave-like cavity of (his) belly in the space made by his chest (and his two arms) – split the demon asunder with the tip of the fingernail of his other hand with contempt, joy and laughter and threw him away at once from that cover like dirt of him (i.e. the Man-Lion or his hand)! [2] (May) this appearance of Viṣṇu (take) evil (away from you?), which is a face that, as it were, assumes Antaka’s (i.e. Yama’s) charm in order to devour the demons, assembling (the following features): [the face] appears to show the teeth with the radiance of the conch, have a tongue with the sword, flame up with the discus, and wear a frown with the mace! [3]

553 Hira Lal EJ 11 (1911–1912), pp. 184–201, lines 1–3 (orthographic):

553 Hira Lal has emended kośāc to krodhāc (i.e. ‘out of anger’), but if we interpret kośa to denote the hiding-place of the demon in Viṣṇu’s sunken belly – as pointed out to me by Yuko Yokochi (in a personal communication) – the original reading seems to provide us
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Grant: the villages of Todaṅkaṇa, Madhuvėḍha, Nālipadra, Kura-padra and Nāgapadra; the village of Vargullaka separately

Donees: the Lākṣmaṇa temple, to meet the expenses of repairs, offerings, maintenance of the temple servants and the almshouse attached to the temple (1); the Rgvedins Brahmatrivikrama (2), Arka (3), Viṣṇudeva (4) and Mahira-deva (5); the Yajurvedins Kapardopādhyāya (6), Bhāskara (7), Madhusūdana (8) and Vedargṛha (9); the Sāmavedins Bhāskarakṛṣṇa (10), Sthiropādhyāya (11), Trailokya-haṁsa (12) and Mouḍḍha (13); the brahmin Vāsavādīna (14); the devotees of Viṣṇu (bhāgavata) Vāmana (15) and Śrīdhara (16); Golāryvabhaṭṭa (17)

Donor: on behalf of Vāsaṭā, mother of king Śiva-gupta

Occasion: presumably the establishment of the Lākṣmaṇa temple as a memorial for the deceased king Harṣagupta, by his queen Vāsaṭā

Engraver: Goṇa


DK31: SIRPUR PLATES (HOARD 2009)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śiva-gupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura
Date: sixth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Pillāsunya in the Deva bhoga
Donee: the Yajurvedin (Vājasaneyya) Bādabhāṭṭa of the Bhāradvā-jagotra, inhabitant of the Lāṭa viṁṣaya

with a sensible meaning and therefore the emendation is rendered unnecessary here.

Śrīpura was Śiva-gupta’s capital and the place where most of his records were found. Therefore, this is the most likely place of issue.

siddham (symbol) svasti.
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Occasion: an eclipse of the sun in the night of the new moon in the month of Āśāḍha
Engraver: Kṛṣṇāyya, son of Stambhāyya
Reference: SINGH, P. K. PM 5 (2009), pp. 11–27 (set 2)

Dk32: Malhār Plates

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śripara (see note 554)
Date: sixth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Kailāsapura in the Tārādaṁśaka bhoga
Donees: a community of ‘monks of the four quarters’ (cāturdiśā-ryabhikṣu), residing at a small monastery (vihārikā) in the Tārādaṁśaka bhoga and constructed by Alakā, the wife of Koradevā
Donor: on behalf of Bhāskaravarman, Śivagupta’s maternal uncle
Occasion: an eclipse of the sun in the night of the new moon in the month of Āśāḍha

Dk33: Bārdūlā Plates

Provenance: Bārdūlā, Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śripara (see note 554)
Date: ninth regnal year

556 The charter is undated, but was issued on the same occasion as Dk31: the solar eclipse of the month of Āśāḍha in the sixth regnal year of Śivagupta.

557 See Chapter 2, p. 95, note 334.
**Dakṣiṇa Kosala**

**Opening:** Success! Hail!

**Grant:** the village of Vaṭapadraka situated in the Koṣiranandapura viṣaya

**Donees:** the Śāmavedins (Chandoga) Nārāyanopādhyaṭya (1), Trailokyahāṁśopādhyaṭya (2), Vidyādharamahāṁśopādhyaṭya (3), Paramahamsopādhyaṭya (4), Nakṣatrarūpa (5), Saṅgaviḍyādyādhara (6), Vidagdhāṣura (7), Pṛthivirūpa (8), Durgakalāśa (9), Podavarāha (10), Tālārūpa (11) and Madhyāṁharūpa (12) settled in Chāṭranāṭasimā; the brahmin Avigrahacarita (13)

**Occasion:** presumably the breaking of the fast on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kārttika


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**DK34: Sirpur Plates (hoard 2009)**

**Provenance:** Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh

**Script:** box-headed

**Dynasty:** Pāṇḍava kings

**King:** Śivagupta Bālārjuna

**Issued from:** not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)

**Date:** eleventh regnal year

**Opening:** Success! Hail!

**Grant:** the village of Aḍakeraka in the Svalpaśarkaramārga

**Donee:** the Rgvedin (Bahvrca) Bhaṭṭa Nandikumāra of the Kāma-kāyanagotra

**Engraver:** Golāyya, son of the goldsmith (akṣaśālika) Boppanāga

**Reference:** Singh, P. K. PM 5 (2009), pp. 11–27 (set 3)

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**DK35: Sirpur Plates (hoard 2009)**

**Provenance:** Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh

**Script:** box-headed

**Dynasty:** Pāṇḍava kings

**King:** Śivagupta Bālārjuna

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Appendix 1

Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: nineteenth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Vaidya-Palāsapadraka in the Brāhaccharkara-mārga
Donees: the Yajurvedins (Taittirīya) Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (1) and Bhaṭṭa Janārdana (2) of the Bhāradvājagotra, brothers and inhabitants of the plains of Śrīpura
Donor: on behalf of rājadeva Bhavagupta
Occasion: an eclipse of the moon on the day of the full moon in the month of Caitra

Dk36: Boṇḍā Plates

Provenance: Boṇḍā, Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: twenty-second regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Śarkarāpāṭaka in the Lāyoddaka visaya
Donee: the Sāmavedin (Chandoga) Bhaṭṭa Trivikramasvāmin of the Bhāradvājagotra
Occasion: a samkrānti in the month of Pauṣa

Dk37: Śirpur Plates (hoard 1978)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Date: thirty-seventh regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Hastipadraka in the Svalpaśarkarāmārga
Donee: the officiant (ācārya) Vyāpasīva, pupil of Dirgha from Nandapura
Occasion: the establishment of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple at Śrīpura by king Śivagupta

Dk38: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: thirty-eighth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Bhāṇḍāgāracattāka in the Aryaṅgā bhoga
Donee: the officiant (ācārya) Vyāpasīva, pupil of Dirgha and grand-pupil of Aghoraśīva from Nandapura; to meet the expenses of various activities in the maṭhikā of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple at Śrīpura

Dk39: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: forty-sixth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Appendix 1

Grant: the village of Bhāṇḍāgāratakaḍaṅgaka in the Devī bhoga
Donee: the Dayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple in the maṭhikā of the Baleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple at Śrīpura; to meet the expenses of repairs, music and worship for Hara, and the sustainance of temple-servants
Occasion: the establishment of the Dayeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple by king Śivagupta

DK40: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bāḷārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: forty-eighth regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Devapadrūllaka attached to Bhāṇḍāgārāśvattthaka in the Callāṭasimā bhoga
Donee: Astraśiva, pupil of Vyāpaśiva and grand-pupil of Dīrgha/Aghoraśiva from Nandapura; in order to finance a free food facility (sattrā), teaching, initiations and offering ceremonies for the pupils and grand-pupils
Donor: on behalf of Amaradevī
Occasion: the installation of the god (devabhāṭṭāraka) in the Amareśvara temple, erected by Amaradevī in the maṭhikā of the Baleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple at Śrīpura

DK41: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed

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Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: forty-eighth regnal year or later
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Katambapadrullaka in the Calatāsimā bhoga
Donee: the Amareśvara temple in the tapovana of the mathikā of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple at Śrīpura; to meet the expenses of repairs, music, worship, bathing and anointing of the image
Donor: on behalf of Amaradevi


Dk42: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: fifty-second regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Aṭavituṅga in the Kikkiḍa bhukti
Donee: Astraśiva, officiant (ācārya) of the tapovana of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple at Śrīpura, pupil of Vyāpaśiva and grand-pupil of Dīrgha from Nandapura (originally Phuṭṭīpāṭi); to meet the expenses of offerings, initiations and housing
Donor: on behalf of Jejjatā
Occasion: the day of the full moon in the month of Kārttika
Engraver: Nāgadeva, son of Goliyya


558 The charter is undated, but the installation of the god in the Amareśvara temple was in the forty-eighth regnal year of Śivagupta (see Dk40).
**DK43: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)**

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh  
Script: box-headed  
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings  
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna  
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śripura (see note 554)  
Date: fifty-fifth regnal year  
Opening: Success! Hail!  
Grant: the village of Vārttoḍaka in the Unī bhoga  
Donee: the officiant (ācārya) Astraśiva, pupil of Vyāpaśiva; to meet the expenses of worship, repairs, teaching and a free food facility (sattrā)  
Donor: on behalf of queen Ammādevī  
Occasion: the establishment of the Ammeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple attached to the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple by Ammādevī  

**DK44: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)**

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh  
Script: box-headed  
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings  
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna  
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śripura (see note 554)  
Date: fifty-fifth or later regnal year  
Opening: Success! Hail!  
Grant: the village of Kośambra in the Svalpaśarkarāmārga  
Donee: the Ammeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple erected by Ammādevī in the vicinity of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple at Śripura; to meet the expenses of repairs, worship with incense, music and oblations, and the cleansing and anointing of images  
Donor: on behalf of queen Ammādevī

*559* The charter is undated, but the establishment of the Ammeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temple was in the fifty-fifth regnal year of Śivagupta (see Dk43).
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Occasion: the Viṣuva saṃkrānti and the start of the northward journey of the sun (uttarāyana) in the month of Māgha

References:  

DK45: Sīrput Bālesvara Vihāra Stone Inscription

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālarjuna
Date: undated
Subject: donation of one hundred ‘oil cakes’ (khallikā) and three bhāras of wood for the free food facility (sattra) of the māṭhikā of Śrīpura

Author: Krṣṇanandin
Engraver: Nārāyana

DK46: Lodhiā Plates

Provenance: Lodhiā, Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālarjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: fifty-seventh regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Vaidyapadraka in the Oni bhoga
Donee: the god Iśāneśvara-bhaṭṭāraka installed in a temple in the plains of Pattana-Khadirapadra; to meet the expenses of repairs, offerings, a free food facility (sattra), dance and music
Donor: on behalf of Śūlapāṇi, pupil of the ācārya Pramatha from the Paṅcayajna tapovana in the Dvaitavana

560See Chapter 2, pp. 86–87, note 304.
Appendix 1

Occasion: the day of the full moon in the month of Kārttika

DK47: Junvānī Plates

Provenance: Junvānī (Malhār), Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Paṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: fifty-seventh regnal year
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the villages of Paśipadraka and Kurapadraka in the Oni bhoga – the villages were secured from brahmins of the Vājasaneyya branch of Yajurveda, who received the village of Bhāṇḍāgaratulapadraka in the Oni bhoga in exchange
Donee: Bhūmasoma, pupil of Tejasoma and grand-pupil of Rudra-sama; to meet the expenses of repairs, ceremonies, initiations, teaching and housing
Occasion: the day of the full moon in the month of Māgha

DK48: Stray Būrīkhār Plate

Provenance: Būrīkhār (Malhār), Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh

561 The text of the charter reads ‘unī’, but there are two other appearances of this bhoga in Dk46 and Dk50 where it is named Onī. For the exchange of villages, see Chapter 2, p. 83, note 294.
562 This is the third copper plate of a charter and therefore it does not contain any information about the grant or the issuing king. However, the engraver of the plate named Nāgadeva is known from one of Śivagupta’s Sirpur Plates (Dk42). Also Śivagupta is the only king of the region known to have ruled as long as fifty-seven years. Therefore the copper plate can be ascribed to king Śivagupta.

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Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Script: box-headed  
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings  
King: Śivagupta Bālarjuna  
Issued from: unknown  
Date: fifty-seventh regnal year  
Grant: unknown  
Engraver: the tāmrapatīka Nāgadeva, son of Golāyya  

DK49: Stray Malhār Plate

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh  
Script: box-headed  
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings  
King: Śivagupta Bālarjuna  
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)  
Date: undated  
Opening: Success! Hail!  
Grant: unknown  
Reference: Jain 2005, pp. 193–194

DK50: Malhār Plates

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh  
Script: box-headed  
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings  
King: Śivagupta Bālarjuna  
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)  
Date: undated  
Opening: Success! Hail!

563 This is the first copper plate of a charter and therefore it does not contain any information about the grant or the date. The plate is inscribed with eight lines of text, as was Dk48. Since both plates were recovered in the same region, perhaps the two plates belonged to the same charter.

564 This is the third charter in which a village situated in the Onī bhoga is granted. The others, Dk46 and Dk47, were issued in Śivagupta’s fifty-seventh regnal year. According to Shastri, these three inscriptions are paleographically very similar. See: Shastri JESI 27
Appendix 1

Grant: the village of Šuksasirillikā in the Onī bhoga
Donee: the god Kapāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka,\textsuperscript{565} to meet the expenses of repairs and offerings
Donor: on behalf of Śivanandin, a resident of Kosalanagara

Dk51: Sirpur Plates (hoard 1978)

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: box-headed
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Issued from: not mentioned, but presumably Śrīpura (see note 554)
Date: undated
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Corapadraka in the Rohṣīmā bhoga
Donee: the Śamavedin (Chandoga) Bhaṭṭa Jejjatā of the Kauśika-gotra, hailing from Kanyakubja

Dk52: Senakapāṭ Stone Inscription

Provenance: Senakapāṭ, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna

(2001), 25–48. Therefore the present charter is probably issued at the close of Śivagupta’s reign, perhaps also in his fifty-seventh regnal year.

\textsuperscript{565} Shastri argues that the grant was made to two temples – the Kapāleśvara temple of Śiva and the Bhaṭṭāraka temple of Sūrya – because of the dual ending of the phrase ‘kapāleśvarabhaṭṭārakayoḥ’. Cf. Shastri 1995 Part II, p. 139, note 7. This is unlikely, for the suffix \textsuperscript{5}bhaṭṭāraka is commonly attached to the names of the abodes of Śiva in Daksīṇa Kosala (Dk21, Dk37–Dk44 and Dk46). The dual ending could easily be a scribal mistake of the author. This would explain Jain’s correction, which is acknowledged here and reads: ‘kapāleśvarabhaṭṭārakāya’. Another (less likely) possibility is that Śivanandin constructed two Kapāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka temples.
Date: undated
Opening: Success! Obeisance to Śiva! Let that Bhava (i.e. Śiva) destroy the cycle of rebirth of you; [Bhava] who in his dance appeared to be engaging in a children’s (ball) game, with the mountains flying upwards impetuously by the fierce blows of his numerous arms violent with the speed of flailing movement (like balls batted into the air by children at play). [1] Let Pārvatī, by whom the adversary Bhrūgin was subdued, protect you; he (i.e. Bhrūgin) who always speaks thus: ‘Oh Śambhu (i.e. Śiva), why don’t you abandon and put to shame this woman (i.e. Pārvatī) who has reposed herself in the ocean of delight? You, harsh in anger, thinking that the mind-born (passion/Kāma) was restored to life as yours by her (Parvati) although he had been burned by gulps of fire from your (third) eye!’ [2]

Grant: part of the village of Koḍāsīmā, part of the village of Viyāṇaka and part of the settlement of Lāṭa in the village of Śripaṇika

Donee: the teacher (acārya) Sadāśiva, pupil of the teacher Sadyah-śiva from the penance grove Āmardaka; in order to arrange annual sacrificial sessions (yūga), initiations (dīkṣā), teaching (vyākhya) and a free food facility (sattra) on the full-moon day in the months of Āśādha, Kārttika and Māgha

Donor: on behalf of Durgarākṣita who constructed the temple of Śambhu (Śiva) in Senakapāṭ; he was a son of Devarākṣita, governor of the Navyāsī visaya, and a grandson of Śivara-

---

566 Sanderson 2012, pp. 4–8, verses 1–2 (orthographic):

```
siddham (symbol) namah śivāya
uvvellanātiḥ bharanirbhharahastasaṅga-
candābhītārābhasotpadadrijālaṁ
yāḥ kandukāya iḥ kṛtātubhālaṁ
vṛ̤tte babhau sa bhavabhid bhavatād bhavo vah || 1 ||
nirdagdha ‘py atra netrajevalanakavanalanais tāvakinair manobhūr
bhūyo jāmnānayā te gamita iti ruṣā ruksitena tegeyan
kip bhoḥ śambho raṇāmbhonidhim adhiśayitā tyajyate lajyate no
bhrīgutī* proktikārī ripur asami yayā sāvatāḥ pārvatī vah || 2 ||
*(em.: śṛṅgūti Ed.)
```

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ksīta, the latter being a governor and trusted friend of Śivagupta’s great-grandfather Nannarāja II

Author: Sumaṅga, son of Tāradatta
Engraver: Vāsluga, son of the sūtradhāra Ṛṣigaṇa

Dk53: Malhār Fragmentary Stone Inscription

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Grant: the villages of Gokṣaragrāma and Vorāpāṭaka
Donee: it is unclear what kind of establishment received the villages, but a ‘saint’ named Aghorajyoti is mentioned

Dk54: Sirpur Gandharveśvara Upper Wall Inscription A

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Subject: unknown
Author: Sumaṅga, son of Tāradatta
Engraver: Sūtradhāra Ṛṣigaṇa
References: Hira Lal 1932, pp. 97–99 (third); Katare IHQ 33 (1957), pp. 229–234 (lines 1–9); Jain 2005, p. 195

567 Among the readable fragments is the name Bālārjuna, indicating that it was a record of Śivagupta.
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

DK55: Sīrpur Gandharveśvara Upper Wall Inscription B

Provenance: Sīrpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Opening: Success! May that Hara protect you from rebirth; [Hara] who prevented the Gaṅgā from falling to earth by the multitude of branches of his matted hair on the top (of his head)!\(^{568}\)
Grant: a flower garland, made of flowers supplied by the garland-makers (mālākāras) at Navahatṭa
Donee: the god Gandharveśvara (i.e. Śiva)
Donor: Jorjjarāka

DK56: Sīrpur Gandharveśvara Lower Wall Inscription

Provenance: Sīrpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Opening: Hail! Obeisance to Śiva! May the complexion of Śambhu (i.e. Śiva), whose body is coloured (white) with ashes, dark

\(^{568}\)Shastri 1995 Part II, pp. 152–153, lines 1–2:

\(\text{\text{siddham\ (symbol)}}\)
\(\text{dhāritam yena gaṅgāyāḥ śṛṅgoccam patanād bhuvī}\)
\(\text{jaṭāvītapaśamghena\* sa harah pāṭu vo bhavāt \ || 1 ||}\)
\*(em.: jaṭāvītapaśamsthenā Ed.)*

The emendation of the adjective \(\text{\text{samsthena}}\) into the noun \(\text{\text{samghena}}\), which is needed because there is no instrumental noun or pronoun to be qualified by an adjective, was suggested to me by Alexis Sanderson (in a personal communication).
Appendix 1

with a shadow (since it has been) embraced by the dark-
blue lustre of his throat, protect you!\textsuperscript{569}

Grant: four flower garlands, made of flowers supplied by the gar-
deners of Śrīpura

Donee: Śiva

Donor: the brahmins Nāgadeva and Keśava, servants of king Śiva-
gupta

Author: Krśna anandin, son of the physician Devanandin


DK57: SIRPUR GANDHARVEŚVARA FLOOR INSCRIPTION

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh

Script: early Nāgarī

Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings

King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna

Date: undated

Grant: presumably a flower garland (or garlands), because the garland-makers (mālākāras) of Pranavahaṭṭaka are men-
tioned

Donee: unknown, but presumably Śiva

References: Hira Lal 1932, pp. 97–99 (fourth); Shastri 1995 Part II, pp. 382 (i)

DK58: SIRPUR GANDHARVEŚVARA PILLAR INSCRIPTION

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh

Script: early Nāgarī

Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings

King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna

\textsuperscript{569}Kielhorn IA 18 (1889), pp. 179–181, lines 1–2 (orthographic):

\textit{om. (symbol) namas śivāya||}

\textit{pāyād ḍrīṅgītā yuṣmān kāṭhamekacarociśā|}

\textit{sambhor bhasmāṅgarāgasya chāyākrṣṇa tancchaviḥ|| 1 ||}

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Date: undated
Opening: Success! Obeisance to Śiva! This great golden (haimī) river, the waters of which are holy, washes away impurity after merely looking at it. How much more will it be able to destroy by bathing in and drinking of (the river’s water)? May the god Gāndharveśa (i.e. Śiva), who resides on her banks, whose glory is widespread and who desires the wellbeing of (all) living creatures, protect you for a long time!

Grant: flower garlands, made of flowers supplied by the garland-makers of Śrīpura
Donee: the god Gāndharveśa (i.e. Śiva)
Donor: Ambulloka, pupil of Udbhavarāśirudra
Author: Tāra(datta)

DK59: SIRPUR Gandharveśvara Pillar Fragment A

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated


\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ṣiddham (symbol) } & \text{nomaḥ śivāya} \\
\text{yeṣaṁ haimi pravahati mahāvahīni punyatoyā} \\
\text{ḍṛṣṭvaiśālaṁ kṣapayati maṇaṁ kīṁ punaṁ snānapāṇaiḥ} \\
\text{aśgās ātre vasatīm akarod dehināṁ yo hitaiśi} \\
\text{gāndharveśaḥ prathitamahīṁ soṁ yam avyāc cīram vah} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(^*\text{em.:} \text{ so Ed.)}\)

The editors translate the word haimī as ‘cold’, but another, perhaps more suitable, translation is ‘golden’. As the Gāndharveśvara temple is located on the banks of the Maḥānādi, it is safe to assume that the ‘golden river’ from this record refers to the local river. In consequence of this reasoning, we may interpret the ‘golden river’ (suvaṁnaṇadi) from the Āraṅg plates of Śūra king Bhīmasena II (Dk68) as the Maḥānādi as well.

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Subject: unknown
Author: Sumaṅgala
References: Hira Lal 1932, pp. 97–99 (fifth); Shastri 1995 II, pp. 382 (ii)

DK60: SIRPUR GANDHARVESVARA PILLAR FRAGMENT B

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgārī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Grant: unknown village
References: Hira Lal 1932, pp. 97–99 (sixth); Shastri 1995 Part II, pp. 382 (iii)

DK61: SIRPUR GANDHARVESVARA RIVER GATEWAY INSCRIPTION

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgārī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Subject: praise of the god Viṣameksaṇa (i.e. Śiva) in the temple of Bhavabhedin (i.e. Śiva) and probably a grant of some sort
Author: Krṣṇanandin, son of the physician Devanandin
Engraver: Goṇḍaśīva

DK62: SIRPUR GANDHARVESVARA BUDDHIST FRAGMENT

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgārī

571 The inscription is too worn out to decipher.

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Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālarjuna
Date: undated
Grant: unknown
Donee: the (Ra)mya monastery (vihāra)

DK63: Sīrpur Ānandaprabha Vihāra Stone Inscription

Provenance: Sīrpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālarjuna
Date: undated
Opening: Success! May the attractive, extraordinary, indescribable, marvelous lotus of the feet of Sugata (i.e. Buddha) fill us with joy; [this lotus of the feet] which has never withered although it is being touched constantly by the beams of the moon, which has not been deformed even by a mass of snow, which cannot be gone away even if it is hurled by the arising uncontrollable wind at the time of the universal destruction and which has been brought into being by the ordinance (kalpa) free from riches (i.e. by the way of life as a monk)!  

Grant: a free food facility (sattra) and housing
Donees: the monks of a monastery in Sīrpara
Donor: the monk (bhikṣu) Ānandaprabha
Author: Sumaṅgala, son of Tāradatta


\[\text{om.} \text{(symbol)}\]
\[\text{muktaśrīkalpajātaḥ satatam api karaiḥ sprśyamāṇaḥ sudhāṃśor} \]
\[\text{no vā mānaḥ kadācin na ca himanivahenāḥ nīto 'nyathātvam|} \]
\[\text{nodyatproddāmakalpākasamayāmarutpreraṇasyāpi gamyo} \]
\[\text{ramyo 'nyāḥ ko 'pi guśmān sukhyatū sugataśyādbhūtāḥ pādāpadmaḥ||} 1 \]

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Engraver: Prabhākara

DK64: Sirpur Buddhaghoṣa Vihāra Stone Inscription

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Grant: the village of Śarkarālaka
Donee: the teacher (acārya) Buddhaghoṣa, pupil of Jinaghoṣa and grand-pupil of Ratnaghoṣa

DK65: Sirpur Vihāra Buddhist Fragment

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Grant: unknown
Donee: the (Dha)rmya monastery (vihāra)

DK66: Sirpur Suraṅga Tīla Fragment

Provenance: Sirpur, Mahasamund District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
dynasty: Pāṇḍava kings
King: Śivagupta Bālārjuna
Date: undated
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Grant: unknown village
Author: Śilāditya
References: SHASTRI 1995 Part II, p. 382 (iv); JAIN 2005, p. 155

DK67: Malhār Plates

Provenance: Malhār, Bilāspur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: nail-headed
Dynasty: Amara kings
King: Pravarabhaṭṭāraka
Issued from: Prasannapura
Date: forty-first regnal year
Opening: Hail!
Grant: the village of Kunturapadraka in the Pūrvarāṣṭra
Donee: the Rgvedin (Bahvra) and Dīkṣita Agnichandrasvāmin of the Kāpyāṅgirasagotra, son of Dīkṣita Durgasvāmin
Donor: Vyāghrarāja, the younger brother (anuja) of king Pravarabhaṭṭāraka of the Amara family and son of Jaya-bhaṭṭāraka
Engraver: Jyeṣṭhasiṃha

DK68: Āraṅg Plates

Provenance: Āraṅg, Raipur District, Chhattisgarh
Script: early Nāgarī
Dynasty: Śūra kings
King: Bhāmasena II
Issued from: the river Suvarṇanadī
Date: 182 Gupta Era (501/2 AD)
Opening: Success! Hail!
Grant: the village of Vāṭapallikā in the Doṇḍā viṣaya

573 The inscription is too worn out to decipher, only the word ‘village’ (grāmo) is readable.
574 svasti.
575 siddham (symbol) svasti.
Donees: the Ṛgvedins (Bahvrca) Harisvāmin (1) and Bappasvāmin (2) of the Bhāradvājagotra
Executor: prince (rājaputra) Subhadra
Engraver: Lakṣmaṇa
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Figure A.1: Overview of the places where the records were found
Appendix 1

Specification of the markers:

1. Adbhär (1 record) – Dk29
2. Amgura (1 record) – Dk4
3. Āraṅg (5 records) – Dk6, Dk11, Dk23–24 & Dk68
4. Baloda (1 record) – Dk28
5. Bamhanī (1 record) – Dk19
6. Bārdūlā (1 record) – Dk33
7. Boṇḍā (2 records) – Dk25 & Dk36
8. Būrlikhār (2 records) – Dk21 & Dk48
9. Dhamatari (1 record) – Dk9
10. Junvānī (1 record) – Dk47
11. Kauvatal (1 record) – Dk12
12. Kharod (1 record) – Dk22
13. Kurud (1 record) – Dk2
14. Lodhiā (1 record) – Dk46
15. Malgā (1 record) – Dk18
16. Malhār (10 records) – Dk3, Dk5, Dk7, Dk16, Dk20, Dk32, Dk49–50, Dk53 & Dk67
17. Nahna (1 record) – Dk8
18. Pīparḍūlā (1 record) – Dk1
19. Pokhra (1 record) – Dk17
20. Raipur (1 record) – Dk13
21. Rājim (1 record) – Dk26
Dakṣiṇa Kosala

22. Sāraṅgarh (1 record) – Dk14

23. Senakapāṭ (1 record) – Dk52


25. Ṭhākurdiyā (1 record) – Dk15
Appendix 2

Stray Būrīkhār Copper Plate of Śūrabala

Plate A.1: Stray Būrīkhār plate of Śūrabala

This stray copper plate was found originally in Būrīkhār, in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. Based on the content and the script, it is assigned to the early Pāṇḍava king Śūrabala, of whom two complete copper-plate charters are preserved as well (Dk19 and Dk20). The record is written in nail-headed characters and based on the contents, in comparison with the two complete charters, it is clear that this plate was meant to be the second plate in a set. The fact that the backside of the plate is not used is peculiar and raises the suspicion that either the charter has never been finished,

or the engraver deviated from the standard and used more plates. In the present plate, two verses are devoted to the eulogy to Śūrabala’s grandfather Nāgabala, whereas the other two charters only use one verse to celebrate this king. The fact that the description of Nāgabala is expanded here may indicate that the charter to which the plate belonged was issued later than Śūrabala’s other two charters (i.e. after his eighth regnal year).  

Today, the plate is in the possession of Mr. Sanjeey Pandey, who inherited it from his father and who was kind enough to invite me to his home in Malhār to have a look at it and take photographs.

**EMENDED, ORTHOGRAPHIC EDITION**

(tasya putras tatpādānudhyātah paramamāheśvarah paramabrahmānyah paramamaḥ)

(tasya putras tatpādānudhyātah paramamāheśvarah paramabrahmānyah paramamaḥ)

Em.:

(tasya putras tatpādānudhyātah paramamāheśvarah paramabrahmānyah paramamaḥ)

(tasya putras tatpādānudhyātah paramamāheśvarah paramabrahmānyah paramamaḥ)

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577 The text on Nāgabala only expanded in size (two verses instead of one), and not so much in content, for the first verse of the eulogy is identical to the one found Śūrabala’s charter from Malhār (Dk20) and the second verse roughly corresponds to the verse in Śūrabala’s Bamhanī charter (Dk19).

578 His father, mr. Raghunandan Prasad Pandey, was the author of the booklet *Malhār Darśana (Mallālapattana)* published in 2002.

579 Sircar has argued that *paramaguru-devatādhi-devatāvīśesaḥ* should be emended to *paramaguru-devatādhi-devatāvīśesaḥ*, because it is an elaboration of the epithet *paramadaivata*. He translates the compound with ‘one who is a great teacher (of his subjects) and devotee of the gods and the supreme god’. *SIRCAR 1965, pp. 347–348 and SIRCAR 1974, pp. 265–270*. One flaw in his interpretation is that the word *adhi-devata* cannot refer to the king’s devotion to ‘the supreme god’, because that devotion is already expressed in the epithet *paramamāheśvara*. A more sensible interpretation of the compound that does not need any emendation of the original text, as suggested to me by Yuko Yokochi (in a personal communication), is to translate it as ‘the distinguished one, who is entirely devoted to his teacher/elders and deities’.

580 Em.: *śrīmāṇī* Inschr.

581 The character for *śrī* seems to be corrupted.
This prose passage is the same in Dk19 and Dk20, which is why the first part of the text can easily be reconstructed. Cf. CHHABRA EI 27 (1947–1948), pp. 132–145, lines 8–11 and SITARAMAN & SHARMA JESI 3 (1977), pp. 183–193, lines 13–15.

583 Em.: bhramatpatākukūlīntārā ḍh.Inscr. As an adjective phrase describing the elephants, this compound should be in the instrumental.

584 Em.: paraṁāḥ Inscr. (unmetrical).

585 Em.: raṇāgrībhūmaḥ Inscr.


587 Em.: susceṭṭhaḥ Inscr. (unmetrical).

588 Em.: karidraḥ Inscr.

589 Em.: prasrutaḥ Inscr. (unmetrical).

590 Em.: tainā Inscr. The construction of this demonstrative pronoun seems to be a mix-up between the instrumental plural (taīs) and the instrumental singular (tena). Emending the word to tena, so it can function as a transitional word ‘for that reason’ gives the best meaning to the sentence.

591 Verse in the Vasantaṭiliṭaka metre (14): ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ . See note 599.

592 Em.: putra Inscr.

593 Em.: śrīmāṇ Inscr.

594 This prose passage is the same in Dk19 and Dk20, except that the word śrīmaṇ is missing in the Bahlani plates (Dk19). Cf. CHHABRA EI 27 (1947–1948), pp. 132–145, lines 13–15 and SITARAMAN & SHARMA JESI 3 (1977), pp. 183–193, lines 18–21.

595 Em.: idro Inscr.
Dakṣiṇa Kosalā

audāryacāturyaḥ (samanvitāyāḥ)\(^{596}\)
(putraḥ prasūto ’malacārakāntih)
(śailendra-pratryā iva kārttikeyaḥ)\(^{597}\)

TRANSLATION:

His (i.e. Vatsarāja’s) son – who was favoured by him (i.e. his respected father), who was entirely devoted to Śiva, who was the foremost patron of brahmins, the distinguished one who was entirely devoted to his teacher/elders and deities – was the illustrious mahārāja Nāgabala, born from the illustrious queen Dronābhāṭṭārikā.\(^{598}\)

He whose army – surrounded by the glittering of flashing weapons, with elephants that have their temples moist with the flow of rut-fluid and the space in between (their temples) filled with fluttering banners – shines on the van of the battlefield.

The dust scattered over a long way by the falling hoofs (of his horses), along the road that his elephants are said to have followed, that (dust) is settled by the water sprouting from (their, i.e. the elephants’) large trunks. Therefore he is known by the name of king Nāgabala (‘Elephant Force’).\(^{599}\)

\(^{596}\) Em.: audāryacāturya\(^o\) Insr.

\(^{597}\) Verse in the Upajāti metre (11): – – – – – – – and – – – – – – – –. The missing pādas can be completed based on the text of Dk19 and Dk20, in which the same verse is used to celebrate the birth of Nāgabala’s son. Cf. Chhabra EI 27 (1947–1948), pp. 132–145, lines 16–17 and Sitaraman & Sharma JESI 3 (1977), pp. 183–193, lines 21–23.

\(^{598}\) On the meaning of pādānudhyāta ‘favoured by the respected’, cf. Ferrier & Törzsök 2008. Sanderson sees the use of the phrase paramabrahmanyā ‘foremost patron of brahmins’, collated with paramamāheśvaru ‘entirely devoted to Śiva’, as one expression of the growth to dominance of Śaivism in the Brahmanical tradition (see also Chapter 2). Sanderson 2009, p. 11, note 7 and p. 216.

\(^{599}\) A different verse with a similar meaning is used to eulogize Nāgabala in the Bāmhānī plates:

At the time of his (Nāgabala’s) march, the roads having been pounded down by the hoof-beats of his steeds, the earth darkens (all) the quarters, dust making every corner dry and dreary, (but) his elephants, with their temples soiled by the ichor, instantly restore serenity, having moistened it (the earth) with the
After him, his (i.e. Nāgabala’s) son – who was favoured by him (i.e. his respected father), who was entirely devoted to Śiva, who was the foremost patron of brahmans, the distinguished one who was entirely devoted to his teacher/elders and deities – was the illustrious mahārāja Bharata, born from the illustrious queen Indrabhaṭṭārikā.

Like Kārttikeya to Śailendraputrī, to her (i.e. Indrabhaṭṭārikā) – who possessed the virtues of compassion and integrity, and who was fully endowed with generosity and amiability – was born a son ‘Indra’, whose beauty was spotless and lovely.

spray (which they habitually emit from their trunks).


trans 

em.: yataḥ Ed.)

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Nederlandse samenvatting (Dutch summary)

Dit proefschrift doet verslag van een onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van het Śivaïsme in Dakṣiṇa Kosala in de periode van de zesde en zevende eeuw. Diverse studies hebben aangetoond dat met name deze periode belangrijk is geweest voor de ontwikkeling en verspreiding van de religie rondom de god Siva in India en ook daarbuiten. Belangrijke factoren waren onder andere dat er nieuwe vormen van Śivaïsme ontstonden die toegankelijk waren voor alle lagen van de bevolking en dat koningshuizen sterk betrokken raakten bij de religie, waardoor (financiële) ondersteuning toenam. De popularisering van het Śivaïsme gaf ook een impuls aan de productie van religieuze teksten waarin theologieën, mythen, filosofieën en rituelen werden vastgelegd voor zowel ingewijden als leken. Een voorbeeld van zo’n tekst is de Skandapurāṇa, waarvan het ontstaan, de samenstelling en de verspreiding over India voor het Instituut voor Indische Talen en Culturen van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen de afgelopen vijfentwintig jaar een belangrijk studieonderwerp is geweest (vanaf 2013 voortgezet in Leiden). Het onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van het Śivaïsme in Dakṣiṇa Kosala maakte deel uit van een overkoepelend project omtrent de Skandapurāṇa in relatie tot de contemporaine religieuze en culturele ontwikkelingen in Noord-India: A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Composition and Spread of the Skandapurāṇa.

Dakṣiṇa Kosala, het gebied dat in dit proefschrift centraal staat, overlapt min of meer met het gebied dat de huidige deelstaat Chhattisgarh en de districten Sambalpur, Balangir en Kalahandi van de deelstaat Odisha beslaat. Vanaf het einde van de vijfde eeuw tot en met het begin van de zevende eeuw werd dit gebied achtereenvolgens door de koningen van Śarabhapatra en de Pāṇḍava koningen van Mekalā en Śrīpura (het huidige Sirpur) geregeerd. Een grote verzameling inscripties van de heersende koningen en archeologisch materiaal uit diverse opgravingen (tempels, beelden, etc.) hebben aangetoond dat met name aan het einde van deze periode het Śivaïsme in Dakṣiṇa Kosala al sterk was ontwikkeld. Een belangrijk doel van het onderzoek was dan ook om de politieke, sociale, economische en geografische omstandigheden te identificeren die het gebied en met name de hoofdstad Śrīpura tot een goede voedingsbodem maakten voor de ontwikkeling van het Śivaïsme. Met het oog op het overkoepelende project, was een tweede doel om na te gaan of de Skandapurāṇa een rol speelde in religieuze leven in Dakṣiṇa Kosala.
Voor het onderzoek is gebruikt gemaakt van twee primaire bronnen: de inscripties die door de koningen van Šarabhapura en de Pāṇḍava koningen werden gepubliceerd en het archeologische materiaal uit opgravingen in het gebied. Na een korte inleiding geven de eerste twee hoofdstukken van het proefschrift een politieke en religieuze analyse van Dakṣiṇa Kosala op basis van de inscripties. Een belangrijke naam in deze hoofdstukken is die van Śivagupta ‘Bālārjuna’. Hij was de laatste Pāṇḍava koning die het gebied regeerde en kende een bijzonder lange regeerperiode van minstens zevenenvijftig jaar. Uit zijn inscripties blijkt dat hij een belangrijke sponsor van het Śivaïsme was en samen met zijn twee echtgenotes liet hij een heel tempelcomplex ter ere van Śiva bouwen in het centrum van Śrīpura. De volgende twee hoofdstukken bevatten een analyse van het Śiva-gerelateerde archeologische materiaal uit de betreffende periode. Daarin speelt de toenmalige hoofdstad Śrīpura een belangrijke rol: het huidige Sirpur is bezaaid met opgegraven tempelresten en getuigt van de tijd en het geld die destijds aan religieuze ontwikkelingen werden besteed. Het proefschrift wordt afgesloten met een conclusie en twee appendices. De eerste appendix geeft een opsomming van de belangrijkste gegevens voor alle achttien inscripties van de koningen van Šarabhapura en de Pāṇḍava koningen en de tweede appendix bevat een editie van een koperplaat inscriptie die nog niet eerder werd gepubliceerd.

Het bronmateriaal laat zien dat het Śivaïsme tegen het einde van de zesde en het begin van de zevende eeuw al ontwikkeld was tot de dominante religieuze stroming in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. Pāṇḍava koning Śivagupta speelde daarin een belangrijke faciliterende rol door de bouw van zijn tempelcomplex, de financiële ondersteuning die hij gaf en ook de nauwe band die hij onderhield met de verschillende priesters in zijn complex. De regeerperiode van Śivagupta kwam op precies het juiste moment om de ontwikkeling van het Śivaïsme positief te kunnen beïnvloeden; zijn voorgangers hadden de macht over het gebied al geconsolideerd, door de lengte van zijn bewind was er decennialang geen politieke onrust over troonopvolging en met de Maukhariërs in het noorden als invloedrijke familierelatie (aan moederskant) was er geen aanleiding tot oorlog. Śivagupta’s regeerperiode was een periode van stabiliteit, vrede en welvaart, waardoor tijd en geld besteed konden worden aan religieuze en culturele ontwikkelingen. Er zijn geen duidelijke aanwijzingen dat de Skandapurāṇa een rol speelde in het religieuze leven van Dakṣiṇa Kosala. Het enige dat geconcludeerd kan worden, is dat mythologische voorstellingen op tempels in het gebied eenzelfde narratieve ontwikkeling van Śiva-gerelateerde mythologie laten zien als de Skandapurāṇa.
Natasja Bosma was born on November 15, 1981, in the village of Zevenhuizen in the Netherlands. From 2001 to 2008 she studied Psychology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen, where she completed the two-year research master Religious Symbols and Traditions in 2008 with the master’s thesis Aum Namaha Śivāya. Early Śaiva Sects in Dakṣiṇa Kosala. It was indeed during this research master that she first became interested in the area of Dakṣiṇa Kosala. From 2008 to 2013 she was a research assistant at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen, where she also taught classes in (Indian) Iconography. Her research was part of the research project A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Composition and Spread of the Skandapurāṇa, which was funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), and it dealt with the development of Śaivism in Dakṣiṇa Kosala through the study of epigraphy and archaeological remains. The present dissertation is the end result of this research.