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Kings as Patrons of Monasteries and Stūpas in Early Āndhra: Sada Rulers, the Rājagiriya Fraternity, and the “Great Shrine” at Amaravati*

VINCENT TOURNIER

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Abstract: Despite the flourishing of Buddhism in the Āndhra region of Eastern Deccan between the 1st century BCE and the 2nd century CE, our knowledge of the role of political power in facilitating its institutional development remains very fragmentary. This article surveys evidence of the involvement of rulers of the Sada dynasty (r. late 1st century BCE–late 1st century CE) in the establishment of monasteries and *stūpas* in the Krishna and Godavari river valleys. In particular, it discusses an exceptional relief on a coping stone from Amaravati *stūpa* preserved at the British Museum, whose accompanying inscription has thus far been neglected. A close reading of the iconography of this exceptional piece, in the light of the study of its inscription, shows how the visual narrative is highly relevant to the issue of royal patronage in Āndhra during the period of the Sada rule. Indeed, I argue that the relief showcases the royal establishment of the monastic complex of Rājagiri. In fact, members of the lineage stemming from this monastery played a very important role in the development of the Amaravati *stūpa*, and endeavored to stress, visually and epigraphically, their proximity to the royal power.

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Keywords: Indian Buddhist Monasticism, Āndhra, Mahisaka district, Amaravati, Vaddamanu, royal patronage, Sada and Sātavāhana dynasties, *nikāyas*, Rājagīriyas.

1. Introduction

At the turn of the Common Era, the Āndhra region was undergoing a gradual process of political integration: from the late 1st century BCE, the Sada dynasty, which appears to have originated from Kalinga, dominated a large part of the fertile Krishna-Godavari *doāb* leading to coastal Āndhra, before the Sātavāhanas took over at the end of the 1st or the very beginning of the 2nd century CE.¹ The relative stability ensured by these dynastic powers and their feudatories, along with the development of communication networks and the economic prosperity stimulated by Roman trade, likely favored the remarkable flourishing of Buddhism during this period.²

Indeed, these centuries saw the mushrooming of *stūpas* and monasteries, yet despite the wealth of the epigraphic evidence the traces of a direct involvement of political power in this impressive development are few and far between. Conversely, it is under less favorable economic circumstances, and when the material evidence points at the loosening of the web of Buddhist sites in the region, after the decline of the Ikṣvāku dynasty in the early 4th century CE, that we possess the richest epigraphic evidence of support to the *saṅgha* by kings.³ This contrast may plausibly reflect changes in the patterns of patronage. But the lack of visibility of direct royal support in the earlier period may also be explained, at least in part, by the evolving nature of our corpus.

¹ For the Sada rulers, their chronology, and the advent of the Sātavāhanas in the lower Krishna valley, likely during the reign of Vāsiṭṭhīputta Siri-Puṣumāvi (ca 85–125 CE), see Akira Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great Stupa at Amaravati (ca. 300 BCE–300 CE)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 40–42; Shailendra Bhandare, “Money and the Monuments: Coins of the Sada Dynasty of the Coastal Andhra Region,” in *Amaravati: The Art of an Early Buddhist Monument in Context*, ed. Akira Shimada and Michael Willis (London: British Museum Press, 2016), 37–45. For additional numismatic evidence, suggesting some lingering Sada presence in the 2nd century CE, see Shailendra Bhandare, “The Numismatic Landscape of the Āndhra Country between the 1st and 4th centuries CE,” in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

² See, for instance, Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 123–132.

³ For a discussion of the rich evidence associated with Viṣṇukunḍin rule of the Krishna-Godavari *doāb*, see Vincent Tournier, “A Tide of Merit: Royal Donors, Tāmaparṇīya Monks, and the Buddha’s Awakening in 5th–6th-Century Āndhradeśa,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 61, no. 1 (2018): 20–96.

Indeed, from the 4th century onwards, the production of limestone sculptures and architecture, which was an ideal support for durable inscriptions, dramatically declines, while copper-plate charters emerge as a new epigraphic type to record donations. Since these charters were generally the product of royal chanceries, they shed important light on a kind of patronage poorly documented in earlier periods, during which similar documents may have been mainly transmitted on perishable supports. The earliest copper-plate charter found within the boundaries of present-day India comes from Āndhra, and already shows that copper plates function as “permanent surrogates” of official registers (Skt. *nibandha*) meant for the grantees.⁴ This charter (EIAD 55) was issued by the Ikṣvāku king Ehavala-Cāntamūla, who ruled in the last decades of the 3rd century CE. It represents the only explicit evidence, in the rich corpus dating from the rule of the Ikṣvāku in Āndhra, of direct support to monastic institutions by a king.⁵ The charter’s *dispositio* details the endowment of two patches of plowable land, to serve for the upkeep of the great monastery at Pithuṇḍa, where the king had earlier established a *cātu(s)sāla*, that is, a set of monastic residences arranged in four wings around a quadrangular courtyard.⁶ It further stipulates

⁴ See Emmanuel Francis, “Indian Copper-Plate Grants: Inscriptions or Documents?,” in *Manuscripts and Archives: Comparative Views on Record-Keeping*, ed. Alessandro Bausi et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 397.

⁵ As is well-known, inscriptions from the Ikṣvāku period show ample evidence of the active support of queens and royal ladies in the establishment of *stūpas* and monasteries. Three queens, for instance, contributed to the building project of the great *stūpa* of site 1, which was led by King Vāsiṭṭhīputta Siri-Cāntamūla’s sister Cāntisiri. See EIAD 5, 10, 12. For the set of *āyāka* pillar inscriptions from site 1 and the self-representation and agency of royal women, see Mekhola Gomes (with an appendix by Stefan Baums), “Ties of Blood on Monuments of Piety: Buddhism, Kinship, and Rule in Āndhradeśa,” in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming). Two monasteries (sites 5 and 7–8) were further sponsored by queens, and another gift records the establishment of an image at a monastic residence (*pariveṇa*) owned by an unnamed great queen, at site 106. See EIAD 44–46, 51, 54.

⁶ The term *cātu(s)sāla* (Skt. *cātuḥśāla*) occurs in inscriptions of the Deccan to refer to monastic compounds. See EIAD 21, l. 6; 28, l. 2; IBH III Kanh 28, ll. 11–12. See also Jean Philippe Vogel, “Prakrit Inscriptions from a Buddhist Site at Nagarjunikonda,” *Epigraphia Indica* 20 (1929–1930): 28; DP, s.v. *catu(s)sāla*. For the term *catuḥśāla* in literary descriptions of lay residences, see Dieter Schlingloff, *Fortified Cities of Ancient India: A Comparative Study* (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2013), 28–29, 81.

that the endowment of each parcel should be consigned onto registers, which in this region would presumably have been in palm leaf.⁷

During the period preceding the emergence of copper-plate charters, we so far possess very little evidence pointing at the establishment or the endowment of a monastery by either a Sada or a Sātavāhana ruler. This contrasts with the wealth of evidence available, for instance, at the Western Deccan cave sites during the same period.⁸ Still, one exceptional series of records from Alluru (Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh) and dating to the late 1st–early 2nd-century evinces some royal support during the period, and underscores the lacunary state of our evidence. This is a series of records engraved in two nearly identical copies on large limestone pillars (EIAD 200–201).⁹ The extant portions of these pillars record respectively at least six (EIAD 201) or seven (EIAD 200) separate gifts of buildings, fields, goods—including cattle and unfree laborers—and money. These appear to have been transposed onto stone from a register in perishable material, at the initiative of the beneficiaries.¹⁰ The first preserved gift consists in “the giving away as pious gift of the monastery (*vihāra*), together with a platform (*thali* ?), a pavilion, a shrine (*cetiya*, i.e., a *stūpa*), a

⁷ In our online edition of the record, with Stefan Baums, Arlo Griffiths, and Ingo Strauch, we understand the term *nipoli*, misread *ti poli* by Harry Falk in his previous edition of the inscription, as an abbreviation for a Middle Indo-Aryan expression equivalent to Sanskrit *nibandhapustake likhitavyam*, “to be written in the register.” See EIAD 55, ll. 16, 20. Compare Harry Falk, “The Pātagaṇḍigūḍem Copper-Plate Grant of the Ikṣvāku King Ehavala Cāntamūla,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6 (1999–2000): 279.

⁸ For a recent synthesis of the evidence for royal patronage in the Western Deccan, see Akira Shimada, “Royal and Non-Royal Patronage in the Early Deccan,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 41 (2018): 473–507.

⁹ The abraded pillar bearing that second copy of the document was identified and preliminarily documented, in January 2019, at the Bapu Museum in Vijayawada (Acc. No. 414), by Arlo Griffiths and myself.

¹⁰ The formal parallel existing between the sentences recording gifts of land and those preceding the abbreviation *nipoli* in EIAD 55 (see n. 7 above) is especially striking. Moreover, in EIAD 200 (l. 15), a sentence mentioning another gift of land (°*atape* °*utarapase* °*bāpana* °*nivatanāni*) is abruptly inserted into the record of a gift of money presented by the *mahātalavara*. That sentence is missing from EIAD 201 and looks like an interpolation into the last gift recorded in EIAD 200. This is best explained by assuming that a gift consigned on a register was misplaced while being transcribed onto stone. The hypothesis that the texts transmitted by EIAD 200 and 201 derive from registers on perishable supports will be developed further in a forthcoming edition and study of the Alluru inscriptions, in collaboration with Kelsey Martini.

quadrangular compound, and a garden” by an unnamed donor.¹¹ That this donor may have been a king is suggested by the following gifts of land, the first three of which are explicitly said to be “given by the king” (*rājadatta*). But the king is not named, nor is the *mahātalavara* (i.e., a local chieftain placed under the authority of the ruler) mentioned later as having granted a non-decreasing capital investment (*akhayanīvi*) of a thousand “old *kārṣāpaṇas*.”¹² The record ends by indicating the identity of the recipients, the monastic order of the Puvvaseliyas (Skt. Pūrvaśailas), whose control over the local monastery is confirmed by a later inscription, also from Alluru, dated during the reign of the Ikṣvāku king Ehavala-Cāntamūla (EIAD 49).

Discussing the evidence in the Deccan in general, and at Amaravati in particular, Akira Shimada noticed that “the role of kings in the construction of *stupa*-s is hardly visible in epigraphic evidence.”¹³ This led him to stress the eminently collective dimension of patronage, as far as the central monument at early Buddhist cult sites is concerned. It is indeed striking that, out of the hundreds of donative inscriptions recorded at the major *stūpa* sites of Amaravati and Kanaganahalli, which typically mark the donation of individual structural elements, not one records a gift by a ruler. However, this does not mean that kings did not leave a lasting and influential legacy as establishers or sponsors of Buddhist monuments, nor, in fact, that they did not display

¹¹ See EIAD 200, ll. 1–2: (1) (*sa*)*tha*[*lisa*]*maḍavasac*[*et*](*iyasacātusāla*)(2)*sa-rāmo vihāro deyadhamapariṇā*(*ko*).... Compare S. Sankaranarayanan, “A Brahmi Inscription from Alluru,” *Sri Venkateswara University Oriental Journal* 20 (1977): 87. My reading and reconstruction of the first element of the compound (*saṭhali*-) is tentative, but it is supported by EIAD 56, l. 4: ... *devakulam thali*[*m*][*ca*] [*kāri*]*tā*. MIA *thali* / *thali* corresponds to Skt. *sthālī*, on which see PW, s.v. *sthala* 3). My reconstruction of the end of the first line relies on the parallelism with the as yet unpublished text of EIAD 201.

¹² For the original meaning of MIA *akhayanīvi* / Skt. *akṣayanīvi*, commonly but imprecisely rendered “permanent endowment,” see Kelsey Martini, “The Origin of *Akṣayanīvi* and the Historical Context of the *Arthaśāstra*: Convergences of Early Indian Epigraphic and Literary Data,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 65, no. 2 (2022): 144–169. In EIAD 200 and 201, I interpret *akhayanīvi* to qualify specifically the gift of money by the *mahātalavara*, and not the preceding list of goods or fields. Compare Ingo Strauch, “Money for Rituals: *Akṣayanīvi* and Related Inscriptions from Āndhradeśa,” in *Power, Presence and Space: South Asian Rituals in Archaeological Context*, ed. Henry Albery, Jens-Uwe Hartmann, and Himanshu Prabha Ray (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 199, 203.

¹³ Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 163. For general remarks on the collective patronage of Buddhist monuments, see also Vidya Dehejia, “The Collective and Popular Basis of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, 100 BC–AD 250,” in *The Powers of Art*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 35–45.

any generosity towards them. Besides the widespread tendency to construe an Aśokan pedigree for local Buddhist *stūpas*,¹⁴ the elaborate decorative programs of both the Amaravati and Kanaganahalli *stūpas* further showcase the support by kings historically closer to the development of these sites. This is well-established for Kanaganahalli: one of the reliefs from the *stūpa*'s dome represents a king facing two monks (fig. 1, see p. 51). He holds a ewer (Skt. *bhṛṅgāra*) with which he is about to pour water on the stretched hands of one of the monks, with a female dwarf at his feet holding a plate with flowers. The scene is identified by a label inscription (KnI 7; N&vH I.7) as representing king Sātakaṇṇi—one of the five Sātavāhana kings represented on the dome and identified by labels—presenting silver flowers to the Great Shrine (MIA *mahācetiya*, i.e., the *stūpa*).¹⁵ Kanaganahalli has been considered unique in its display of a king of a currently ruling dynasty as a donor,¹⁶ yet a parallel and much more elaborate narrative repre-

¹⁴ The fact that the “Adhālaka Great Shrine” was labelled a *dharmarājika*, a title assumed by *stūpas* purportedly established by Aśoka, is obviously a facet of the site's Mauryan legacy. See Vincent Tournier, “Buddhist Lineages along the Southern Routes: On Two Nikāyas Active at Kanaganahalli under the Sātavāhanas,” in *Archaeologies of the Written: Indian, Tibetan, and Buddhist Studies in Honour of Cristina Scherrer-Schaub*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Vincent Eltschinger, and Marta Sernesi (Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli “L'Orientale,” 2020), 881.

¹⁵ On this inscribed panel, see Oskar von Hinüber, “Buddhist Texts and Buddhist Images: New Evidence from Kanaganahalli (Karnataka/India),” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2015* 19 (2016): 13–15; Andrew Ollett, “Sātavāhana and Nāgārjuna: Religion and the Sātavāhana State,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 41 (2018): 450–451; Monika Zin, *The Kanaganahalli Stupa: An Analysis of the 60 Massive Slabs Covering the Dome* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2018), 123–124. Both von Hinüber and Ollett agree in identifying Sātakaṇṇi as Gotamīputta Sātakaṇṇi (r. ca 60–84 CE). I had earlier expressed doubts about this identification (Tournier, “A Tide of Merit,” 25–26, n. 12). However, I am now inclined to think this identification is indeed the most plausible, considering the importance of Gotamīputta Sātakaṇṇi and his successor Vāsīṭhīputta Siri-Puṣumāvi at Kanaganahalli. The importance of Gotamīputta's legacy in the area is provided by inscribed fragments (KnI 406, 440) recovered from the “Khatal” mound at Sannati. Ollett, Griffiths, and I have argued elsewhere that these fragments should in fact be interpreted as parts of a large memorial dedicated to this king during the reign of his successor. See Andrew Ollett, Vincent Tournier, and Arlo Griffiths, “Early Memorial Stones from the Deccan (up to 300 CE),” in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming), § 6.1.

¹⁶ von Hinüber, “Buddhist Texts and Buddhist Images,” 13. See also Zin, *The Kanaganahalli Stupa*, 26.

sensation of royal generosity is arguably also found at Amaravati. Indeed, it is possible to identify the royal patron portrayed on a large and beautiful relief figured on a coping stone of the railing (*vedikā*) of the great *stūpa* with a king of Āndhra possibly connected with the Sadas. This identification is supported by a so-far unpublished inscription, containing an epigraphic label alongside a donative record. Taken together, the evidence from Kanaganahalli, Amaravati, and possibly Al-luru may thus allow us to nuance the paradigm of “collective patronage” as the sole explanatory model for the flourishing of Buddhist monuments in central and eastern Deccan around the turn of the Common Era.

In the following pages, I undertake to present and contextualize the important new evidence from Amaravati, which has implications for our understanding of patronage before the advent of the Sātavāhanas in the lower Krishna valley. I first explore the echoes of Sada rulers as founders of monasteries that reverberated among their successors in the Āndhra region and discuss their known and alleged association with several Buddhist sites. Turning to the above-mentioned *vedikā* coping stone from Amaravati, I propose a new interpretation of its visual narrative, which is supported by a closer reading of the iconographic details than was heretofore proposed, and by the accompanying inscription. The donative portion of the record leads me to review the available evidence on the Rājagiriya, a little-known monastic order (*nikāya*) whose head monastery—the “Royal Mountain” (*rājagiri*)—might have been located near Amaravati. I will argue that this lineage played a significant role in the development of the Amaravati *stūpa* during the rule of the Sadas. Finally, I discuss some aspects of its self-representation, showing how members of this lineage were eager to stress their proximity to temporal power, alongside their spiritual accomplishments and doctrinal orientation.

2. Echoes of the Sadas’ involvement in establishing monasteries

The notion that some of the major monastic sites in Āndhra were established by kings of old is given expression in Xuanzang’s (600/602–664) famous *Datang xiyuji* 大唐西域記. In his description of the realm of Dhānyakāṭaka (馱那羯磔迦, MIA Dhañṇakaḍa, mod. Dharanikota near Amaravati), which he also calls “Greater Āndhra”

(大安達邏),¹⁷ the Chinese pilgrim refers to the Pūrvaśaila and the Aparāśaila monasteries that he locates respectively to the East and the West of the capital. He then notices that these (or perhaps just the latter, the Chinese is ambiguous) were established for the Buddha by a king of yore.¹⁸ This statement is somewhat of a trope in Xuanzang's report, and the presentation of the Buddha as beneficiary of the king's generosity is obviously anachronistic. It merely reflects a vague notion that a past king must have been involved in establishing the head monasteries of those two *nikāyas* that remained important in the lower Krishna valley in the early 7th century, that is, shortly after the fall of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty, which included several supporters of Buddhist institutions. Alas, there is not much that can be done to tie this tradition with earlier evidence. Although I have presented above the possibility that the monastery at Alluru might have been established by an unnamed king, and this is also the earliest known monastery which we know was controlled by the Pūrvaśailas, we have no specific reason to believe that this establishment—located to the north of Dhānyakāṭa(ka) and not to its east—was their head center, and nothing indicates that the site was still active at the time of Xuanzang.¹⁹

A more precise allusion to the founding of a monastery by a king of yore may be found in a 6th-century copper-plate charter of

¹⁷ Note that, in the following discussion, I use the expression “greater Āndhra” in a broader sense than Xuanzang, to point to an area including but extending beyond the Telugu-speaking region of present-day Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. In particular, I think that it is especially meaningful to include the Sannati/Kanaganahalli area, in the Gulbarga district of Karnataka, in the early cultural history of the Āndhra region. There is indeed strong architectural, visual, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence showing the existence of close ties between this part of the Bhima basin and Western Telangana, on the one hand, and the lower Krishna-river valley, on the other hand. This is for instance reflected in the corpus of donative inscriptions from the great *stūpa* at Kanaganahalli, on which see pp. 25–27.

¹⁸ T. 2087, LI, 930c18–19: 此國先王為佛建焉. See Li Rongxi, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (Berkeley, CA: BDK America, 1996), 279. For a new translation and assessment of Xuanzang's account of the Āndhra country, see Max Deeg (with an appendix by Peter Zieme), “Chinese Reports about Buddhism in Early Āndhra,” in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: forthcoming).

¹⁹ A detailed discussion of the early evidence concerning the Pūrvaśaila and the Aparāśaila *nikāyas* will be published separately, in Vincent Tournier, “Following the Śaila Trail — I. Epigraphic Evidence on the History of a Regional Buddhist School” (in preparation).

Pr̥thivīśrīmūla (r. ca. 510–566).²⁰ This elusive character was a vassal and, for part of his reign, a rival of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin rulers in the lower Krishna region. Five of his charters have so far been recovered (EIAD 185–189), four of which are in support of Buddhist monasteries. The *dispositio* of the first set of his Kondavidu plates (EIAD 187), issued in the 25th year of his reign, deserves to be cited in full:²¹

(8) ya tālupākaviṣaye velpukoṇḍa°ūrukoṇḍamaddi(9)ceruvu°ātu-
kūrākhyagrāmamaddhyāvasthitaḥ kalvaceruṇḍa (10) nāma grā-
maḥ śrīmahāmeghavāhanapraṭiṣṭhāpitavarddhamā(11)nimahāvihā-
ranivāsaraterddhyānādhyayanakarmmanuṣṭhāna(12)parasyāryya-
bhikṣusaraṅghasya yathāsukhaṁ caturvīdhapratyaya(13)paribho-
gāya sarvvābādhaparihāreṇa sarvvādānaparivāraḥ (14) tāmraśāsa-
nikṛtya mahāmātrapuṇyaśāsanamātāmahī(15)puṇyaprāptiyarttham
pr̥dhivīśrīmūlarājena dattaḥ tad atra (16) śrutismṛtivilāsitadācārā-
nuṣṭhānaparais sarvvair eva (17) rājābhīr ayam asmadyo dhar-
mma °iti paripālaniyaḥ (18) hastikośavīrakośena

8. ya Emend yat. ✧ -°ūrukoṇḍa- -°urukoṇḍa- KS. ✧ 9. -°ātukūrākhyā-
-°atukūrākhyā- KS. ✧ -maddhyāvasthitaḥ -madhyavasthitaḥ KS. ✧ kal-
vaceruṇḍa kalvaceruṇḍa KS. ✧ 12. caturvīdhapratyaya- caturvīdha-
pratyāya- KS. ✧ 13. sarvvābādhapari- sarvvabādhapari- KS. KS corrects
<dha> to <dhā>, but the reading -bādḥāpari- is not attested anywhere in
these inscriptions. The reading as it stands could be corrected
sarvvabādhapari-, in which case one could argue that the scribe anticipated
correct sarvvā- further on in the line. Note, however, that the same reading
sarvvābādhaparihāreṇa is preserved in EIAD 175, l. 33; sarvvābādha-
parihāram is found in EIAD 170, l. 8. Therefore, it seems necessary to take
the compound as sarvva + ābādha-. ✧ 15. pr̥dhivī- pr̥thivī KS. Understand
pr̥thivī-. ✧ 15. tad atra tadānu KS. ✧ 18. hastikośavīrakośena The editor
of KS's publication (n. 15) proposes to correct to hastikośavīrakośābhyām.

The village named Kalvaceruṇḍa in the Tālupāka district, situated in the middle of the villages called Velpukoṇḍa, Ūrukoṇḍa, Maddiceruvu and Ātukūrā, has been given by king Pr̥thivīśrīmūla with complete exemption from taxes, with complete immunity from levies, after making a charter in copper, with a view to his maternal grandmother obtaining the merit of a grant entailing

²⁰ For the hypothesis of a single Pr̥thivīśrīmūla with a long reign and his tentative dates, see Tournier, “A Tide of Merit,” 22, n. 2.

²¹ EIAD 187, ll. 8–18. The inscription, reedited by Arlo Griffiths and myself, was first edited in V. V. Krishna Sastry, “Three Copper-Plate Grants of Prithvi-Sri Mularaja from Kondavidu,” *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India (Bharatiya Purabhilekha Patrika)* 16 (1990): 71–84 (abbreviated as KS in the apparatus). A more detailed apparatus may be found in the online edition of this record.

very copious merit, for the purpose of unrestricted (*yathāsukham*) use for the fourfold requisites by the noble community of monks, devoted to the execution of tasks such as meditation and study, delighted to reside in the *mahāvihāra* of Vardhamāni that had been established by Śrī-Mahāmeghavāhana—therefore it is to be safeguarded by all [future] kings, devoted to the execution of good conduct in this connection, as enjoined in revelation and tradition, [thinking:] “This is our foundation,” [and also] by the officer in charge of the [king’s] elephants (*hastikośa*) and that in charge of the [king’s] soldiers (*vīrakośa*).

The passage is particularly interesting for its clarification of the logic leading a king—in this instance a non-Buddhist king²²—to endow a monastery established by a predecessor, belonging to another dynasty, while at the same time enjoining future rulers to respect his legacy and safeguard the endowment. This is a common trope encountered in contemporary charters,²³ yet the long memory that this grant deploys is especially interesting. Indeed, as much as half a millennium, or more, may have elapsed between the past king referred to as the founder of the endowed monastery and Pṛthivīśrīmūla. This may be compared, for instance, to the inscription recording the repair and embellishment of a tank at Girinagara (mod. Girnar, Junagadh district, Gujarat) by Rudradāman in 150 CE, which refers to the original excavation of the structure by Puṣyagupta—the governor (*rāṣṭriya*) of the Maurya king Candragupta, who ruled in the last quarter of the 4th century BCE.²⁴

Mahāmeghavāhana, to whom the establishment of the Vardhamāni monastery is credited, is a title assumed by several rulers, two of them attested in the epigraphic record. The first is the “lord of Kalinga” (*kalīṅgādhipati*) Khāravela, named in his *res gestae* engraved at the Hathigumpha cave of Udayagiri in the 1st century BCE.²⁵ In Āndhra,

²² Indeed, Pṛthivīśrīmūla never expresses Buddhist leanings in his charters, but he consistently assumes the title *paramamāheśvara* (thrice alongside *paramabrahmaṇya*). See EIAD 185, l. 9; 186, l. 14; 187, l. 6; 188, l. 11; 189, ll. 11–12. See also Vincent Tournier, “A Tide of Merit,” 39, with references cited in n. 45.

²³ See, for instance, EIAD 174, ll. 25–26 and 175, ll. 34.

²⁴ See Franz Kielhorn, “Junagadh rock inscription of Rudradāman — the year 72,” *Epigraphia Indica* 8 (1905–1906): 43, l. 8. See also Oskar von Hinüber, “Hoary Past and Hazy Memory: On the History of Early Buddhist Texts,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006): 194–195; Romila Thapar, *The Past Before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 338.

²⁵ Dines Chandra Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*. Volume I: *From the Sixth Century B.C. to the Sixth Century A.D.* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), 214, l. 1.

which Khāravēla claims to have conquered, this title is further assumed by Siri-Sada in a set of four nearly identical pillar inscriptions from Guntupalli (EIAD 203–206).²⁶ Siri-Sada, who in these inscriptions assumes the extended title “lord of Kalinga and Mahisaka” (*kaligamahisakādhipati*), may have been a successor of Khāravēla, and possibly the first of the Sada rulers.²⁷ Khāravēla, although praised as someone “who paid homage to all religious groups” (*savapāsamḍapūjaka*), was primarily a supporter of Jains and Brahmins, and is not known to have supported Buddhist monasticism. Much less is known about Siri-Sada, and he is not recorded as a royal sponsor of any religious group. Yet, in view of the fact that Buddhism flourished in the Krishna and Godavari valleys during Sada rule, it seems more likely that the epithet *śrīmahāmeghavāhana*, used in Pṛthivīśrīmūla’s record, attests to the lasting memory—which, of course, may well be distorted—of the importance of the Sadas *qua* Mahāmeghavāhanas as patrons of monasteries.

The localization of the endowed monastery seems consistent with this interpretation. Indeed, the locality of Vardhamāni, mentioned in EIAD 187, may be identified with modern Vaddamanu (Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh), a site situated around 8 km as the crow flies Southeast of the Amaravati *stūpa*, and 35 km northeast of the Kondavidu fort, where Pṛthivīśrīmūla’s copper-plate charter was found.²⁸ An important Buddhist sanctuary was excavated at Vaddamanu during the 1980s,²⁹ and the antiquity of the toponym is confirmed epigraphically. Indeed, an inscription engraved on a *vedikā* coping stone of Vaddamanu’s *stūpa* records the gift of an individual named Dhamūti, defined as a resident of Vaḍḍhamāna, together with

²⁶ EIAD 203 reads, for instance: (1) *mah[ā]rājasa kaliga[ma](hi)* (2) *sakādh(i)patisa mahāme(3)[khavāhana]sa sirisada(4)sa lekhaḥasa culago(5)māsa maḍapo dānaḥ*. “A *maḍapa* as gift of Culagoma, scribe of the Great King, lord of Kalinga and Mahisaka, Mahāmeghavāhana Siri-Sada.”

²⁷ Bhandare has very tentatively proposed the ruling dates 20–10 BCE for Siri-Sada. See Bhandare, “Money and the Monuments,” 41.

²⁸ The identification of Vardhamāni as Vaddamanu was already suggested by Krishna Sastry, “Three Copper-Plate Grants,” 73, but still needs to be further substantiated.

²⁹ Note that the identification by the excavators of the site as a Jaina centre is erroneous, and only supported by very creative (mis)readings of the epigraphic evidence, as shown for instance by Ingo Strauch, “Inscribed Pots and Potsherds from Āndhradeśa in the Context of Early Buddhist Archaeology,” in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

his relatives.³⁰ One potsherd moreover identifies the engraved vessel as the possession of the community on the Vaḍḍhamāna mountain.³¹ The MIA term *vaḍḍhamāna* is also attested, in compounds, to refer to a plot or estate owned by a prominent individual, within which monastic residences were located.³² In two instances of the term (EIAD 47, 55), in the corpus from the Ikṣvāku period, the owner of the estate in question is clearly a king. It seems plausible that, in early Āndhra where the technical meaning of *vaḍḍhamāna* is particularly well attested, it may have evolved into a toponym.³³ In other words, Vaddamanu might originally have been a royal estate handed over to a monastic community. There probably was at least one other Vaḍḍhamāna in the Āndhra region in ancient times, whose name is preserved in the modern toponym Vardhamanakota, in the Nalgonda district of Telangana. Indeed, a 3rd–4th century inscription from Phanigiri, a mere 6 km northeast of Vardhamanakota, alludes to an

³⁰ EIAD 711: (1) *vaḍḍhamānanevāsikasa dhamūtisa samātu{i}kasa (sa)pitukasa sabhātukasa culadhamutikasa ku[m]. + ?///*. Cf. T. V. G. Sastri, M. Kasturi Bai, and M. Veerender, *Vaddamanu Excavations, 1981–85* (Hyderabad: Birla Archaeological & Cultural Research Institute, 1992), 267.

³¹ See Strauch, “Inscribed Pots and Potsherds,” Vadd 49. See also Vadd 51, 121.

³² Sircar guesses that it is “a kind of religious establishment,” and Falk states that “a simple ‘plot, estate’ might also be considered a possibility before more material settles the case.” See Dines Chandra Sircar, “More Inscriptions from Nagarjunikonda,” *Epigraphia Indica* 35 (1963–1964): 8, 32; Falk, “The Pātagaṇḍigūḍem Copper-Plate,” 276. As far as I know, all occurrences of this term in early Indian epigraphy are from Āndhra. Here follows a list of the ten occurrences currently known to me: EIAD 2, ll. 12–13: *°upedagirivadha(mane)*; EIAD 36: *maharaja-vaḍḍhamane*; EIAD 47, l. 6 = 48, l. 8: *°sethivaravaḍḍhamāne*; EIAD 55, ll. 8–9: *°eha-lavattamāṇavattavehi*; EIAD 65, l. 6: *°sembakavardhamāna*; EIAD 112: *°utara-vaḍḍhamāne*; EIAD 97, l. 1 = 98, l. 1: *°ukhasirivadhamane*; EIAD 99: *°ukha-sirivadham[ā]ne*.

³³ This scenario of course does not apply to all the places named Varddhamāna/Vaḍḍhamāna in South Asia. Indeed, *vardhamāna* meaning “prosperous” is an auspicious name to give a newly founded city. To give but two examples, a city in Mahāgāma in Laṅkā and a city in Harikelā, present-day South-east Bangladesh, bore this name. Cf. DPPN, s.v. Vaḍḍhamāna, (3); Gouriswar Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report on the Inscribed Metal Vase from the National Museum of Bangladesh,” in *Explorations in Art and Archaeology of South Asia: Essays Dedicated to N. G. Majumdar*, ed. Debala Mitra (Calcutta: Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal, 1996), 242. Closer to the Krishna-Godavari region, the Tekkali copper-plate charter of Umāvarman, and the Baranga plates of Nandaprabhañjanavarman, both Piṭṭbhakta rulers of Kaliṅga, were issued from a city called Vijayavardhamānapura. See Snigdha Tripathy, *Inscriptions of Orissa. Volume 1: Fifth-Eighth Centuries A.D.* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research and Motilal Banarsidass, 1997), 106 (no. 8), l. 1; 116 (no. 13), l. 1.

individual originating from a city thus named.³⁴ Unlike Vardhamanakota, which lacks a clear connection with the Sadas, Vaddamanu certainly lied within—and quite possibly at the heart of—their domain. Indeed, the site is, along with nearby Amaravati and Dharanikota, one of the main findspots of their coins.³⁵ Moreover, occupation of the site till the time of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins is likewise confirmed by numismatics. It therefore seems plausible to identify Pṛthivīśrīmūla's Vardhamāni with modern Vaddamanu. While the connection between their rule and the early site of Vaddamanu is secure enough, the Sadas' actual involvement in the establishment or enlargement of that monastery is difficult to confirm in the present state of our knowledge.³⁶

More generally, the Sada kings do not feature as sponsors in donative inscriptions recovered from Buddhist sites, but those mentioning them record gifts by court officials. At Guntupalli (EIAD 203–206), it is the royal scribe (*lekhaka*) who donates a *maṇḍapa*. Likewise, at Amaravati two court officials of King Siri-Sivamaka are mentioned in the dedication of a large *vedikā* coping stone established near the northern gate of the great *stūpa* (EIAD 302).³⁷ Rare evidence

³⁴ EIAD 113, l. 2: *vaddhamānaṁnagarajāta[sa]*.

³⁵ See Sastri, Kasturi Bai, and Veerender, *Vaddamanu Excavations*, 164–173; Alok Parasher-Sen, “Localities, Coins and the Transition to the Early State in the Deccan,” *Studies in History* 23, no. 2 (2007), 257–258; Bhandare, “Money and the Monuments,” 38.

³⁶ The chronology of the site proposed by the excavators, primarily based on the stratigraphy of the excavations, is problematic and cannot be uncritically accepted. Indeed, the early occupation of the site, as early as the 3rd century BCE, is assumed by the discovery of Northern Black Polished Ware, traditionally associated with the Maurya period, but its use as sole criterion for dating monuments is problematic. See Sastri, Kasturi Bai, and Veerender, *Vaddamanu Excavations*, 91–92; Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 63–64. A few inscriptions are also characterised by an archaic (though post-Mauryan) paleography, tentatively datable to the 2nd or 1st century BCE. Among stone inscriptions, the example that looks earliest is the inscription found nearby a water cistern south of the Peddakonda hill (EIAD 701), which mentions an otherwise unknown king Sāmaka (Skt. Śyāmaka). See Sastri, Kasturi Bai, and Veerender, *Vaddamanu Excavations*, 262. A handful of potsherd inscriptions likewise have archaic-looking letters, but the bulk of the corpus is datable to the first three or four centuries of the Common Era. See Strauch, “Inscribed Pots and Potsherds.”

³⁷ The coping stone was reconstructed by Zin based on four fragments, three of which are inscribed. See Monika Zin, “Traces of Reciprocal Exchange: From Roman Pictorial Models to the World's Earliest Depictions of Some Narrative Motifs in Andhra Reliefs,” *Religions* 11, no. 3 [103] (2020): 6. These three fragments (numbered A–C) were first edited separately: (A) James Burgess, *The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta in the Krishna District, Madras Presi-*

pointing at the likely direct involvement of a Sada king in the establishment of a monastery is provided by a sealing recovered from the Gurubhaktakonda hill at Ramatirtham, in northern coastal Āndhra (Vizianagaram district, Andhra Pradesh). The sealing, whose published documentation is unfortunately of poor quality, seems to bear the text *siris[i]vama[ka]v[i]ja[ya]rājaselasaghasa*.³⁸ This may be

decency, Surveyed in 1882. With Translations of the Aśoka Inscriptions at Jaugadi and Dhauili by George Bühler (London: Trübner, 1887), 61, no. 2 (abbreviated as Br in the apparatus); (B) Ramāprasād Chanda, "Some Unpublished Amaravati Inscriptions," Epigraphia Indica 15 (1919–1920): 270 (abbreviated as Ch); (C) Burgess, The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta, 62, no. 15. They correspond respectively to nos. 72, 91, and 73 in C. Sivaramamurti, Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum (Madras: Government Museum, 1942), 291–295 (abbreviated as S). The new edition of the record (EIAD 302) by Griffiths and myself reads:

(A) raño sirisivamakasadasa ◊ pāniyagharikasa he ? /// (B) mahāgovalavabālikaya ◊ [n]. /// (C) (ka)ya ◊ sak[u]līgāya ◊ mahācetiye °utarāyāke ◊ °unisa dāna –

A. raño rāño Br. ◊ B. mahāgovalavabālikaya mahāgovalivu bālikāya Ch; mahāgovalāva bālikāya S. ◊ C. (ka)ya ◊ sak[u]līgāya kayasa kalīgāya Br. We rely on Burgess for the reading of the first <ka>, which is not visible on the stone or any available documentation.

A coping stone as gift of He-, the keeper of the central depot of King Siri-Sivamaka, the Sada... (and of?) the daughter of the chief keeper of the royal cattle (Skt. mahāgoballavabālikā) N- ... together with her family, at the Great Shrine, by its northern platform.

The form *pāniyagharika* was tentatively translated by Hultzsch in the first edition published by Burgess as “superintendent of the water establishment,” and followed in subsequent scholarship. See, for instance, Heinrich Lüders, *A List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to about A.D. 400 with the Exception of Those of Asoka* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1912), 152, no. 1279. Following a suggestion by Kelsey Martini, I am now inclined to interpret it as corresponding to MIA **pāniyagharika* and relating to Skt. *paṇyagrha*, meaning, in Kautilya’s *Arthaśāstra*, the central depot for merchandises. See KAS 2.5.11, 2.6.11; Patrick Olivelle, *A Sanskrit Dictionary of Law and Statecraft* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2015), s.v. *paṇyagrha*. Thus understood, this function would closely relate to two other official duties, namely the *koṣṭhāgārika* “keeper of the storehouse,” and the *bhāṇḍāgārika* “keeper of the treasury,” both of which are attested in the epigraphic corpus of the greater Āndhra region. See EIAD 20, l. 2; KnI 201 (N&vH V.2,7), as reedited in Tournier, “Buddhist Lineages,” 880, n. 66.

³⁸ See A. Rea, “Buddhist Monasteries on the Gurubhaktakondā and Durgakondā Hills at Rāmatīrtham,” *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1911–1910*, 85–86, and pl. XLIII (20); D. Raja Reddy and P. Suryanarayana

rendered as “of (i.e., belonging to) the monastic community [established on] the Mountain of the victorious King Siri-Sivamaka.” This suggests that the monastic community in question was established on a hill which belonged to the Sada king, and whose monastery was established by him or by someone in his name.³⁹ This hill, which may thus have been, like Vaddamanu, a royal estate, may or may not be identical with the “Royal Mountain” (Rājasela, Rājagiri) referred to repeatedly in the Amaravati epigraphic corpus. The scrutiny of the relevant material from the latter site further reinforces the idea that Sada kings left a significant legacy as sponsors of Buddhist establishments and supported a lineage involved in the building of the great *stūpa*.

3. Representing the royal establishment of a *stūpa* and *vihāra* on the Amaravati *vedikā*

Evidence in favor of this interpretation is found in an unpublished inscription from Amaravati preserved in the British Museum (EIAD 468).⁴⁰ Like the aforementioned inscription associated with the rule of Siri-Sivamakasada (EIAD 302), this one-line record was engraved on a large limestone *vedikā* coping stone, using a strikingly similar script.⁴¹ The two coping stones further share the characteristics of being associated with the northern gate of the railing,⁴² and of belonging to the second phase of its construction. This phase of construction is

Reddy, *Coins of the Megha Vahana Dynasty of Coastal Andhra* (Hyderabad: The Numismatic Society of Hyderabad, 1983), 16.

³⁹ A sealing is of course a highly portable object, which, in the absence of any corroborative evidence, cannot serve to identify the place in which it was found as the royal hill in question.

⁴⁰ The piece bears the accession number 1880,0709.19/20. Its inscription is one of the fourteen Amaravati inscriptions preserved at the British Museum which have never been edited. Of these fourteen inscriptions, the eight situated in the Amaravati Gallery were documented by James Miles (Archaeovision) for the DHARMA project on 15–16 July 2021. I thank Sushma Jansari, curator of the South Asian collections at the British Museum, for making possible this documentation campaign. Miles produced Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) documentation, which facilitated the decipherment of the most abraded of these records, among which EIAD 468.

⁴¹ According to Knox, the British Museum coping stone’s dimensions are as follows: h. 90 × w. 276 × d. 28 cm. See Robert Knox, *Amaravati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stūpa* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 93.

⁴² The association of the coping stone bearing EIAD 302 is made clear by the inscription itself. As for that bearing EIAD 468, its association with the northern gate is confirmed by an annotated sketch prepared by W. Elliot in 1845. See Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 89, 207 with n. 16.

dated by Shimada to *ca.* 50–100 CE.⁴³ Both also contain, in Robert Knox’s words, “some of the most successful and dynamic sculpting in the entire Amarāvati corpus.”⁴⁴ The relief decorating the inner face of the British Museum coping stone (fig. 2, see p. 52) has attracted the attention of several art historians, but no fully compelling identification of the narrative represented has so far been proposed. Before considering how the neglected inscription EIAD 468 sheds light on the identification of the visual narrative, let us describe its five scenes, unfolding from left to right:

1. The first scene occupies a small area in the top left corner of the relief (fig. 3, see p. 53), which is heavily damaged. In a roofed terrace protected by a city’s high walls, a male figure with a richly adorned turban sits face to face with another smaller male figure wearing heavy earrings. The latter raises his right hand towards the former, in a gesture that may be evocative of him receiving instructions. Immediately behind is another damaged figure wearing bracelets and joining hands in *añjali*. The larger figure should be interpreted as a king sitting in his palace, and he is represented with his distinctive head-dress in all the following scenes.
2. The second scene, engraved on the left of a large *stūpa* characteristic of the greater Āndhra country,⁴⁵ shows a large procession of footmen and horsemen. They precede the royal figure riding an elephant, which emerges from the city’s gates. These are partly hiding a second character sharing the same mount. The king holds an *aṅkuśa* in his left hand and gestures at the horseman immediately preceding him with his right hand, as if to dispense orders.⁴⁶ The procession, led by a drummer and a conch blower,

⁴³ See Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 99–102. Stern and Bénisti, who did not propose an absolute dating, also recognized that both reliefs were characterized by the “second concomitance” of motifs and were representative of the second period. See Philippe Stern and Mireille Bénisti, *Évolution du style indien d’Amaravati* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961), 66–68, 74.

⁴⁴ See Knox, *Amaravati*, 93–95. See also Zin, “Traces of Reciprocal Exchange,” 6, 13.

⁴⁵ In particular, the *stūpa* represented on the relief is characterized by four projections (*āyāka*) each bearing five pillars; one of these projections is further decorated by a multi-headed *nāga*. For these features, see Mireille Bénisti, “Étude sur le *stūpa* dans l’Inde ancienne,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 50 (1960): 69–72.

⁴⁶ On similar representations of kings mounting elephants on memorial and narrative reliefs from the greater Āndhra region, see Ollett, Tournier, and Griffiths, “Early Memorial Stones,” § 6.2.

proceeds over a rocky formation to the right. This rocky formation seems to indicate that the *stūpa* and the scenes situated to its right are located on a hilly landscape.⁴⁷

3. The third scene (fig. 4, see p. 53) represents a large monk, with his open right palm raised in the direction of the royal figure and his entourage, who express their awe and reverence with joint hands and arms risen. Previous scholars have convincingly interpreted the central figure of this scene as levitating.⁴⁸ To the left of the flying figure, five monks also offer their respects by joining their hands in *añjali*.

4. Five monks are represented again in the scene below, seated under two trees⁴⁹ and interacting with the royal figure and four members of his entourage. The first monk of the group raises his right hand towards the most prominent of the lay individuals, humbly sitting below him, and appears to be teaching. The fact that five monks feature here, and five plus the wonder-working figure appear in the preceding scene, seems to correspond to (and be informed by) the quorum required, in the border regions

⁴⁷ Similar rock formations are, for instance, depicted in a relief from Goli representing the conversion of Nanda by the Buddha preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc. No. 30.29). See Elizabeth Rosen Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), fig. 185. See also the preaching scene represented on the *torāṇa* beam from Phanigiri reproduced here as fig. 6, see p. 55.

⁴⁸ See Catherine Becker, “Mahinda’s Visit to Amaravati? Narrative Connections between Buddhist Communities in Andhra and Sri Lanka,” in *Amaravati: The Art of an Early Buddhist Monument in Context*, ed. Akira Shimada and Michael Willis (London: British Museum, 2016), 72: “The sculptor not only employed subtle hierarchical scale to emphasize the importance of the levitating figure in this crowd, but also carved a deep trough of negative space around the figure to help the viewer understand that the figure is surrounded by air. The toes of the floating figure point downwards to indicate that they are dangling freely rather than supporting the weight of the standing body. These toes also hover above the head of a seated man, whose gesture of reverence seems directed to the levitating figure...” See also Douglas Barrett, *Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1954), 67. Zin, who does not propose an identification for the relief as a whole, tentatively interprets the flying figure as Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja and the king as Aśoka.

⁴⁹ The bigger of these two trees is surrounded by a built platform characteristic of a tree-shrine and has leaves consistent with those of the *aśvattha* tree. Tree-shrines are likewise located at the four intermediate directions of the *stūpa*. This set of four could point to the *bodhi*-trees of the four first Buddhas of the “Fortunate Eon” (*bhadrakalpa*). See Becker, “Mahinda’s Visit to Amaravati?,” 75.

(P. *paccantima-janapada*), to perform *upasampadā* and hence ensure the continuity of a monastic lineage.⁵⁰

5. The fifth and last scene (fig. 5, see p. 54) is separated from the former two by a vertical dividing wall, broadening from bottom to top and interrupted by the crown of the smaller tree of the preceding scene. That this is meant to represent a natural wall, evoking those of a cave, is confirmed by the zigzag patterns engraved on the wall, which are comparable to those on the boulder represented to the right of scene 2. The impression of a rocky landscape is further reinforced by the irregularity of the floor on which the two main figures are standing, and by the different floor levels of the buildings represented on the rightmost end of the relief. The scene shows the royal figure holding a ewer to pour water on the outstretched hands of a slightly crouching monk, and is strongly reminiscent of the scene showing the gift of silver flowers from Kanaganahalli discussed above (p. 6 and fig. 1). The monk may be identified with the leader of the group of five in the previous scene. The two figures stand below a fragmentary free-standing pillar,⁵¹ and immediately behind the monk is a damaged, but still recognizable *caityagrha* enshrining a smaller *stūpa*. That building is connected through a flight of stairs to other edifices, which include a domed structure and a pillared hall. The complex of buildings may be interpreted as a monastery being presented by the king to the *saṅgha*, this being sealed by the ritual act of water pouring.

Stern and Bénisti merely interpreted the scene as representing an “adoration of the *stūpa*,”⁵² but the large mound represented on the relief is in fact not the object of reverence by any of the characters involved in the narrative. This may be explained by the fact that the *stūpa* was,

⁵⁰ Vin I.194.18–198.10. For the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya*, see T. 1425, xxii, 415a28–416a22.

⁵¹ Two decorated rings are visible on the pillar, which lacks its finial: the upper one featuring three elephants, and the lower one—partly hidden by the king and the monk—a row of lions. Two free-standing *dharmacakra* pillars similarly decorated with high-relief bands of lions and elephants may be seen at Kanaganahalli. See Tournier, “Buddhist Lineages,” fig. 6. A slab preserved *in situ* bearing Knl 67 (N&vH II.3,5) and 94 (N&vH II.5,2), whose general view is still unpublished, presents the same pattern. For some preliminary observations on the importance of free-standing pillars in Āndhra, see Tournier, “Buddhist Lineages,” 864–870.

⁵² Stern and Bénisti, *Évolution du style indien d’Amaravati*, 12, 110. See also Mi-reille Bénisti, “Les *stūpa* aux cinq piliers,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 58 (1971): 137.

like the monastic complex, erected at the end of the temporal sequence represented in the narrative. Barrett, followed by Knox, tentatively proposed to identify the five scenes as representing the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu, his miracles and teaching to his father Śuddhodana, and the granting by the latter of the grove of banyan trees.⁵³ Yet he could not account for the presence of the Āndhra-style *stūpa*, nor—more importantly, perhaps—for the absence of a halo in what he would interpret, in scenes 3–5, as three representations of the Buddha.⁵⁴ In a recent contribution, Becker has proposed a different reading, informed by the *Mahāvamsa* narrative of Mahinda's journey to Laṅkā, where he converted king Devānaṃpiya Tissa before being granted the Mahāmegha park. She observes:⁵⁵

Rather than understand the relief as a rendering of the *Mahāvamsa*, I propose that we see a functional similarity between these two narratives, in that both attempt to record the founding of a monastery or the bringing of the dharma to a new region, specifically at the hands of miracle-performing monks with the ability to charm gifts of land from willing royal patrons.

Even though Theriya monastics were active at Amaravati,⁵⁶ and that later inscriptions of Āndhra testify to the circulation of narratives also embedded in *vamsa* literature,⁵⁷ the narrative figured on the railing is not a rendering of a Pāli *vamsa*. In fact, as we shall see shortly, EIAD 468 and related inscriptions reveal that another milieu than the Theriyas—namely, the Rājagiriya—oversaw the building activity on the northern side of the great *stūpa*'s *vedikā* at the end of the 1st century CE, including the relief under discussion. Thus, I agree with Becker that the parallels between the visual narrative and the *Mahāvamsa* are best explained by their common deployment of tropes to represent the establishment of Buddhism in new territories.

Two other reliefs from the greater Āndhra region that have emerged in recent years are likewise representative of the same genre

⁵³ Barrett, *Sculptures from Amaravati*, 67; Knox, *Amaravati*, 93.

⁵⁴ See Barrett, *Sculptures from Amaravati*, 59, n. 9. Moreover, Shimada has shown that the Buddha is never represented anthropomorphically in the second phase of construction of the *vedikā*, which complicates further Barrett's interpretation. See Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 100.

⁵⁵ Becker, "Mahinda's Visit to Amaravati?," 74.

⁵⁶ For the single inscription from Amaravati mentioning a Theriya donor (EIAD 537), see Tournier, "Buddhist Lineages," 874. For Theriya presence in Āndhra, see also Petra Kieffer-Pülz, "Traces of Theriyas in Āndhradeśa: Glimpses from Inscriptions and from the *Andhaka-Aṭṭhakathā*," in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

⁵⁷ See Tournier, "A Tide of Merit," 59–65.

of narrative and may fruitfully be compared to the Amaravati coping stone. The 1st-century BCE representation of the conversion of the Himālayas on a set of encasing slabs (*kañcūkā*) from the Kanaganahalli *stūpa*'s south-western quadrant shares with scene 4 of the British Museum relief the characteristic motif of five "missionaries."⁵⁸ A greater number of parallel motifs may be found in an Ikṣvāku-period visual narrative found on a *torāṇa* recovered from Phanigiri.⁵⁹ According to Dhar's convincing reconstruction of the *torāṇa*'s fragments, the rear side of the three beams would have been dedicated to a continuous narrative, half of which is preserved. That narrative started, in the bottom right corner (see fig. 6.24 in Dhar), with a palace scene (as scene 1 above), followed by a royal procession out of a city's gates (fig. 6.25 in Dhar). On the left side of the middle beam (fig. 6, see p. 55), a better-preserved procession scene involving the same royal figure mounting an elephant occurs again, and it shares obvious similarities with the Amaravati scene 2 (fig. 3, see p. 53). The royal procession leads to a cluster of sanctuaries, represented to the left of the middle beam, and on the right side of the upper beam (fig. 6.11 in Dhar): *caitya*-bearing freestanding pillars honored by monks, a *nāga* shrine and a *stūpa* revered by lay individuals. The central part of the middle beam further shows two monks miraculously taming fierce *nāgas*, and below this scene the two monks are represented teaching to a mixed audience of *nāginīs* and princely figures, three of which are haloed. Another miracle is represented on the upper beam, namely thirteen monks emerging from a water body and revered by two *nāgas*. The Phanigiri narrative has so far defied identification with any known literary source, al-

⁵⁸ The group of missionaries led by Kassapagotta, represented in the guise of royal figures mounting fantastic creatures, is identified by a series of labels and dated by a separate donative record to the 16th year of Chimuka (Knl 3, cited below, pp. 26–27). On this set of slabs, see Sonya Rhie Quintanilla, "Transformations of Identity and the Buddha's Infancy Narratives at Kanaganahalli," *Archives of Asian Art* 67, no. 1 (2017): 113–119; Zin, *The Kanaganahalli Stupa*, 82–91; Tournier, "Buddhist Lineages," 861–862. Zin's interpretation that the artists consciously chose to represent monastic missionaries as royal figures—considering the non-representation of Buddhist monks in early art—seems to me more convincing than Quintanilla's hypothesis that a royal procession was later reinterpreted, through the addition of label inscriptions, as representing venerable monks.

⁵⁹ A documentation of the whole set of *torāṇa* beams may be found in Parul Pandya Dhar, "Reading Architecture, Constructing Narrative: Visualizing the Phanigiri Torana," in *Phanigiri: Interpreting an Ancient Buddhist Site in Telangana*, ed. Naman Ahuja (Mumbai: Marg Publications and Department of Heritage Telangana, 2021), 153–185.

though superficial similarities with the *Mahāvamsa* have been highlighted.⁶⁰

The difficulty in identifying this narrative, or the one of the Amaravati coping stone, may be explained by assuming that—by contrast to the Kanaganahalli narrative—both chronicle and showcase the local establishment of Buddhism. This is presented as the outcome of the display of supernatural powers by eminent monks, which paves the way to the establishment of an assembly through teaching, and eventually culminates in the formalization of royal support. These three phases constitute a narrative pattern that is identifiable in both the Phanigiri and the Amaravati reliefs, although the details vary according to local beliefs and stories.

4. Pussagutta, a “lord of Kaliṅga” active in the Mahisaka country

Confirmation that at least the Amaravati coping stone represents a local narrative not preserved in the extant literature is provided by the inscription (EIAD 468), to which we shall now turn:

(1) {ca. 5 *akṣaras* lost}/// ? [ka]l[i]gā[bh]ipati[nā] pusakutena mahisagamaḍale tīni mahācetiya[ni] [ni]vesi[tā]ni °ekadi[va]se rāja(gir)iyānaṃ panativādānaṃ sihās[a]naparigāhakāna[r̥]n mahā[va]sibh[utā]na[r̥]n °an[u]r[u]dhānaṃ °atevāsikasa therasa mahāva[s]///(ibhūtaśa){ca. 20 *akṣaras* lost}

[ka]l[i]gā[bh]ipati[nā] The first visible *akṣara* is very damaged, its lower part missing, and only the context makes the reading <ka> likely. On the characteristic shape of the *akṣara* , which may be confused with a <pa>, see Tournier, “Buddhist Lineages,” 871. The present reading is supported by the parallel expression *kalimṅgādhīpatinā* in the Khāravēla inscription (l. 1) and *kaligamahisakādhīpatisa* in EIAD 203–206. The use of *abhipati* instead of *adhipati* can be explained by the common interchange between the two prefixes. See, for instance, CPD, s.v. *abhi*. On the related Gāndhārī word *aviraja* (Skt. *abhirāja*, for *adhirāja*), see Stefan Baums, “Catalog and Revised Texts and Translations of Gandharan Reliquary Inscriptions,” in

⁶⁰ See Becker, “Mahinda’s Visit to Amaravati?,” 75–77 and my critical remarks in Tournier, “A Tide of Merit,” 62–63, n. 118. See also Monika Zin, “The Buddha’s Relics and the *Nāgas*: An Attempt to Throw Light on Some Depictions in the Amaravati School,” in *South Asian Archaeology and Art 2012*. Volume 2: *South Asian Religions and Visual Forms in their Archaeological Context*, ed. Vincent Lefèvre, Aurore Didier, and Benjamin Mutin (Turnout: Brepols, 2016), 761–763. Zin’s interpretation of the *torāṇa* narratives preceded Dhar’s reconstruction of the correct sequence of the beam fragments. See Dhar, “Reading Architecture, Constructing Narrative,” 181.

Gandharan Buddhist Reliquaries, ed. David Jongeward et al. (Seattle: Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project, 2012), 210, n. 22. ✧ **pusakutena** This likely stands for Skt. Puṣyagupta. The following term *mahisaga* is another example of the weakening of the distinction between voiceless and voiced intervocalic velars. ✧ **rāja(gir)iyānaṃ** The restoration of the missing *akṣaras* is supported by comparison with EIAD 283, likewise reading *rājagiriyaṇaṃ*. This reconstruction is further confirmed by the following epithet, *panativādānaṃ*, which likewise characterizes the *nikāya* of Anuruddha. See below, pp. 36–38. ✧ **mahāva[s]///(ibhūtaśa)** This reconstruction is supported by the parallel expression in EIAD 328, l. 1: *[r]āyaselanivāsino vasibhūtaśa...* See also EIAD 315: ... *mahāvasibhūtaśa* ...

The inscription seems to be divided into two separate, partially preserved, sentences. Only the second—opening with *rājagiriyaṇaṃ*—follows a common pattern that is easily identifiable in donative records at Amaravati: the sentence starts with a string of epithets in the genitive plural describing the donor’s teacher Anuruddha, and is followed by the characterization of the donor in the genitive singular. The end of the sentence, lost to us, likely contained further epithets qualifying the donor and naming him. We do not know whether the donor was the direct pupil (*antevāsin*) of Anuruddha, or a pupil’s pupil. The record was plausibly concluded, like EIAD 302, with the identification of the structural element(s) given (e.g., *unisa*, Skt. *uṣṇīṣa*) and *dānaṃ*.⁶¹ The first sentence, from which only about five *akṣaras* seem to be missing, is most likely distinct from the donative record proper. I propose to understand it as a label inscription,⁶² providing us with a precious

⁶¹ The construction “teacher in gen. pl. + donor in gen. sg. introduced by *antevāsika* + object of the gift in nom. sg.” may, for instance, be found in EIAD 321: *saṃyutakabhanakānaṃ ... car[u]nāgānaṃ °at[e]vāsika pemaḍapātika ... pasamasa ... deyadhamma °ima °udhapa[to]* “This dome-slab is the pious gift of Pasama, living on alms ... disciple of Caru-Nāga, a reciter of the Saṃyuta[-Nikāya]... .”

⁶² Label inscriptions, common at Kanaganahalli, are especially rare at Amaravati, as, for instance, at Sanchi. Nevertheless, a group of eight early epigraphic labels (EIAD 456–463) is engraved on three of the extant faces of a broken stele studied in A. Ghosh and H. Sarkar, “Beginnings of Sculptural Art in South-East India: A Stele from Amaravati,” *Ancient India: Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India* 20–21 (1964–1965): 168–177. At Sanchi, I know of only one label inscription, which occurs alongside (and physically above) a donative record. See *IBH*, IV Sāncī 3. At Kanaganahalli, which is known for its numerous label inscriptions, there is one example where a label is immediately followed by a donative record, on the same line as in the case of EIAD 468. See KnI 139 (N&vH III.1.12). In another inscription by the same donor, the label and the donative record also fea-

identification of the royal patron represented in the visual narrative. It may be translated as follows:

... Pussagutta, overlord of Kalinga, established (*nivesita*)⁶³ three great shrines in the Mahisaka district in a single day ...

In light of this statement, the royal figure represented in each of the relief's five scenes, may now be identified with Pussagutta. The visual narrative indeed lends itself to being read as representing that king's encounter with Buddhist monks and the generation of a faithful disposition towards the Dharma (scenes 1–4), followed by the establishment of one of the three *mahācetiya*s alluded to in the inscription, together with a monastic complex (scene 5). Since, in the epigraphy of the greater Āndhra region, *mahācetiya* consistently refers to the mound which, in scholarly literature, is referred to as a *stūpa*,⁶⁴ it seems that the narrative is synthetizing the ruler's patronage by representing one specific case. Alternatively, one could consider that the group of "three *mahācetiya*s" included two other of the shrines or cult objects represented in the relief, for instance the large tree-shrine depicted between scenes 3/4 and 5, the apsidal chapel containing a *stūpa* in the monastic compound, or less likely the free-standing pillar. In epigraphic usage, however, these shrines and sacred objects are never qualified as *mahācetiya*s,⁶⁵ so I would favor the first interpretation.

ture on the same line but are separated by a space. See KnI 314 (EBIS C15), cited in Yael Shiri, "From Royal Ideology to Religious Polemics: The Evolution of the Śākya Tutelary Temple in South Asia," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 106 (2020): 58–59, n. 78.

⁶³ The verb *ni√viś* is likewise used in the sense of erecting a building—in that case the wing of a monastery—in EIAD 77, st. 10. In the Hathigumpha inscription, the Āndhra city of Pithuṇḍa destroyed by Khāravela is likewise said to have been previously established (*nivesita*) by a king. See Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 217, l. 11. A similar use of *ni√viś* is interestingly encountered in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. See KAS 2.3.3; Olivelle, *A Sanskrit Dictionary of Law*, s.v. *ni√viś*.

⁶⁴ For a sample of the relevant evidence, see Peter Skilling, "Caitya, Mahācaitya, Tathāgatacaitya: Questions of Terminology in the Age of Amaravati," in *Amaravati: The Art of an Early Buddhist Monument in Context*, ed. Akira Shimada and Michael Willis (London: British Museum, 2016), 25–28.

⁶⁵ At Nagarjunakonda, bodhi-tree shrines are called *bodhiru(k)khaṇḍāsādā* (EIAD 20, l. 3). Apsidal (at times circular) chapels are, as far as I know, consistently referred to as *cetiyaḥara* (Skt. *caityagrha*). Cf. EIAD 20, ll. 2, 3; 28, l. 1. Smaller *stūpas*—whether enshrined in buildings or kept in the open air—are called *cetiya*s, tout court. For two examples of the latter, see EIAD 324; KnI 266. Finally, pillars supporting a *stūpa* are termed *cetiyaḥabha* (Skt. *caityastambha*) at Amaravati. Cf. EIAD 269, l. 3; 286, l. 4.

There is unfortunately no means to clearly situate Pussagutta's activity in time, for no "overlord of Kalinga" bearing such a name is—as far as I know—attested elsewhere in the historical record.⁶⁶ The overlordship of Kalinga, however, as mentioned above (p. 10), was claimed by Khāavela and, a few decades later, by at least one of the Sada kings. Moreover, Pussagutta is said to have exerted his patronage "in the Mahisaka district" (*mahisakamaṇḍala*), an area which, after Khāavela and before the rise of the Sātavāhanas at the end of the first century CE, was mostly controlled by the Sadas. Considering also that the coping stone was likely carved and established during the Sada rule over the Dhaññakaḍa region, one may surmise that Pussagutta was himself a Mahāmeghavāhana and/or a Sada king. However, his identity and precise dating cannot yet be clarified.

What we can do is characterize further his domain and situate the pious foundations ascribed to him. Indeed, EIAD 468 provides further confirmation that the Mahisaka country was closely linked to Kalinga. This evidence reinforces what was already clear from the Guntupalli inscriptions mentioning Siri-Sada (EIAD 203–206) as lord of Kalinga and Mahisaka, clearly indicating that the latter toponym cannot be identified with the Mysore area in Karnataka, as some have done till recently.⁶⁷ Instead, the Mahisaka country has been identified plausibly

⁶⁶ It would indeed seem far-fetched to attempt to associate this individual with Puṣyagupta, Candragupta's governor, mentioned in the above-mentioned Rudradāman inscription. Note that the name Pussagutta is otherwise attested, in the epigraphy of the Deccan, at Kanaganahalli and Pauni, to qualify donors with no title. See KnI 240 (MASI 189): *pusagūta*; IBH, III Pauni 3: *pusagutasa*.

⁶⁷ This view is expressed by Maiko Nakanishi and Oskar von Hinüber, *Kanaganahalli Inscriptions*, Supplement to *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology* 17 (Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2014), 52. They rely on the interpretation adopted in 1971 by Sircar, but the same author subsequently changed opinion, in favor of the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra, which borders on Telangana. See Dines Chandra Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, 2nd rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), 52; "Indological Notes," *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 6 (1973–1972): 166–168. Seen in this light, the identification of Eruminātu (derived from Tamil *erumai*, "buffalo" [Skt. *mahiṣa*]), a toponym found in an early Tamil inscription from Sittanavasal, with the Mysore area, proposed by Mahadevan may also have to be reconsidered. See Iravatham Mahadevan, *Early Tamil Epigraphy: From the Earliest Times to the Sixth Century A.D.* (Chennai; Cambridge, MA: Cre-A; Harvard University Press, 2003), 152, 385, 577–578. I owe the latter reference to Andrew Ollett.

with Ptolemy's Μαισώλια (VII, I, 15)⁶⁸ and was, according to Pali *vamsas*, the domain of missionary activity of the venerable Mahādeva, a name associated with the doctrines of some Āndhra monastic lineages.⁶⁹ It thus appears that the Mahisaka country must have included at least part of the Krishna-Godavari *doāb*.⁷⁰ Moreover, it seems possible, as suggested by Ramachandra Murthy, that the Amaravati-Vaddamanu area was, during the Sāta rule at least, subsumed under that region.⁷¹

In fact, the hypothesis that Dhaññakaḍa fell within the Mahisaka country would help to explain that these precise toponyms are the two best attested in the corpus of Kanaganahalli inscriptions,⁷² and that do-

⁶⁸ See, for instance, I. K. Sarma, *Studies in Early Buddhist Monuments and Brāhmī Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa* (Nagpur: Dattsons, 1988), 68–70. The equivalence between the name of the river Μαισώλος, from which the toponym Μαισώλια derives, and MIA *mahisa*, incidentally seems supported by Hesychius of Alexandria's understanding of the term as pointing to "a quadruped similar to a veal." See Roger Goossens, "Glose indiennes dans le lexique d'Hésychius," *L'antiquité classique* 12 (1943): 53.

⁶⁹ See Dīp 8:5, Mhv 12:3, 29; N. A. Jayawickrama, *The Inception of Discipline, and the Vinaya Nidāna: Being a Translation and Edition of the Bāhiraṇidāna of Buddhaghosa's Samantapāsādikā, the Vinaya Commentary* (London: Luzac & Co., 1962), 182 (§64), 184 (§66). For the association between the name Mahādeva and some Andhaka schools, see for instance, Jonathan A. Silk, "Kern and the Study of Indian Buddhism. With a Speculative Note on the Ceylonese Dhammarucikas," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 31 (2012): 142–144.

⁷⁰ For the long-established connections of Mahisa(ka) with the Āndhra region in Japanese scholarship, see Paul Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśālī," *T'oung Pao* 40 (1951): 265, n. 1; Yamazaki Gen'ichi 山崎元一, *Ashōkaō Densetsu no Kenkyū* アシヨーカ王伝説の研究 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha) 1979, 138–141. Interestingly, the epigraphic corpus from the Guntupalli area records two other instances of a toponym, Sakula, which in the Pali *Cullahaṃsajātaka* is situated in the Mahi(m)saka country. See EIAD 216, l. 1; EIAD 220, l. 1; Stefan Baums et al., "Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa: Results of Fieldwork in January and February 2016," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 102 (2016): 366–367. This further increases the likelihood that the Guntupalli area was indeed part of the Mahisaka country.

⁷¹ See N. S. Ramachandra Murthy, "Pātagaṇḍigūḍem Plates of Ehavala Chāntamūla," *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India (Bharatiya Purabhilekha Patrika)* 25 (1999): 116.

⁷² Nakanishi and von Hinüber (*Kanaganahalli Inscriptions*, 16) recorded eleven mentions of donors originating from Dhaññakaḍa. I currently know of two additional instances of the toponym in previously undocumented inscriptions (KnI 286 and 311). Moreover, eight inscriptions refer to a donor as *māhiseka*, which stands for *māhisaka*, i.e., from Mahisa(ka). See, in addition to the inscription KnI 3 cited below, KnI 41–43 (N&vH II.4, 23–25, the first of which was misread), KnI

nors from Dhaññakaḍa and Mahisaka were active in the same phase of the building's construction.⁷³ Due to a misreading, it has not been noticed so far that the earliest dated inscription at the site, marking the gift of the wealthy notable Toḍa—one of the most important donors of the *stūpa*'s early phase—highlights his provenance from the Mahisaka region. My new edition of the record (KnI 3), which was edited as four separate inscriptions by Nakanishi and von Hinüber,⁷⁴ may be cited here in full before we return to the Amaravati corpus:

(A) raño sirichimu[ka]sātavāhanasa savachare soḍe 10 6 mähise-
ka(B)sa gahapatinā toḍesa canagahapatiputesa sabhāriyesa sa-
(bhag)inikesa (C) saputasa sajāmātusa sasunhasa sagotasa sadu-
hu(takasa sanatukasa) (D) kacūkā deyadhamma[m] dānam

A–B. mähisekasa mātisekasa N&vH. The shape of the <h> is peculiar, being more angular than the others in this inscription, but it is still comparable to that found in *saduhu(takasa)*. And its shape is markedly distinct from the <ta> in *-sātavāhanasa*. It is clear that a <hi> was meant.

✧ **B. gahapatinā** Understand *gahapatino*. The hand active on this slab is distinct from the one of part A. In fact, four different hands may have engraved the four parts of the record. The hand active in part B looks more cursive and less expert than the others, which perhaps explains the further irregularities in the ending of all following words. ✧ **B. toḍesa canagahapatiputesa** The left horizontal stroke on top of the <ḍa> looks like the marker of a <e>, and a similar (and similarly unexpected) sign is found in the penultimate consonant of the three following words. I suggest the four <e> should be understood as superfluous. ✧ **B. sa(bhag)inikesa sa** /// N&vH. ✧ **D. saduhu(takasa sanatukasa)** *saduhu(takasa)* N&vH. My reconstruction *sanatukasa* is speculative, but it fits the number of missing *akṣaras*. In several inscriptions from Amaravati, the mention of the donor's daughter(s) is immediately followed by that of grandchildren. See EIAD 272, ll. 4–5; 286, ll. 2–3. Moreover, the presence of children (possibly

79 (N&vH II.4,9, which mentions the same donor), KnI 43 (N&vH II.2,25), KnI 49 (MASI 265; missing from N&vH II.2,31), KnI 64 (N&vH II.3,2), KnI 79 (N&vH II.4,9), and KnI 94 (N&vH II.5,2).

⁷³ This is suggested by the fact that the majority of inscriptions mentioning either toponym as the place of provenance of the donors are engraved on elements of the lower balustrade (*puphagahaṇī*, Skt. *puṣṭagrahaṇī*) or on drum slabs (11 out of 13 mentions of Dhaññakaḍa; 6 out of 8 mentions of Mahisa provenance). The latter were situated immediately below the former, so these structural elements belong together. All inscriptions mentioning these two toponyms are in script varieties paleographically datable between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE. In other words, later inscriptions from the site mention neither Dhaññakaḍa nor Mahisaka.

⁷⁴ Nakanishi and von Hinüber, *Kanaganahalli Inscriptions*, I.3 [A] + IV.9 [B] + IV.2 [C] + II.4,22 [D].

grandchildren) in Toḍa's family is confirmed by the portrait occurring on one of the dome slabs. See Oskar von Hinüber, "Some Buddhist Donors and Their Families," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 61, no. 4 (2018): 358–360, figure 1, and below, n. 75. I don't think that the absence of the marks of old age necessarily excludes that three generations were represented. **D. deya-dhamma[m] dānam** *deyadhamadāna* N&vH. The previous editors remark that "the expression *deyadhamadāna* might occur once again in a damaged inscription at Amarāvati (Tsukamoto, II Amar 15.4): *deyadhamad(āna?)*..." The new reading of this inscription by Griffiths and I (EIAD 267, l. 3) reads instead ... *[de]yadhamma* ♦ *[pa]tiṭhapita* ... EIAD 305, l. 3, by contrast, does have the two expressions in combination: ... *deyadhamaparikā be suciya dānā*. See also EIAD 266.

In the sixteenth—16—year of King Siri-Chimuka, the Sātavāhana. The encasing slabs are the pious offering, the gift of the notable (*gahapati*) Toḍa, son of the notable Cana,⁷⁵ from Mahisaka, together with his wife, his sister(s), his son(s), his son(s)-in-law, his daughter(s)-in-law, his clan, his daughter(s) (and his grandchildren?).

Once the interesting reference, in EIAD 468, to the Mahisaka country is explained, we are led to understand that the narrative figured on the *vedikā* coping stone was meant to represent the foundation of a *stūpa* and monastery in the same domain as the Amaravati *stūpa*. Therefore, we are definitely confronted with a local narrative, whose relevance

⁷⁵ The previous editors, because they read *māhisekasa* as *mātisekasa*, which they understood as a proper name, struggled to make sense of the following names. See Nakanishi and von Hinüber, *Kanaganahalli Inscriptions*, 107: "The sequence *toḍesacanagahapatiputesa* could be segmented either as *toḍe-sacana-gahapatiputesa* or as *toḍesa ca {na}gahapatiputesa*." Moreover, they seem to have been reluctant at first to interpret Toḍa as a proper name of an individual, which explains their translation of *toḍagahapatino deyadha[m]ma* in KnI 139 (N&vH III.1,12) as "pious gift of the banker (of the) Toḍa (family?)." See, however, von Hinüber, "Some Buddhist Donors," 360. Yet four of the six occurrences of Toḍa in Kanaganahalli make clear that it is in fact a proper name. See, besides KnI 3, KnI 139 (N&vH III.1,12; MASI 109), KnI 314 (EBIS C15), KnI 79 (N&vH II.4,9; MASI 5). Interestingly, an inscription from the Amaravati *stūpa* (EIAD 399) also mentions an individual donor named Mahātoḍa, meaning "the senior Toḍa." Of the remaining two occurrences from the Kanaganahalli corpus, one is the first element of what seems to be a female name (*toḍakādā*, KnI 93 = N&vH II.5,1), possibly a relative of Toḍa. The remaining one occurs as the first element in the compound *toḍakula*, in an inscription working both as a donative record and as a label identifying the "family portrait" under which it is engraved (KnI 92 = N&vH II.4,23). In light of the other occurrences of Toḍa, it seems preferable to translate this compound "Toḍa's family," rather than "the Toḍa family," as done by previous editors.

for the Amaravati *stūpa* will emerge from investigating the religious milieu that formulated it.

5. Rājagiriya monks and the Amaravati Stūpa

A hint as to the identity of the monastery represented in the last scene of the relief is provided by the second sentence of the inscription, which may be translated as follows:

(A coping stone as gift?) ... of the elder ..., who (has achieved?) great mastery (*mahāvasībhūta*?), the pupil of Anuruddha, who has achieved great mastery [and belongs to] the Rājagiriya, those who propound [the doctrine of mere] designation (*paññattivāda*), the holders of the lion throne (*sīhāsanapariggāhaka*).

Rājagiriya, the first epithet qualifying the donor's master (or master's master) Anuruddha, addressed with the *pluralis majestatis*,⁷⁶ marks his link to a monastic establishment located on the "Royal Mountain." Among extant stone inscriptions, allusions to Rājagiri, to its residents, or to the *nikāya* deriving from the name of that hill, only occur in the Amaravati corpus, which comprises four relevant epigraphs. It thus seems likely that the Rājagiri monastery was located in the Mahisaka district mentioned in EIAD 468's first sentence, and possible that it was relatively close to Amaravati.

Thus, I propose to identify the *stūpa* and the rocky, perhaps partly troglodytic monastic establishment represented in the fifth scene of the coping relief with Rājagiri monastery. This identification is of course tentative, but it allows connecting the contents of the first and second sentences of the inscription, and the inscription as a whole with the visual narrative. One might ask why this monastery would have been included in the iconographic program of the great *vedikā*. This is explainable by the very significant involvement of the Rājagiriya in the

⁷⁶ Several reasons might have determined the choice of the genitive plural to characterise Anuruddha. As noticed by Schopen, such an expression of reverence is used, at Amaravati and elsewhere, in inscriptions connected with *stūpas* of deceased monks. See Gregory Schopen, "An Old Inscription from Amarāvātī and the Cult of the Local Monastic Dead in Indian Buddhist Monasteries," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, no. 2 (1991): 292–294. By contrast, some other inscribed objects without commemorative function leave it unclear whether the individual thus referred to is departed or not, and EIAD 468 is one of them. See also, for instance, EIAD 5, ll. 9–10; 6, ll. 11–12.

construction of a segment of the great *stūpa*.⁷⁷ The evidence of three other inscriptions from the site that explicitly mention this *nikāya* clarifies its significance. For instance, among the other inscribed coping stones recovered, like the British Museum piece, near the northern gate,⁷⁸ and which are stylistically representative of the railing's second phase of construction, one (EIAD 301; fig. 7, p. 56) refers to an important resident of the “Royal Mountain.”⁷⁹

(1) rājagirinivāsikasa (2) vetikānavakamikasa (3) therāsa bhaya-tabudharakkhitasa (4) °at[e]vāsi(niya) [°ā]rikaya bhikhun[iya] budhar[a]khita[ya] (5) sadhutuka(ya) (°a)yadhamadinaya saghara-khi(6)tasa ca dānaṃ

2. vetikānavakamikasa *cetikānavakamakasa* H; *vetikānavakamakasa* S Ts. ✧ 3. therāsa F; *therasa* H Ts. Understand *therasa*. ✧ 4. °at[e]vāsi(niya) °at[e]vāsi ... H; °atevasi ... S; °atevāsi[niya] Ts. ✧ 4. [°ā]rikaya [varu]rikaya H S Ts. The reading is tentative. ✧ bhikhun[iya] Ts; *bhikhu[ni]na* H S. ✧ 5. sadhutuka(ya) *sadhutuka* F S Ts; *sudhutuka* H. (°a)yadhamadinaya *ya dhamadinaya* H S Ts.

Gift of the noble (*ārikā*?) nun Buddharakkhitā—pupil of the elder, reverend Buddharakkhita, the resident of Rājagiri and superintendent of construction of the (Great Shrine's) railing

⁷⁷ This has gone so far unnoticed. For instance, in her recent discussion of the coping stone bearing EIAD 302—which belongs to the same section of the *vedikā* and period as the one under discussion—Zin assumes that the source of all major narratives at Amaravati is (as in Kanaganahalli or Nagarjunakonda) the (Apara)mahāvinaseliya *nikāya*. See Zin, “Traces of Reciprocal Exchange,” 13. On Kanaganahalli, compare now Tournier, “Buddhist Lineages,” 859–892. Similarly, Shimada, who misinterprets one inscription (EIAD 301) as implying that “the *stūpa* was in the possession of the *Caityakas* around the 1st–2nd century CE,” does not mention the Rājagiriya at all in his monographic study of the *stūpa*. See Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 160.

⁷⁸ More precisely, the coping stone was found by Sewell between the northern and the western gates. See Robert Sewell, *Report on the Amarāvati Tope, and Excavations on Its Site in 1877* (London: G. E. Eyre and W. Spottiswoode, 1880), 46–47, no. 46, with pl. III.

⁷⁹ Previous editions referred to in the apparatus are: Eugen Hultzsch, “Berichtungen und Nachträge zu den Amarāvati-Inschriften,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 40 (1886): 346, no. 53 (abbreviated as H); Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures*, 290, no. 69 (S); *IBH*, II Amarāvati 49 (Ts). See also R. Otto Franke, “Epigraphische Notizen,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 50 (1896): 599 (F).

(*vedikānavakammika*)⁸⁰—together with her daughter, the noble Dhammadinnā,⁸¹ and of Saṅgharakkhita.

The characterization of Buddharakkhitā's master as *vedikānavakammika* is unique and most interesting. It points to a degree of specialization introduced in the function of *navakammika*. This may have occurred for large building projects, the overseeing of which had to be shared by various individuals.⁸² That Buddharakkhita was in charge not merely of overseeing the construction of "some railings at Amarāvati,"⁸³ but "the" railing of the great *stūpa* is supported by additional evidence. Indeed, a later one-line inscription engraved on a drum-frieze preserved at the British Museum (EIAD 283; fig. 8, p. 57)⁸⁴ confirms that the Rājagiriya were involved in overseeing construction at the *stūpa*, particularly at its northern section. The beginning of this inscription is not extant. In light of parallel records, it is safe to assume that it characterized the donor—probably a layperson—and that it mentioned some of the relatives that he or she wished to associate with the gift. The rest of the record is complete and reads as follows:⁸⁵

⁸⁰ As indicated in the apparatus, the first part of the form *vetikānavakamikasa* was read *cetikā* by Hultsch, Burgess, and Lüders and was interpreted as pointing to the Caityaka *nikāya*. Sivaramamurti correctly read *vetikā*, as also pointed out by Silk. See Jonathan A. Silk, *Managing Monks: Administrators and Administrative Roles in Indian Buddhist Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 94. Other instances of the term confirm that it corresponds to the more common *vedikā*, with devoicing of the intervocalic dental; see, for instance, EIAD 274, l. 1; 318.

⁸¹ On allusions, in the Amaravati corpus, to the relatives of monastic donors, and for a slightly different translation of EIAD 301, see Shayne Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 42–43.

⁸² See Petra Kieffer-Pülz, review of *Managing Monks: Administrators and Administrative Roles in Indian Buddhist Monasticism* by Jonathan Silk, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 53, no. 1 (2010): 78.

⁸³ Silk, *Managing Monks*, 94.

⁸⁴ The piece bears the accession number 1880,0709.77. Stylistically, the frieze falls under what Shimada calls the third type of drum slabs; it corresponds to Stern and Bénisti's third period. See Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 106–107; Stern and Bénisti, *Évolution du style indien d'Amaravati*, 68–69, 74–75. Paleographically, the inscription looks later than EIAD 302 and 468, and it may be tentatively dated to the late 2nd or early 3rd century CE.

⁸⁵ Since a first and rather unreliable edition of this inscription was published by Cunningham, it has never been read in full, but Burgess improved the decipherment of the concluding portion of the record. See Alexander Cunningham, "Appendix E," in *Tree and Serpent Worship: Or, Illustrations of Mythology and Art*

(1) {ca. 30 *akṣaras*}/// bālikāhi sahā natīhi sahā [bha]tukehi ◊ sanigasambāndhivagena sahā ◊ °imañ deyadhammañ kāritañ ◊ dhamñakaḍe mahācetiye cetiyapaṭa be 2 pāt[u]kā 3 °umñiso puphaga(ha)ñiyañ paṭasamthar[o] ca mahācetiye ca°utho bhāgo rājagiriyañ °utaradāre paṭiṭhapitañ savasatānañ ca hitasughathañ ti

1. **sahā natīhi sahā [bha]tukehi** *sahina tihisa nitya* C Ts. ◊ **sanigasambāndhivagena** *sanigamakhatana gena* C Ts. ◊ **sahā** ◊ **°imañ** *sahadama* C Ts. ◊ **deyadhammañ kāritañ** *deya damana* C Ts; *deyadhamma kāritañ* B. ◊ **dhamñakaḍe mahācetiye** *dhankata mahacetiya* C; *dhañakaḍe mahacetiya* B; *dhañakaḍe mahacetiya* B Ts. ◊ **pāt[u]kā** *bataka* C; *pātaka* B; *pātuka* Ts. ◊ **°umñiso puphaga(ha)ñiyañ** *datisa pupha gatiya* C; *umñise puphagatiyañ* B; *°unisa puphagañiya* Ts. In light of the numerous occurrences of the term *puphagahañī* in the Kanaganahalli corpus, it seems reasonable to assume that the engraver of EIAD 283 omitted the *akṣara* <ha>. Cf. Nakanishi and von Hinüber, *Kanaganahalli Inscriptions*, 45. ◊ **paṭasamthar[o]** B; *paṭasa* ... C Ts. ◊ **mahācetiye ca°utho bhāgo** B; ... *hā ca nebatasa tha* ... *ṭha* C; *[ma]hācetiya tasa tha* ... *ṭha* Ts. ◊ **°utaradāre** B Ts; *natavadāre* C ◊ **paṭiṭhapitañ** *paṭitha pita* C Ts; *paṭiṭhapitañ* B. ◊ **savasatānañ ca hitasughathañ ti** *sanasa dānañ cahitasa paṭhati* C; *sanasa dānañ cahitasa paṭhati* Ts; *savasatānañ ca hitasughathañ ti* B.

... together with his(/her) daughters, blood-relatives, and his own entourage, had this pious gift made: at Great Shrine at Dhaññakaḍa, two—2—slabs for the shrine, 3 pilasters; a cornice, a[n element of] lower balustrade,⁸⁶ and a covering of [floor-]slabs. [All this was] established at the Great Shrine—the fourth share [being in possession?] of the Rājagiriya—at the northern gate, for the well-being and happiness of all beings.

The inscription preserves a list of altogether seven structural elements that were offered, which is exceptional in the Amaravati corpus. Most of these were components of the drum of the *stūpa*. This is obviously the case of the two drum slabs (*cetiyapaṭa*), one of which is likely to

in India in the First and Fourth Centuries after Christ, from the Sculptures of the Buddhist Topes at Sanchi and Amaravati, ed. James Fergusson (London: India Museum, 1868), 240, no. XX; James Burgess, “Is Bezawāḍa on the Site of Dhanakāṭaka?,” *Indian Antiquary* 11 (1882): 98. See also *IBH*, II Amaravati 31, which overlooked Burgess’ contribution. In the apparatus, the three editions are abbreviated as C, B, and Ts respectively.

⁸⁶ For the meaning of the word *pu(p)phagahañī*, see Oskar von Hinüber, “Some Remarks on Technical Terms of Stūpa Architecture,” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2015* 19 (2016): 29–38.

be the object bearing the inscription, but also include an element of the lower balustrade (*pupphagahaṇī*). Although *pātuka* (Skt. *pādaka*) and *umṇisa* (Skt. *uṣṇīṣa*) generally refer to the uprights and coping stones of the *vedikā*, Barrett has plausibly argued that in this and a few other instances, these terms may be used to refer to parts of the drum's encasement. According to him, the group of donated objects formed a unit,⁸⁷ which may have adorned the northern *āyāka* platform. In addition, the donor presented a lining of slabs, which might have covered the floor of (part of) one of the *pradakṣiṇapathas*.⁸⁸

In the second sentence of the inscription, the phrase *caūtho bhāgo rājagiriyanāṃ* framed by the two locatives *mahācetiye* and *utaradāre* is difficult to interpret. I propose that the genitive plural *rājagiriyanāṃ* is used here to mark the corporate possession of the sponsored elements by members of a *nikāya*. This is suggested by comparison with EIAD 264, engraved on a Dharmacakra-pillar capital cornice recovered by the western gate of the great *stūpa*. This inscription, best known for being dated to the reign of the Sātavāhana king Vāsiṭṭhīputta Siri-Puḥumāvi (r. ca 85–125 CE), has a comparable ending, namely ... *mahācetiye* ◊ *cetikiyanāṃ nikā(ya)sa parigahe* ◊ *°aparadāre* ◊ *dha[m]macakam de(ya)dhamma[m th]āpita* “at the Great Shrine, in possession of the monastic order of the Cetikiyas, at the [shrine's] western gate, a Dharmacakra[-pillar] was established as pious gift... .”⁸⁹ In both passages, the name of members of a *nikāya*, expressed in the genitive plural, is similarly framed by two locatives (*mahācetiye* ... *-dāre*). I thus propose to understand that (*nikāyasa*) *parigahe* was likewise implied after *rājagiriyanāṃ* in EIAD 283. This would mean that the structural elements, all fitted in the *stūpa*'s north-

⁸⁷ See Douglas Barrett, “Style and Palaeography at Amarāvati,” *Oriental Art* 36, no. 2 (1990): 79. See also Akira Shimada, “Beginning of the Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda: Sculptures from Sites 6 and 9,” in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

⁸⁸ For other occurrences of the compound *paṭasamthara*, see EIAD 20, l. 2; KñI 8, ll. 4–5, as edited in Tournier, “Buddhist Lineages,” 878–880.

⁸⁹ Contrary to what was believed by Lamotte and repeated till recently, this is the only secure epigraphic attestation of the obscure Cetikiya *nikāya* in Indian epigraphy. Compare Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien: des origines à l'ère Śaka* (Louvain: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1958), 580; Bart Dessein, “Of Tempted Arhats and Supermundane Buddhas: Abhidharma in the Krishna Region,” in *Buddhism in the Krishna River Valley of Andhra*, ed. Sree Padma and Anthony W. Barber (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 66, n. 5; Bart Dessein, “The Mahāsāṃghikas and the Origin of Mahayana Buddhism: Evidence Provided in the **Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣāśāstra*,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 40, no. 1 (2009): 35.

ern structure, were formally placed in the hands of the Rājagiriya, who oversaw the construction works in that section of the *stūpa*. The phrase *caūtho bhāgo rājagiriyanāṃ* may then form a parenthetical statement, pointing to the fact that the *stūpa* was divided into segments controlled by various *nikāyas*.⁹⁰ Among these, the Rājagiriya would have been entrusted with the northern gate, while the Cetikiya might have been assigned the western section. This interpretation, as tentative as it is, allows us to account for the clustering of inscriptions mentioning the Rājagiriya in the northern section of the *stūpa*. It may also be connected to Buddharakkhita's appointment as *navakammika* of the *vedikā*, in a period during which much of the building activity of the railing seems to have concentrated on its northern section.

6. Emergence and self-representation of the Rājagiriya (-Paṇṇattivāda)s

The fourth and last structural element identified at Amaravati whose inscription (EIAD 328) points to the Rājagiriya is a pillar found reused as a threshold in a later temple of the Amaravati village.⁹¹ Since the epigraph also contains no indication of its original location, this evidence cannot be used to further support the argument that the *nikāya* was specifically responsible for the *stūpa*'s northern section. It is nonetheless interesting in other respects. First, the inscription marks the gift of a pillar by two individuals:⁹² one is said to be the disciple of the *mahāthera* Bhūtirakkhita, who is explicitly defined as a resident of Rāyasela (perhaps identifiable with Rājagiri); the other is the female

⁹⁰ In the description of the layout of fortified cities in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, the term *bhāga* is commonly used to point specifically to the division of the urban space into sectors. See KAS 2.4.7–14.

⁹¹ Burgess, *Notes on the Amarāvati Stūpa*, 51.

⁹² The inscription was edited in Eugen Hultzsch, "Berichtigungen und Nachträge," 344–345, no. 37. The following reading only marginally improves upon the previous edition:

(1) [r]āyaselanivāsino vasibhūta (2) [ma]hatherasa °ayirabhūtirakhitasa [°a](3)[te]vāsikasa cula°ayirasa °ara[ha](4)(ta)sa °ayira[bu]dharakhitasa °atev[ā](5)s[i]niya bhikhuniyā nadāya thabho dāna

2. °ayirabhūtirakhitasa °ayirabhūtarakhitasa H. Cf. EIAD 76, l. 2: °aya[bhuti]sa. ✦ 5. thabho [tha]mbho H.

A pillar as gift of Culla-Ayira—disciple of the eminent elder, the noble Bhūtirakkhita, a resident of the Rāyasela who achieved mastery (*vasī-bhūta*)—[and] of the nun Na(m)dā, disciple of the noble Buddharakkhita, who is an *arhat*.

disciple of a *Buddharakkhita*. It may be tempting at first to identify the latter with the above-mentioned *navakammika*. But that *Buddharakkhita* is not explicitly associated to Rājagiri, and his name is too common at Amaravati to allow any secure identification.⁹³

More importantly, perhaps, the two teachers mentioned in EIAD 328 are respectively defined as *vasībhūta* and *arhat*. The two terms point to the fact that they were considered to have realized *nirvāṇa*, with the former stressing the subsequent mastery of supernatural powers (Skt. *balavaśībhāva*).⁹⁴ This brings us back to the characterization of the Rājagiriya lineage in EIAD 468. Indeed, both master Anuruddha and—if my reconstruction of the last, partially preserved word is accepted—his pupil are likewise characterized by the epithet *mahāvasībhūta*. This epithet rarely occurs in early Buddhist inscriptions,⁹⁵ and in the Āndhra corpus it is only found one more time—in the feminine—in a fragmentary record (EIAD 315) from Amaravati.⁹⁶ What is less rare in the Āndhra epigraphic corpus is the recognition of local *virtuosi* as accomplished *arhats*.⁹⁷ Indeed, the liberality with which the Rājagiriya and other religious groups of Āndhra appear to have granted the status of liberated saints to prominent monks—and, more rarely, nuns—makes it possible to shed new light on the alleged “devaluation” of the status of the *arhat* among the *nikāyas* dominating

⁹³ A good example of the multiplicity of homonyms is EIAD 391, a very abraded four-line inscription engraved on a second-type dome slab, dated by Shimada to ca. 170–200 CE. See Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture*, 109–110. EIAD 391 is an exceptional record in that it mentions as many as three *navakammikas* of various provenance. The first of these is the *mahānavakammika* *Buddharakkhita*, resident of Pākagiri, which must be a later homonym than the one attested in EIAD 301. See also Silk, *Managing Monks*, 94.

⁹⁴ For the meaning of the first term, which most of the time is used to qualify realized and wonder-working *arhats*, see BHSD, s.v. *vaśībhūta*, with complements in Vincent Tournier, *La formation du Mahāvastu et la mise en place des conceptions relatives à la carrière du bodhisattva* (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2017), 314–315.

⁹⁵ Besides its occurrences in the EIAD corpus, see IBH, III Bhājā 11.

⁹⁶ This inscription is engraved on a coping stone recovered near the eastern gate belonging, like EIAD 468, to the second phase of construction of the railing.

⁹⁷ See, besides the inscriptions already referred to, EIAD 49, ll. 10–12; 135, l. 1; 173, ll. 2–3; 321, l. 1; 287, ll. 2–3. In light of this evidence, Schopen’s statement, in an article focusing on the cult of local monastic dead at Amaravati, according to which “[t]here are, in fact no indications—apart from reference to *piṇḍapātikas* or *āraṇyakas*—that canonical or textual definitions of religious achievement or ‘sainthood’ ever penetrated actual early monastic communities in India, no indications in these records that they were known at all” calls for serious reconsideration. See Schopen, “An Old Inscription from Amaravati,” 310.

the religious landscape of Āndhra. This issue deserves to be explored at length but doing so would take us outside of the scope of the present paper.⁹⁸ At the moment, I will only highlight that the remark, by the donor, that he belongs to a lineage of accomplished *vasībhūtas* is coherent with the representation of the levitating monk in scene 3 of the relief. This is why I propose to identify that individual with a wonder-working *arhat*, the spiritual ancestor of the Rājagiriya.

While the epithet *mahāvasībhūta* characterizes Anuruddha individually, the three epithets preceding it, *rājagiriya*, *paññativāda*, and *sīhāsanapariggāhaka* in my opinion characterize the broader group to which he and, by extension, his pupils belonged. I have argued above that Rājagiriya is used, in EIAD 283, to refer to members of a *nikāya*. The fact that, in EIAD 468, the epithet occurs at the very beginning of the characterization of Anuruddha reflects a pattern observable in other early donative inscriptions. When recording gifts by monastic donors, these sometimes open with the name of a *nikāya* in the genitive plural, immediately followed by the characterization of the donor in the genitive singular.⁹⁹ Even if the syntactic relationship between the first three and the last two genitive plural forms in EIAD 468 is ambiguous, consideration of these parallels supports the thesis that the epithet *rājagiriya* defined a corporate identity.

EIAD 301 and 328 have a different phrasing, since they open with a reference, in the genitive singular, to the donor's teacher as a "resident" (*nivāsin*, *nivāsika*) of the Rājagiri (var. Rāyasela). In and of themselves, these characterizations do not unambiguously point to a *nikāya* affiliation and could simply indicate the teacher's residence at a given monastery. However, many monastic orders ultimately derived their names from that of the older—or most important—seat from which they developed and spread. Moreover, the use of the word (*ni*)*vāsin* as last element of a compound can also be a marker of a *nikāya* affiliation, but it is an ambiguous one. For instance, according to the context *mahāvihāravāsin* variously meant "resident of a great monastery," or "member of [the Theriya lineage centered on] the Mahāvihāra (at Anurādhapura)."¹⁰⁰ When EIAD 301 and EIAD 328

⁹⁸ See Vincent Tournier, "A Devalued Ideal? Notes on the Cult of Arhats among the Andhakas," (in preparation).

⁹⁹ For a description of this pattern and examples, see Tournier, "Buddhist Lineages," 873–874.

¹⁰⁰ For the ambiguity of *mahāvihāravāsin* in Āndhra epigraphy, see Tournier, "A Tide of Merit," 52–53; Kieffer-Pülz, "Traces of Theriyas in Āndhradeśa." I will return to the various markers of *nikāya* affiliation in Tournier, "Following the Śaila Trail."

are taken together with EIAD 468 and EIAD 283, the combined evidence suggests that by the end of the 1st century CE, the Rājagiriya were exerting control over (part of) a site located outside of its head monastery's precinct, and had emerged as a trans-local fraternity.

The following two epithets in EIAD 468 moreover show that this group had developed a clear notion of its distinctiveness. Indeed, *paṇṇativāda* and *sīhāsanapariggāhaka* point respectively to the group's doctrinal orientation and to its privileged relationship with temporal power. Both interestingly also occur in a fragmentary potsherd inscription from Salihundam, where they very probably characterized the lineage in whose custody the donated vessel was placed.¹⁰¹ This parallel confirms that we are dealing, in EIAD 468, with a series of epithets characterizing the donor's lineage as a whole and not merely his teacher Anuruddha.

The term *Paṇṇattivāda* (P. also *Paññattivāda*, Skt. *Prajñaptivāda*/*Prajñaptivādin*), like *Rājagiriya*, occurs in historiographic and doxographic sources dating from around the 4th century CE onwards,¹⁰² which focus on the genealogy and doctrines of the “eighteen *nikāyas*.” This *nikāya*'s name was so far unknown from epigraphy, and, as a result, the geographical spread of the *Prajñaptivādins* has remained shrouded in mystery. The meaning of the *nikāya*'s name is variously defined and may have evolved over time, but what is clear is that it points to a certain “nominalist” stance, since *Prajñaptivādins* appear to have identified some of the constituents of experience (e.g., the *saṃskṛtadharma*s, the *āyatana*s) as mere “designations” (*prajñapti*) devoid of reality.¹⁰³ Taken as a pair of defining notions, *Rājagiriya*-

¹⁰¹ The following reading, by Ingo Strauch and myself, is very tentative, given the poor quality of the published documentation: *[sidham· °a]kara[na]pa[na]-tiv[ā]tasihañasi[h]ā[sanaparigahakaṇam [bha]///* “(In the possession of?) ... the *akaraṇa* (? One would expect *ācariya*-), who propound [the doctrine of mere] designation, who, known as ‘lions’ (*sīhañña*), are holders of the lion throne.” See Strauch, “Inscribed Pots and Potsherds,” Sal 53, for further comments. Interestingly, a fragmentary potsherd inscription from Vaddamanu might also preserve the end of the name *paṇṇativādi*, a variant of *paṇṇativāda* also known in Pali sources. Strauch reads the fragment as follows: *///dināna v[ih]ārāparibhoko same///*. See Strauch, “Inscribed Pots and Potsherds,” Vadd 62. Considering the connection of the site with the Sadas, and its proximity with Amaravati, it is tempting to reconstruct the first word, in the gen. pl. of possession, as (*paṇṇativā*)*dināna*, and to translate “... (vessel) of use of the monastery of the *Paṇṇativādins*”

¹⁰² For the dating of the relevant sources, see Tournier, *La formation du Mahāvastu*, 15–16.

¹⁰³ See André Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1955), 84–86.

Paṇṇattivāda thus combines a claim about the *nikāya*'s origins with a defining doctrinal stance, much like Theriya-Vibhajjavāda, attested for instance in EIAD 61, or Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravādin attested in the paratexts of that school's *Vinaya*.¹⁰⁴ The *bahuvrīhi* compound Paṇṇattivāda, like Vibhajjavāda, "those who propound analytical distinctions," may in fact have characterized the doctrinal orientation of several *nikāyas*. Some sources, including a section of Bhāvivēka's *Tarkajvālā*, identify or closely relate the Prajñaptivādins with the Bahuśrutīyas.¹⁰⁵ It is incidentally in Āndhra, where they were established in the 3rd century CE at the latest, that the Bahuśrutīyas are the best attested epigraphically.¹⁰⁶

But the Prajñaptivādins are never associated with the Rājagiriya in the few sources that talk about the latter. In fact, within most lists of *nikāyas*, the Prajñaptivādins occur subsumed under the larger Mahāsāṅghika group. In the extant lists of Mahāsāṅghika sub-groups, the Rājagiriya only occur in the so-called "second list" by Bhāvivēka, from which the Prajñaptivādins are absent.¹⁰⁷ The fact that the Prajña-

¹⁰⁴ See, respectively, Tournier, "A Tide of Merit," 52–53, and Tournier, *La formation du Mahāvastu*, 3–4, 16–18, 24–29.

¹⁰⁵ See Malcolm D. Eckel, *Bhāvivēka and His Buddhist Opponents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 170, 352.7. For the Bahuśrutīyas, see Baireau, *Les sectes bouddhiques*, 81–83; Oskar von Hinüber and Peter Skilling, "Two Buddhist Inscriptions from Deorkothar (Dist. Rewa, Madhya Pradesh)," *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2012* 16 (2013): 23–26.

¹⁰⁶ Four inscriptions mention the Bahuśrutīyas in the EIAD corpus, and attest to the fact that they possessed at least two monasteries in the lower Krishna valley: one at Kesanapalli and one at Nagarjunakonda. See EIAD 3, l. 2; 44, ll. 8–9; 45, ll. 11–12; 46, l. 7. A much earlier inscription, tentatively dated by Salomon and Marino to the latter part of the 2nd century BCE, attests the presence of the (Kaukuṭika-)Bahuśrutīya at Deorkothar (Rewa dist., Madhya Pradesh). See Richard Salomon and Marino Joseph, "Observations on the Deorkothar Inscriptions and Their Significance for the Evaluation of Buddhist Historical Traditions," *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2013* 17 (2014): 27–39. For the interpretation of this early record for the history of Buddhist *nikāyas*, see Tournier, *La formation du Mahāvastu*, 18–19.

¹⁰⁷ See Eckel, *Bhāvivēka and His Buddhist Opponents*, 115, 310–311; Tournier, *La formation du Mahāvastu*, 33, table 1.1. The *Dīpavaṃsa*'s fifth chapter knows about both the Paññatti(vāda)s and the Rājagirikas, but the mentions of the two *nikāyas* belong to two distinct textual layers. Indeed, the former *nikāya* is treated as one of the five subgroups of the Mahāsāṅgītikas (= Mahāsāṅghikas), while the latter is listed outside of the genealogy of the eighteen *nikāyas*, in an ancillary stanza. That stanza, whose *pāda* c seems to be corrupt, twice mentions the Rāja-

ptivādins and the Rājagiriya may—at least in the historical context of 1st-century CE Āndhra—have been so closely related that they would appear together in a monastic pedigree, contradicts the genealogy proposed by Bareau for the distinct *nikāyas* generally associated with the larger Mahāsāṅghika group. Indeed, according to the now outdated genealogical tree drawn by Bareau, the Prajñaptivādins and the Rājagiriya were rather far apart: the former would have emerged alongside the Bahuśrutīya, from the earlier Gokulika/Kaukkuṭika *nikāya*, while the latter would ultimately have descended from the Caitikīya and not have emerged before the 3rd or the 4th century CE.¹⁰⁸

The last epithet assumed by the lineage, *sīhāsanapariggāhaka* also requires some elucidation. It presents the members of the lineage as “possessors” (Skt. *parigrāhaka*) of the “lion seat” or “throne” (Skt. *simhāsana*).¹⁰⁹ This is a major emblem of royalty, and it further

girikas, in a list of six *nikāyas* that “appeared one after another” (*uppannā aparāparā*). See Dīp 5:41, 54. Compare Mhv 5:12–13. It is noteworthy that the Rājagirikas are listed here alongside the Siddhatthas (Skt. Siddhārthikas), the Pubbaseliyas and the Aparaseliyas. Indeed, these four *nikāyas*, all attested epigraphically in the Āndhra corpus, are grouped together, by the author of the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā*, under the label Andhakas. See Kv-a 52.24–25.

¹⁰⁸ See Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques*, 30, 32–33.

¹⁰⁹ One inscription from Kanaganahalli (KnI 273) interestingly comprises a similarly formed compound, *bodhipariggāhaka*. It was first published in *Indian Archaeology — A Report 2000–2001*, 77. It is included neither in Nakanishi and von Hinüber, *Kanaganahalli Inscriptions*, nor in K. P. Poonacha, *Excavations at Kanaganahalli (Sannati), Taluk Chitapur, Dist. Gulbarga, Karnataka* (New Delhi; Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India; Chandu Press, 2011). Based on my *in situ* documentation of the inscription at the site, I read it as follows:

(1) ψ (si)[dha] bodhipariggāhakasa vāṇiyasa budhilaḍsa payasaghādo
deyadhama 卐

Success! A pair of footprints as the pious gift of the merchant Budhila, the possessor of the *bodhi*[-tree].

My translation of *bodhipariggāhaka* is informed by the fact that *bodhi* commonly stands for *bodhimūla* or *bodhivṛkṣa*. Therefore, the compound probably meant that the donor had acquired a sapling of the *bodhi*-tree. He might have established a corresponding tree-shrine at Kanaganahalli, under which the pair of footprints which the inscription serves to dedicate were set up. That *bodhi*-tree shrines could include a set of footprints is suggested, for instance, by the relief of the British Museum coping stone, as observed by Becker, “Mahinda’s Visit to Amaravati?,” 75 with fig. 100. One fragmentary and unpublished inscription from Kanaganahalli (KnI 278) incidentally appears to refer to such a tree shrine. This is engraved on what appears to be a plinth, and reads as follows: (1) /// ? *bodhirukha-*

possesses a rich symbolism within Indian religious traditions in general, and Buddhism in particular.¹¹⁰ Their use of this title may indicate that the Rājagiriya lineage claimed to have been granted the distinct honor of mounting on the royal throne to teach the king and his entourage.¹¹¹ Understood in this way, the epithet assumed by members of this *nikāya* is comparable to the claim, made in the Ikṣvāku period by Theriyas active at Nagarjunakonda, to be the “supreme teachers of kings” (*accantarājācariya*).¹¹² The last epithet characterizing Anuruddha’s lineage may therefore have served to stress its proximity with the royal power. This would be perfectly coherent with the very name Rājagiriya, which seems to imply the claim that their head-center was a royal foundation, as also lavishly represented in the visual narrative of the British Museum coping stone.

peḍhikā ◇ *c[e]ti°a* ? ///. The term *peḍhikā* (there spelt *peḍhikā*) is also found in compounds in two other unpublished inscriptions from the same site, one of which is likewise engraved on a plinth. See KnI 289, l. 1, and KnI 312, l. 2. It is close to Ardhamāgadhi *peḍhiyā* and corresponds to Skt. *pīṭhikā* (see also *pīṭhī*), meaning “seat, base, pedestal.” My tentative understanding of the fragment is therefore “... the plinth of the *bodhi*-tree ... (at ?) the ... shrine.”

¹¹⁰ See, for instance, Jeannine Auboyer, *Le trône et son symbolisme dans l’Inde ancienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), 108–112; Joseph Walser, “On Buddhists and Their Chairs,” in *Scriptural Authority, Reason and Action: Proceedings of a Panel at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, September 1st–5th, 2009*, ed. Vincent Eltschinger and Helmut Krasser (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013), 53–56. A more in-depth investigation of the *śimhāsana* in the Buddhist context is a desideratum.

¹¹¹ The presentation of the royal throne to the preacher is described, for instance, in the later *Ajitasenavyākaraṇa*, where the great *śrāvaka* and “king among monks” (*bhikṣurāja*) Nandimitra sits on King Ajitasena’s *śimhāsana*. See Jiro Hirabayashi, William B. Rasmussen, and Safarali Shomakhmadov, “The *Ajitasenavyākaraṇa* from Central Asia and Gilgit,” in *The St. Petersburg Sanskrit Fragments*, volume I, ed. Seishi Karashima and Margarita I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya (Tokyo: The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences & The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2015), 109–110. See also the similar interaction between King Asoka and the former prince Nigrodha, Dīp 6:47–48; Mhv 5:62–66; Jayawickrama, *The Inception of Discipline*, 169 (§ 48). Note that, in scene 4 of the British Museum relief (fig. 5), the monk teaching the king is not represented as sitting on a throne or high seat. The absence of correspondence between the lineage’s epithet and the founding narrative may be explained by the fact that, in the relief, the king and his entourage came to the monastic group in the wilderness. It is there, in the shadow of trees, that they were taught, before the monastery was established. The monks are also not represented as guests back in the palace, where the lion throne might have been offered to the preacher.

¹¹² See EIAD 20, l. 1; 69, ll. 5–6. For an attempt at understanding the implications of this epithet, see Tournier, “A Tide of Merit,” 59–62.

7. Concluding Remarks

The preceding discussion has undertaken to garner as much information as possible on the role of the Sada dynasty (late 1st century BCE–late 1st century CE) in the remarkable development of Buddhist monuments in Āndhra and in the support of Buddhist monastic lineages. The trail of evidence has led us from the exploration of the legacy left by the Sadas in later royal discourses and modern toponymy, to the self-definition of a religious milieu, the Rājagiriya, which appears to have enjoyed their support. Central for my argument is a famous visual narrative from Amaravati, which I have reinterpreted as a foundation story of the Rājagiriya. Indeed, I have argued that it represents a series of events leading to the establishment of the Rājagiri monastic complex, somewhere in the Mahisaka region, by Pussagutta, an unknown king who may however be connected to the Sada dynasty. Investigating why the establishment of that monastery was so prominently represented on the railing of the Amaravati *stūpa* has led me to highlight the importance of the Rājagiriya fraternity at that major site. I have proposed that members of this *nikāya* were granted the possession of the northern section of the *stūpa*, which allowed them to oversee the construction—through the appointment of a dedicated *navakammika*—of a significant portion of the railing during the late 1st century CE. Members of that *nikāya* were especially eager to stress the support they had historically enjoyed from the Āndhra rulers. This allowed them to position themselves within the highly diverse and competitive religious arena of Amaravati, whose epigraphic corpus records the name of no less than six distinct *nikāyas*.¹¹³

The Rājagiriya further marked their doctrinal distinctiveness by assuming the name Paṇṇattivādas, a term for which I have uncovered the first epigraphic attestations. This has implications for the genealogy of the Buddhist “schools” proposed by Bareau, which is still largely accepted in scholarship, despite its problems of method and the limitation of its sources. Systematic mining of the epigraphic evidence provides important correctives to the late Buddhist historiographic and doxographic sources. Only a comprehensive historical enquiry may contribute to the needed revision of many of our assumptions about the early institutional history of Buddhism.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Besides the Rājagiriya, these are the Cetikias (EIAD 264), Mahāvīnaseliya (EIAD 287, 321), Puvvaseliya (EIAD 396, plus EIAD 407 from Dhāranikota), Aparamahāvīnaseliya (EIAD 428), and Theriya (EIAD 537).

¹¹⁴ I will return to this point, and to other issues characterising Bareau’s approach to the history of Buddhist *nikāyas* in Tournier, “Following the Śāila Trail.”

Conventions

The transliteration system used throughout the present article is the one adopted for the Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa (EIAD) corpus. See the conventions page at <http://hisoma.huma-num.fr/exist/apps/EIAD/conventions.html> and Tournier, “A Tide of Merit,” 22, n. 1. In addition, the sign ψ renders the auspicious symbol characterized by a tripartite ω -motif commonly referred to as *nandyāvarta*, which is sometimes engraved before epigraphic formulae. In the apparatus, the symbol \diamond is merely used as a separator between lemmas. I have “translated” the conventions adopted in other epigraphic publications into those of the EIAD, for the sake of clarity and in order for the reader to understand significant differences of reading recorded in my critical apparatus. Inscriptions of the EIAD corpus are cited according to their number in the project’s inventory, to be published in Arlo Griffiths and Vincent Tournier, “Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa: A Provisional Inventory,” in *Early Āndhradeśa: Towards a Grounded History*, ed. Vincent Tournier, Akira Shimada, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming). When referring to inscriptions of the distinct corpus of Kanaganahalli inscriptions (KnI), which I am currently re-editing, I use the inventory numbers that will accompany them in a future publication, followed by their number in Nakanishi and von Hinüber, *Kanaganahalli Inscriptions* (abbreviated N&vH). When the inscriptions are missing in that corpus, I refer to their numbers in Poonacha, *Excavations at Kanaganahalli* (abbreviated MASI). If a reference to a Kanaganahalli inscription is not followed by a reference to either work, it means that it was never published before.

Abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated, references to Pali texts are to the editions of the Pali Text Society, following the abbreviation system adopted in von Hinüber 1996.

BHSD	See Edgerton, <i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary</i> .
CPD	See Trenckner et al., <i>A Critical Pāli Dictionary</i> .
Dīp	<i>Dīpavaṃsa</i> .
DP	See Cone, <i>A Dictionary of Pāli</i> .
DPPN	See Malalasekera, <i>Dictionary of Pali Proper Names</i> .
EIAD	See Griffiths and Tournier, <i>Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa</i> .
IBH	See Tsukamoto, <i>Indo Bukkyō himei no kenkyū</i> .

KAS	See Kangle, <i>The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra</i> .
KnI	See Tournier, <i>Inscriptions of Kanaganahalli</i> .
Kv-a	<i>Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i> .
MASI	See Poonacha, <i>Excavations at Kanaganahalli</i> .
Mhv	<i>Mahāvamsa</i> .
N&vH	See Nakanishi and von Hinüber, <i>Kanaganahalli Inscriptions</i> .
PW	See Böhtlingk and Roth, <i>Sanskrit-Wörterbuch</i> .
T.	See Takakusu, Watanabe, and Ono, <i>Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō</i> .
Vin	Pali <i>Vinaya</i> .

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Figures

Figure 1. Upper register of an encasing slab, with relief showing King Sātakaṇṇi donating silver flowers to the Great Shrine, Kanaganahalli stūpa site. Photo V. Tournier; courtesy of the Archaeological Survey of India.



Figure 2. General view of the inner face of a coping stone (bearing EIAD 468), vedikā of the Amaravati stūpa, British Museum. Photo J. Miles, Archeovision; © The Trustees of the British Museum, shared under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence.



*Figure 3. Detail of the Amaravati coping stone, left register.
Photo J. Miles, Archeovision.*



*Figure 4. Detail of the Amaravati coping stone, center-right register.
Photo J. Miles, Archeovision.*



*Figure 5. Detail of the Amaravati coping stone, right register.
Photo J. Miles, Archeovision.*



*Figure 6. General view of the inner side of the toraṇa beam fragment no. 7, Phanigiri.
Photo V. Tournier; courtesy of Dept. of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Telangana.*

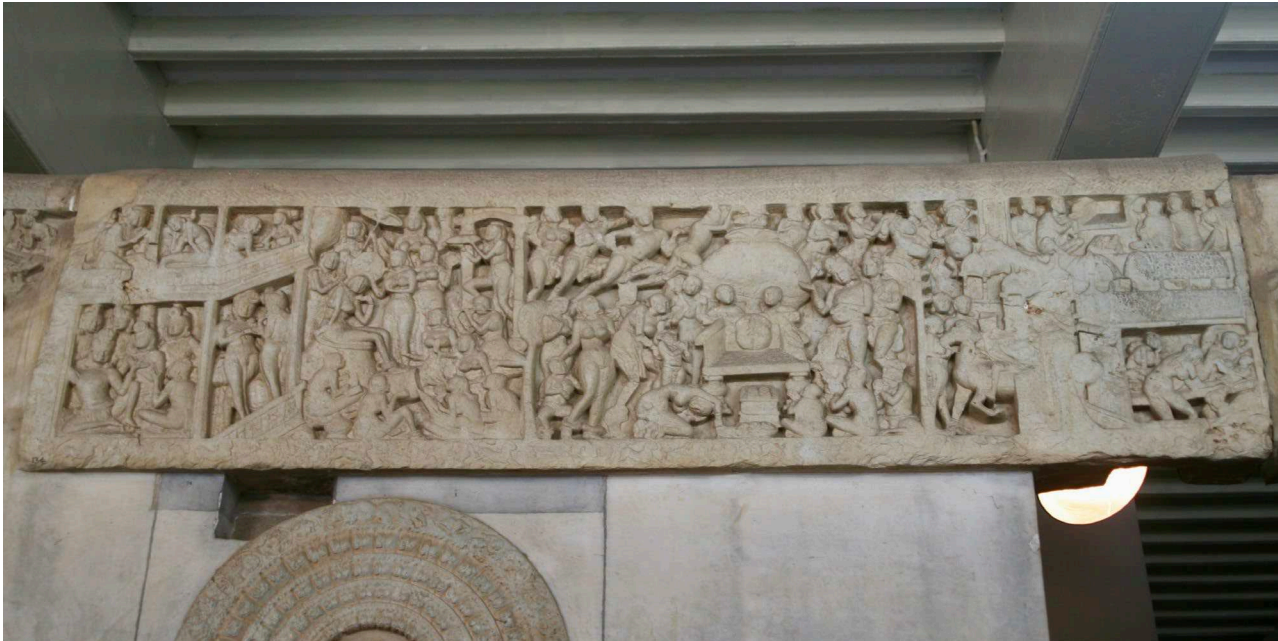


Figure 7. General view of the inner face of a coping stone (bearing EIAD 301), vedikā of the Amaravati stūpa, Chennai Government Museum. Photo Takashi Koezuka.

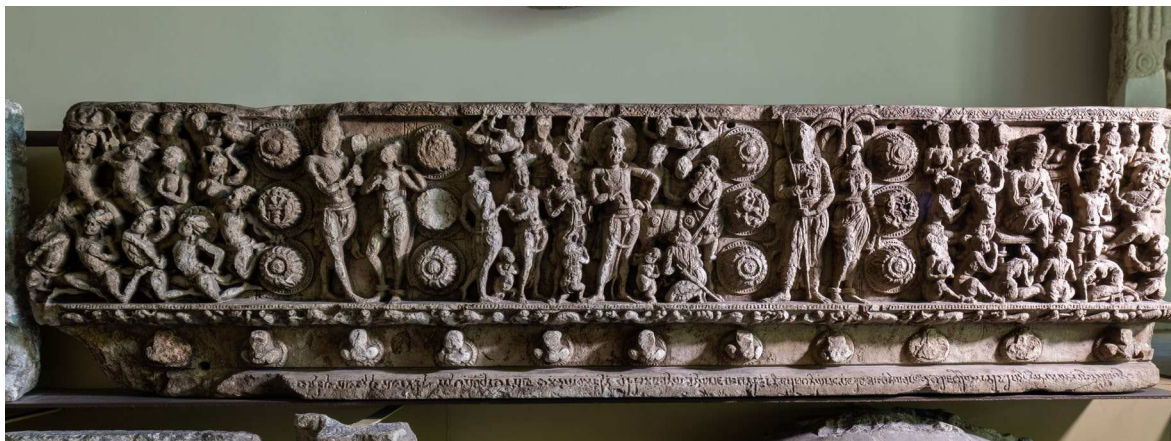


Figure 8. General view of a drum frieze of the Amaravati stūpa (bearing ELAD 283), British Museum. Photo J. Miles, Archeovision; © The Trustees of the British Museum, shared under CCBY-NC-SA 4.0 license.

