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Buddhist *Vihāras* in Early Medieval Bengal: Organizational Development and Historical Context

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Abstract: From the first epigraphic references in the early sixth century, the Buddhist *vihāras* in Bengal emerged as institutions with extensive landholdings, crucially depending on patronage from temporal powers. In the seventh and eighth centuries, they accumulated more landholdings as widely scattered land plots, a process facilitated by the growth of sub-regional kingships with several layers of rulers and the emergence of stratified land relations engendering tenurial rights. *Vihāras* also underwent an organizational development that was required for the management of large landholdings. In the ninth and tenth centuries, Buddhist *vihāras* flourished under regional kingships establishing ever stronger territorial control. The royal patronage conferred on them access to extensive resources and powers in the donated tracts, but also opened a door to political interference and made them a focus of power struggles between kings and their subordinate rulers. The accounts of the Chinese monk Yijing on the practices followed at *vihāras* in eastern India in the late seventh century complement the picture that can be sketched from the epigraphic sources, with more information on management of landholdings and administration.

Keywords: Bengal, early medieval, inscriptions, *vihāra*, landholdings.

1. Introduction

In the early medieval period,¹ Bengal, an eastern region of South Asia which mostly corresponds to the present territories of the Republic of Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal, saw the rise of eminent Buddhist *vihāras*, of which the most prominent were Somapuramahāvihāra, identified with the excavated site of Paharpur, and Paṭṭikeramahāvihāra, represented by numerous sites on the Mainamati/Lalmai Hill.² In early medieval eastern India, *vihāra* denotes a monastic complex consisting of residential quarters of monks, each of which is made of rows of cells arranged in a quadrangle surrounding a courtyard, places of worship like *stūpas* and shrines, which stand either in the courtyard of a quadrangle or outside, and other facilities including granaries and refectories.³ Apart from the gigantic sites representing the aforementioned *mahāvihāras*, the sites of middle-scale *vihāras* like Jagajjibanpur identified with Nandīrghīvihāra were excavated in several places of Bengal.⁴

¹ By “early medieval,” I refer to the period between the sixth/seventh and twelfth/thirteenth centuries, in which diverse terrains of South Asia experienced the rise of regional political powers consisting of kings and several layers of subordinate rulers, and the socio-economic development later culminating in the formation of regions. The socio-economic processes unfolded in many regions of South Asia in this period were (1) an agrarian expansion, namely the expansion of sedentary agriculture and agrarian society through the reclamation of wild tracts, (2) the formation of stratified land relations, and (3) the emergence of *jātis* through the consolidation of hereditary occupational groups and the incorporation of new social groups, to be arranged in a hierarchical order. For a general view of the early medieval period and theorization of historical processes in it, see B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1–37, 183–222. For the specific case of Bengal, see Ryosuke Furui, *Land and Society in Early South Asia: Eastern India 400–1250 AD* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

² For these sites, see K. N. Dikshit, *Excavations at Paharpur, Bengal* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1938) and Abu Imam, *Excavations at Mainamati: An Exploratory Study* (Dhaka: The International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, 2000).

³ For an overview, see Debala Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments* (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971), 40–41.

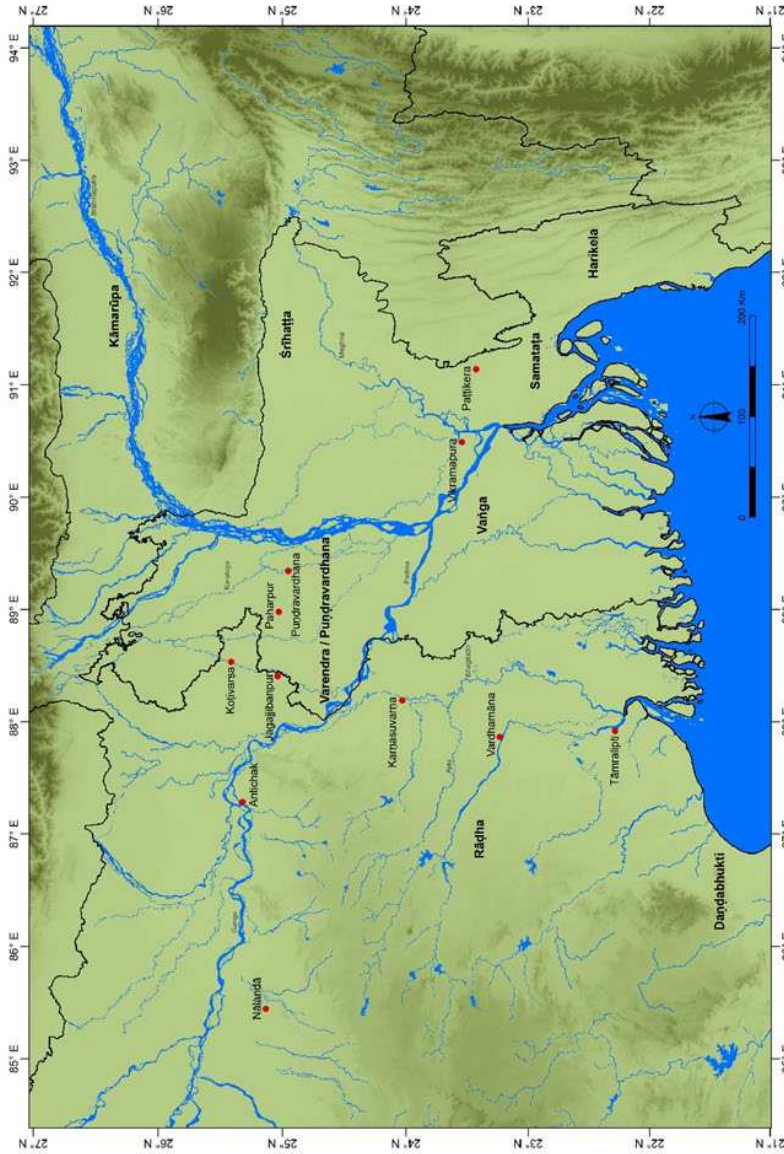
⁴ For the site of Jagajjibanpur, see Amal Roy, *Jagjivanpur 1996–2005 Excavation Report* (Kolkata: Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of West Bengal, 2012).

These *vihāras* functioned as centers of learning and religious activities. Their foundation and maintenance, as well as the subsistence and activities of the residents, naturally required a material base. The main sources which can shed light on this economic aspect of Buddhist *vihāras* are the contemporary inscriptions left by the diverse agents connected with the institutions.

Already in the first extant epigraphic reference to them in the early sixth century, Buddhist *vihāras* in Bengal appear as firmly implanted institutions with extensive landholdings, acquired through patronage from temporal powers. This basic scenario remained in place through the entire early medieval period, as attested by the inscriptions. A careful reading of the epigraphic sources, however, reveals that the organization of *vihāras* underwent developments in connection with historical changes in the political and socio-economic domains. In this article, I will discuss the development of Buddhist *vihāras* in Bengal, mainly relying on my analysis of the early medieval inscriptions, especially the copperplate grants which involve diverse levels of political powers. I will also address some matters connected with the management of Buddhist *vihāras* based on the inscriptional sources and complemented by the accounts of the Chinese monk Yijing on practices at *vihāras*, supposedly following *vinaya* rules.

Before starting the main discussion, Bengal, the venue of the present study, has to be described. The historical processes of early medieval Bengal proceeded in reference to its sub-regions which had different geological and ecological conditions. These were (1) Puṇḍravardhana, in the north, (2) Rāḍha, in the west, (3) Vaṅga, in the south, and (4) Samatāṭa, in the east, with the sub-regions of Śrīhaṭṭa and Harikela adjacent to the north and south of Samatāṭa respectively. Puṇḍravardhana and Rāḍha, with land of relatively high elevation conducive for reclamation, saw the development of an agrarian society earlier than Vaṅga and Samatāṭa, where the Bengal Delta proper and active floodplains posed difficulties for any cultivation without improvement in technology and labor mobilization. The first two sub-regions also kept a close connection with the Mid-Ganga heartland, due to their closeness to Bihar, which resulted in the introduction of a state apparatus earlier than in the last two sub-regions.⁵ These differences had implications for the historical processes related to Buddhist *vihāras* of Bengal, which will be discussed below.

⁵ For details of the sub-regions of Bengal and their characters, see Furui, *Land and Society*, 25–31.



Map: Major Urban Centers and Buddhist Sites of Early Medieval Bengal and its Environs (drawn by Socheat Chea).

2. Emergence of Buddhist *Vihāras* as Solidly Implanted Institutions: The Sixth Century

In the period between the second quarter of the fifth and the middle of the sixth century, Puṇḍravardhana, the northern sub-region of Bengal, was under Gupta rule as a province (*bhukti*) governed by a governor (*uparika*) appointed by the king. Samataṭa, the eastern sub-region, was under rulers who were subordinate to the Gupta kings but growing towards semi-independence.⁶ Due to the different administrative settings, the copperplate inscriptions issued in the respective sub-regions were of different types. While in Puṇḍravardhana land sale grants recording sales of land plots to individuals for religious purposes were issued by local bodies called *adhikaraṇa*,⁷ in Samataṭa royal grants announcing donations by local rulers were issued.⁸ The first extant epigraphic evidence of Buddhist *vihāras* in Bengal, the Gunaighar copperplate inscription of Vainyagupta, dated year 188 Gupta Era (507 CE),⁹ belongs to the second category. It records the donation of waste/fallow (*khila*) land of a substantial size in five plots by a copperplate grant (*tāmrapaṭṭena*), with complete enjoyment (*sarvato*

⁶ For the different administrative systems adapted by the Guptas to the local situation in Bengal, see Furui, *Land and Society*, 41–42, 46–56, 68–69, 74–75.

⁷ A land sale grant pertaining to the Tāvīra district (*viṣaya*) of the Daṇḍa province, the peripheral area of western Bengal adjacent to Odisha, has recently come to light. For the updated list of land sale grants issued under the Gupta rule, including this one, see Arlo Griffiths, “Four More Gupta-period Copperplate Grants from Bengal,” *Pratna Samiksha: A Journal of Archaeology, New Series* 9 (2018): 18–23. The *adhikaraṇa* under the Gupta rule was a body established at different levels of administrative units, through which the state interacted with local residents and governed them. Its members consisted of the urban elite at the *adhikaraṇa* of cities and the upper layer of peasant householders at the *adhikaraṇa* of rural areas. They mediated the interests of both state and local society, simultaneously as constituents of local administration and as representatives of local residents. Based on its capacity to represent the state or royal claim of territorial control as well as the communal right over waste/fallow land within a village, the *adhikaraṇa* wielded authority to issue land sale grants. For a detailed discussion, see Furui, *Land and Society*, 46–56.

⁸ Ryosuke Furui, “Ājīvikas, Maṇibhadra and Early History of Eastern Bengal: A New Copperplate Inscription of Vainyagupta and its Implications,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26, no. 4 (2016): 657–681; D. C. Sircar, ed., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization* Vol. 1: *From the Sixth Century B. C. to the Sixth Century A. D.*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), 340–345.

⁹ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 340–345.

bhogena)¹⁰ and the status of rent-free holding (*agrahāra*), petitioned for by *mahārāja* Rudradatta, a subordinate ruler of *mahārāja* Vainyagupta.¹¹ The practical purposes of the donation are stated to be (1) perpetual offerings, three times per day, of perfume (*gandha*), flowers (*puṣpa*), lamps (*dīpa*), incense (*dhūpa*), and so on, for the Buddha, (2) the enjoyment of robes (*cīvara*), alms food (*piṇḍapāta*), bedding (*śayana*), seating (*āsana*), medicine as a requisite for the sick (*glānapratyayabhaisajya*), and so on for the *bhikṣusaṃgha*, and (3) repairs of broken and cracked parts (*khaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṃskāra*) of buildings, all at the Āryāvalokiteśvarāśrama-vihāra, which was being constructed by Rudradatta in the name of Śāntideva, a follower of the Mahāyāna, Śākya monk, and scholar (*māhāyānikaśākya bhikṣvācārya*).¹² The *vihāra* was the property (*parigraha*) of the

¹⁰ For the terms related to √*bhuj*, I adopt their literal translation of enjoy/enjoyment with legal connotations of “to have the use or benefit of, have for one’s lot” and “the possession and use of something which affords pleasure or advantage” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989, s. v. “enjoy, v.,” 4 a. (a), “enjoyment, n.,” 1), as they suit better to their use in the inscriptions, with elements of usufruct, possession and partaking in profit. For a similar line of interpretation and translation of the terms based on legal texts, see Patrick Olivelle, ed., David Brick and Mark McClish, assoc. eds., *A Sanskrit Dictionary of Law and Statecraft* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2015), 103 (*upabhoga*), 304–305 (*bhukti*, √*bhuj*), 308–309 (*bhokṭṛ*, *bhoga*), 412 (*sambhoga*).

¹¹ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 341, line 3, 342, lines 7–8.

¹² Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 341–342, lines 3–7. The term *śākya bhikṣu* is an object of heated debates. Based on its appearance with the *anuttarajñāna* formula in a number of inscriptions, Gregory Schopen opines that *śākya bhikṣu* is a title especially held by monks belonging to Mahāyāna groups. Gregory Schopen, “Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 21, no. 1 (1979): 1–19. L. S. Cousins, citing a diverse range of texts, claims that the basis for Schopen’s theory is rather weak and *śākya bhikṣu* simply denotes a Buddhist monk. L. S. Cousins, “*Sākiyabhikkhu/Sākyabhikkhu/Sākyabhikṣu*: A Mistaken Link to the Mahāyāna?,” *Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism: Saṃbhāṣā* 23 (2003): 1–27. Schopen fiercely counters Cousins’ criticism by pointing out the invalidity of texts cited by him as counter evidence to the theory based on epigraphic data. Gregory Schopen, *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 244–246. Vincent Tournier provides new epigraphic sources which attest to the use of the *śākya bhikṣu* title and *anuttara-jñāna* formula by monks with explicitly mentioned *nikāya* identities and raises the larger question of the co-existence of *nikāya* and Mahāyāna identities as attested in inscriptions. Vincent Tournier, “A Tide of Merit: Royal Donors, Tāmraparṇīya Monks, and the Buddha’s Awakening in 5th–6th-Century Āndhradeśa,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 61, no. 1 (2018): 45–46. Based on the wider range of textual sources, Norihisa Baba also discusses the

saṃghas of irreversible (*avaivarttika*) *bhikṣus* following the Mahāyāna (*māhāyānika*), established by Śāntideva.¹³

The content of the inscription attests that Buddhist monasticism must have already been firmly established, although the functions of the *vihāra* to be erected in this particular case are described rather simply as the venue of the worship of the Buddha, presumably in the form of an image, and the residence of *bhikṣus* to whom subsistence would be provided. What is remarkable in this particular case is the presence of Śāntideva. He was credited with the establishment of plural Mahāyāna Buddhist *saṃghas* and fulfilled an important role in the construction of a new *vihāra* in his own name.¹⁴ He may have cultivated a personal relationship with Rudradatta, which led to the construction of the *vihāra* by the latter's patronage. Both the activity and visibility of Śāntideva in the matters connected with the *saṃgha* and the *vihāra* suggest that these institutions were still in an early phase of their organizational development, with room for the personal charisma of an eminent monk to have significant impact. The Śākya monk and scholar (*śākyabhikṣvācārya*) Jitasena, whose *vihāra* is mentioned in the border demarcations to be explained below, may have been another such eminent monk.

co-existence and non-exclusiveness of both identities and criticizes Schopen and others for presupposing the existence of a Mahāyānist sect independent of the Buddhist *nikāyas*. Norihisa Baba 馬場 紀寿, *Bukkyou no Seitou to Itan: Pāli Kosumoporisu no Seiritsu 仏教の正統と異端——パペリ・コスモポリスの成立* [*Buddhist Orthodoxy and Heresy: The Birth of the Pāli Cosmopolis*] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2022), 37–64.

¹³ *anenaivācāryyeṇa pratipādi(taka-māhāyānikā)vaivarttika-bhikṣusaṃghānām parigrahe*, Gunaighar plate, lines 4–5, my own reading from the digital photographs taken by Adeline Levivier. Cf. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 341, which reads *māhāyānika-vaivarttika* in place of *māhāyānikāvaivarttika*. According to the early Mahāyāna texts translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema or preserved in the Bajaur manuscripts, the irreversible (*avaivarttika*) is the third of the four stages of the *bodhisattva* path, which signifies that a *bodhisattva* is close to awakening and has reached a point after which there can be no turning back from the attainment of full Buddhahood. James B. Apple, “The Irreversible Bodhisattva (*avaivarttika*) in the Lotus *sūtra* and *Avaivarttikacakrasūtra*,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy* 29 (2013): 62.

¹⁴ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 341, lines 3–5.

The material base for the *vihāra* and its residential monks took the form of landholdings. In the present case, 11 *pātakas* of waste/fallow land were donated as five plots scattered in a single village, Kāntedadaka-grāma,¹⁵ and each plot is described with its size and boundary markers. How the *saṃgha* managed the reclamation and cultivation of donated tracts remains unclear. The absence of any reference to Vainyagupta, the donor, or Rudradatta, the petitioner, having made relevant arrangements, indicates that this task fell onto the *saṃgha*, as donee. The *saṃgha* may have deployed its own servants or local residents as labor power.¹⁶

The way the boundaries of the five plots, together with those of the flat land (*talabhūmi*) of the *vihāra* and empty marshy waste land without tax yield (*śūnyāpratīkaraḥajjikakhilabhūmi*)¹⁷ belonging to the *vihāra*, are defined gives an impression of the ecological and socio-economic context of the *vihāra* and its landholdings. They consisted of cultivated land (*kṣetra*) held by individual or collective landholders and religious institutions, neighboring settlements including an *agrahāra*, water bodies like lakes (*puṣkarīṇī*), watercourses (*jolā*), canals (*khāṭa*) and rivers (*gaṅga*), and facilities related to river traffic like boat landings (*nauyoga*).¹⁸ These

¹⁵ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 342, lines 7–8.

¹⁶ Both the *Mahāvihārin Vinaya* and *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya-vibhaṅga* mention *ārāmikas*, servants working for a Buddhist *saṃgha*, to which we have no reference in the inscriptions of early medieval Bengal. Gregory Schopen, “The Monastic Ownership of Servants or Slaves: Local and Legal Factors in the Redactional History of Two *Vinayas*,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17, no. 2 (1994): 145–173. The Chinese translations of the *Mahīśāsaka*, *Mahāsāṃghika*, *Sarvāstivāda*, and *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayas* also mention *ārāmika* by the corresponding terms of shōuyuánrén 守園人, yuánmín 園民, and shōusēngyuánrén 守僧園人, while conflating them with the other terms indicating attendants and servants like gēishirén 給侍人, and jīng rén 淨人. Nobuyuki Yamagiwa, “*Ārāmika* — Gardener or Park Keeper? One of the Marginals around the Buddhist Saṃgha,” in *Buddhist and Indian Studies in Honour of Professor Dr. Sodo MORI*, ed. Publication Committee for Buddhist and Indian Studies in Honour of Professor Dr. Sodo MORI (Hamamatsu: Kokusai Bukkyoto Kyokai, 2002), 363–385. I would like to thank one of the reviewers for suggesting the last reference. For references to *ārāmikas* in the Pāli *Vinaya* and the related texts, see Petra Kieffer-Pülz, “Stretching the Vinaya Rules and Getting Away with It,” *The Journal of the Pali Text Society* 29 (2007): 15–19.

¹⁷ *śūnyāpratīkara* can be read on a digital photograph of the original plate taken by Adeline Levivier, where Sircar reads *śūnyapratīkara*. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 344, line 29.

¹⁸ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 343–345, lines 18–31.

descriptions conjure an image of a riverine environment undergoing a process of intensive agrarian development, with some room for reclamation suggested by the availability of *khila* land. The presence of an *agrahāra* and the three cultivated land plots belonging to a Brahmanical temple and to two Buddhist *vihāras* other than the one constructed by Rudradatta in the same area suggests that agrarian expansion was instigated by donations to religious agents.

The present inscription also shows the complexity of the relations between the political actors, in which the Buddhist *vihāra* was involved. *Mahārāja* Rudradatta, “a servant of our feet” (*asmatpādadāsa*), was constructing a new *vihāra* in the name of Śāntideva and petitioned his overlord *mahārāja* Vainyagupta to donate land plots to this *vihāra*.¹⁹ The physical existence of the *vihāra* demonstrating his power and wealth may have enhanced the presence of Rudradatta himself in the locality, while the extensive land tract belonging to it would have given him a channel for wielding his authority over local residents cultivating the tract. In view of these possible results, it can be said that Rudradatta, a subordinate ruler, tried to legitimately enhance his power with royal sanction in the name of a religious endowment. The king had to accept the petition, as far as it was a charitable act undertaken in compliance with current norms and respected the royal authority over the land in his own territory, which manifested itself in the power to grant tax-free status on land. That the king nevertheless felt some irritation in accepting the petition can be detected in the phrase “accepting the pain/burden by oneself”²⁰ in his considerations on the merit of land donation: he was put into a position of being obliged to donate land plots, which would entail loss of revenue.

The contention among the political powers surrounding religious institutions can also be detected in the land plots of a temple (*devakula*) of Pradyumneśvara and three Buddhist *vihāras* and their locations. Patronage by different political authorities can be traced at least in the case of Buddhist *vihāras*. The Rājavihāra, whose land plot bordered on the first and second donated plots,²¹ seems to have been established by the king. The *vihāra* which received land donations in the present grant was constructed by Rudradatta in the name of Śāntideva. The other *vihāra*, belonging to *śākyabhikṣvācārya* Jitasena, whose land plot bordered on marshy *khila*

¹⁹ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 341, lines 3–4.

²⁰ *svatas tu pīḍām apy ūrikṛtya*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 342, lines 9–10.

²¹ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 343, line 19, 344, line 22.

land belonging to the *vihāra* under construction,²² may have been established by another authority in the name of this monk. It is remarkable that the landholdings of these religious institutions existed side by side in the same village. The land plot of the temple of Pradyumneśvara was located between low land and the marshy *khila* land of the *vihāra* of Rudradatta.²³ The competing presence of religious institutions patronized by the king and subordinate rulers seems to imply that their establishment of these institutions endowed with landed properties served as stratagem in their competition for local influence.

The next inscription recording a donation to a Buddhist *vihāra* is the Jayarampur plate of the time of Gopacandra,²⁴ who was among the rulers who gained sovereignty in the second half of the sixth century, following the collapse of the Gupta rule, in the sub-regions of Vaṅga (center-south), Rāḍha (west), and Puṇḍravardhana. Under these kings, the *adhikaraṇa* and notables associated with it continued to issue land sale grants.²⁵ The Jayarampur grant is one of such grants and pertains to the Daṇḍa province, in the area of Rāḍha bordering what is today Odisha. According to the inscription, *mahāsāmanta mahārāja* Acyuta, a subordinate ruler,²⁶ asked the *adhikaraṇa* and associated people to sell him the village Śvetavālikāgrāma to donate it for the construction of a *vihāra*, the practice of rituals of offering (*balī*), milk rice (*caru*), perfume (*gandha*), flowers (*puṣpa*), lamps (*pradīpa*) and so on, and timely provision of robes (*cīvara*),²⁷ alms food (*piṇḍapāta*), bedding (*śayana*), seating (*āsana*), and preparation / equipment for medicine as a requisite for the sick (*glānapratyayabhaisajya-*

²² Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 345, lines 30–31.

²³ To the west of the former and the east of the latter. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1, 344, line 29, 345, line 30.

²⁴ The interpretation of this inscription is based on my own reading from photographs taken by myself. Cf. Snigdha Tripathy, *Inscriptions of Orissa* Vol. 1: *Circa Fifth-Eighth Centuries A. D.* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997), 174–179.

²⁵ Under these kings, the *adhikaraṇa* became an organization consisting of scribes. In association with ascending landed magnates, it continued to preside over the petitions for land sales and to issue land sale grants as authority mediating the interests of both state and rural society. For details, see Furui, *Land and Society*, 85–91.

²⁶ Both *mahāsāmanta* (literally “great neighboring king”) and *mahārāja* (“great king”) were titles held by a subordinate ruler in the early medieval period. For details, see Lalanji Gopal, “Sāmanta: Its Varying Significance in Ancient India,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, New Series* 5 (1963): 21–37.

²⁷ My own reading of *akṣaras* which Tripathy read as *haviṣa* and emended to *haviṣya*. Tripathy, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, 175, line 19.

pariṣkāra),²⁸ for the *saṅgha* at Bodhipadrakamahāvihāra inhabited by Avalokiteśvara.²⁹ The *adhikaraṇa* and associates acceded to the request so

²⁸ While *glānapratyayabhaisajya* is interpreted as “medicine to cure the sick,” which is one of the four *pariṣkāra* (Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary* Vol. II: *Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 219 s. v. *glāna*), *glānapratyayabhaisajyapariṣkāra* could rather denote “cloth kept as a fund for medicine which is a requisite for the sick,” according to some *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* texts translated by Yijing into Chinese. In his translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Ekaśatakakarman* (*Gēnběn shuō yīqiè yǒu bù bāiyī jiémò* 根本說一切有部百一羯磨), Yijing lists *bhaisajyapariṣkāra* (*bīngshāshèbōlīsèjiālúo* 鞞殺社鉢利色加羅) as the last of the thirteen kinds of cloth which monks are permitted to keep and glosses it with *yàozhūyī* 藥資具衣 (T. 1453 [XXIV] 498a18). In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya Mukta* (*Gēnběn shuō yīqiè yǒu bù mùdèjiā* 根本說一切有部目得迦), also translated by him, the Buddha is said to have ordered that *bhikṣus* keep *yàozhūyī* 藥直衣, also listed as the last of the thirteen kinds of cloth, to sell for supplying medicine when they encounter disease (佛言。從今已往制諸苾芻畜藥直衣。若遇病時賣以充藥。T. 1452 [XXIV] 447c15–16). The second reference seems to have a corresponding section in the Tibetan *Vinaya Uttaragrantha* (Derge 7 pa, 180a2–). Ryoji Kishino, “A Further Study of the *Mukta* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*: A Table of Contents and Parallels,” *Bukkyō Daigaku Bukkyōgakkai Kiyō* 21 (2016): 245, Table no. 3.1.1. In his *A Record of the Inner Law Sent Home from South Seas* (*Nánhǎi jìguī nàifǎ zhuàn* 南海寄歸內法傳), Yijing lists *yàozhūyī* 藥資具衣 as the last of the thirteen kinds of necessary cloth (*zījūyī* 資具衣) and equates it with *yàozhūyī* 藥直衣 without providing a Sanskrit transcription or an explanation on its use (T. 2125 [54] 212b27–28, c2). He also describes the latter as a bolt of silk in a particular size, to be kept for emergency of sickness (T. 2125 [54] 212c11–14). Junjiro Takakusu, who seems to have been familiar with either the aforementioned *vinaya* texts or the traditions based on them, supplies *bhaisajyapariṣkāracīvara* as a Sanskrit restoration of *yàozhūyī* and translates it as “a cloth kept for defraying the cost of medicine (*in case of necessity*)” (Italics original). He also translates *yàozhūyī* as “a garment for medicament” and “(t)he cloth for defraying the cost of medicaments.” I-Tsing, Junjiro Takakusu, tr., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malaya Archipelago (AD 671–695)* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1896), 55–56. Li Rongxi mistranslates these terms as “(a) garment worn when decocting medicine,” “a garb for decocting medicine,” and “(t)he garment for decocting medicine.” Li Rongxi, tr., *Buddhist Monastic Traditions of Southern Asia: A Record of the Inner Law Sent Home from the South Seas by Śramaṇa Yijing (Taisho Volume 54, Number 2125)* (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2000), 55–56.

²⁹ *astu vas samviditām prārthitā vāyam śrī-mahāsāmanta-mahārājācyutena yuṣmad-vīthyām sādhubhir anekair ācandrārkkā-kālīna-tāmra-paṭṭa-paṭa-sāsana-sthityā satā-mūlyena grāma-kṣetra-vāstūni yuṣmat krītvakṛtvā deva-dvija-maṭha-vihārāva-sathebhyo tisṛṣṭhāty atisṛjyamānāni (ta)th(ai)va samyak pratipālyamānāny eti*

that the village was donated (*pratipādita*) for the *bhikṣusaṃgha* of Mahāyāna followers at Bodhipadrakamahāvihāra, and given (*datta*) to *mahāsāmanta mahārāja* Acyuta (on lease) on the condition that he would annually pay cash 100 *aripiṇḍakacūrṇikās*, presumably to the state coffer or the king through the *adhikaraṇa*.³⁰

The construction of a *vihāra* at Bodhipadrakamahāvihāra, one of the purposes stated in the inscription, suggests that a *mahāvihāra* was an institution which could contain more than one *vihāra* within its compound. It should be noted at the same time that the donation was made for the

*samīkṣya ma(hati ca) saṃsārārṇṇave sarvva-prāṇinām jala-budbudāvaśyāya-preṣita-gaja-kalābha-kaṇṭhāgra-bhujaga-jihva-tadit-sampāta-capalāni jīvitā(ni) tyāja(vañ ca vi)bhāva(ñ ca) dṛṣtvā mamāpi dharmma-n(i)mittam utsāho jāta so ham i(cche) ratna-caityodbhava-khyāpitāśeṣa-ttri-bhuvana-pratāpa-māhātmyātiśaya-bhagavad-āryyāvalokiteśvarāddhyāsita-śrī-vodhipadraka-mahāvihāre vihāra-karaṇāya tasmimś ca vali-caru-gandha-puṣpa-pradīpādi-kriyā-pravarttanāyāryya-saṃghāya ca yathā-kālāni (cī)va(ra)-piṇḍapāta-śayanāsana-glāna-pratyaya-bhaiṣajya-pariṣkāryātisraṣṭum tad arhatha śvetavālikā-grāmaṃ krayeṇa dātum tāmra-śāsani-kṛtyeti, Jayarampur Plate, lines 13–20. Cf. Tripathy, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, 175.*

³⁰ *yato smābhir yuyuktamayā prārthayati (sa) ca grāmas samudrapasarppita-pratyantatvāt saha da(tto) guṇāddhyāsana te pratibhayānāstha-sañcitārtheya-deyārthāḥ kāś cāṭa-bha(ta)-dāsayitum nadittham bhūtena tas tata(h) ko rthaḥ asti cāsuddhānyāsāḥ [u]tpadyamānāyaika-prayojana-prata-sama-dhāna-grāma-kṣetra-vāstunām vā samasta-pravṛtti-suddhāyatām asmai dīyam(ā)na punaḥ paramabhaṭṭarakasyāpi dharmma-ṣaḍ-bhāgopacayo nirdesāyati yataḥ pustapāla-bhogibhaṭṭenā(vadhāra-na)yā (i)t(y) avadhṛtya daṇḍa-bhukty-ādhiḥkṛta-mahāsāmanta-mahārāja-śrī-(graha)-varmma-viniyuktaka-kumārāmātya-rājānaka-vijayavarmma(tr-ā)dhikṛta-śvetavālikā-vīthī-vyāvahāri-prāptavyam parivodhya deśācā(rā)rtha[----] śvetavālikā-grāmas sakala-samudayaḥ krayeṇa viṣayādhikaraṇa-mahāmahattara-grhasvāmy-ādibhiḥ yatra mahāmaha(tara-guḥa)svāmi-mahattara[--](svāmi-mahatta)ra-bhavarata(svāmi)[--]ta-(maha)ttara-dharmmasvāmi-mahattara-devasvāmi-mahattarendrasvāmi-aśunapadrakīya-pradhāna-yogrīdā(sa-dharmma)padrakīya-taṅka-prathāna-(maṇi)-ta(pa)drakī(ya)-vaudhasvāmi-hulavaṇajeya-cittrakarmaṇi-mukhīya-prathānā-sāhu-śvetavālikā(ya)-pra(tyako)narāḥ[----] [pra]bhūṣuṇḍa-dharmmaṣeṇa-pradhāna-dharmmagonamakaya-bhavarāta-vantokaś ca karaṇika-datanandi-karaṇika-anudatta-karaṇikādityadāsa-pusta(sta)(pāla)-nāga-sthāyapā-(la)-prabha(ve)ṣṭā(di)bhīḥ vikrītena niṣpattaḥ kṛtvā mātā-pittor ātmanāś ca sarvva-satvānām ca puṇyābhivṛddhaye dakṣaṇāya-diśi sa śrī-vodhipadrak(īya)[--]-mahāyānika[-]bhi(kṣu)-saṃghāya pratipāditaḥ yatra śrī-bhārolāṅgalā-vaitheya-pustapāla-candradharmma-karaṇikājatādhyā-sthāyapāla-khaghāś ceti sarvādeya-varjitaḥ prativarṣaṇī cāripiṇḍaka-cūrṇikā-śatam ekaṃ deyam ity upanivaddhya śrī-mahāsāmantaścyutasya dattam, Jayarampur Plate, lines 20–31. Cf. Tripathy, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, 175–176.*

entire *saṃgha* of the Bodhipadrakamahāvihāra and that the religious practices and provision for monks were organized at the *mahāvihāra*, not at each constituent *vihāra*. This makes a stark contrast with *mahāvihāras* in the later period, when each *vihāra* and even sub-structures like *gandhakuṭī* had their own *saṃgha*, as discussed below. Together with the relatively simple description of the functions as venue of worship and residence of monks, it shows the early stage of Buddhist monasticism, despite the fact that a more complex form, a conglomeration of plural *vihāras*, had emerged in this period as a *mahāvihāra*.

The donation of a village enacted in the present case indicates the transfer or diversion of its revenue from the state to the *mahāvihāra*. The fact that *mahāsāmanta mahārāja* Acyuta, the petitioner, was given on lease the village, which was donated for the *saṃgha*, and that he continued to pay some amount of cash presumably as reduced tax, points to his involvement in revenue collection and even in the management of the donated tracts. He could have entrenched himself in the village and enhanced his local authority by negotiating with the *adhikaraṇa* and the associated people through this donative act. The power relation discernible from the inscription is one that opposes the local notables associated with the *adhikaraṇa* against a subordinate ruler. The former, which simultaneously represented the royal authority as constituents of the state apparatus and the interest of local population as their notable members, wielded the power to alienate revenue to be paid to the king from a village as religious endowment. The latter, on the other hand, tried to legitimately encroach upon the authority of the former through undertaking an act of piety.

The two inscriptions of the sixth century, detailing transactions that took place respectively in the eastern and southwestern peripheries of Bengal, show the emergence of Buddhist *vihāras* as established institutions supported by their landholdings, at the early stage of their development. They also point to the entanglement of a *vihāra* in power relations as a focus of contention between different political forces. The following period saw some development in both directions.

3. Development in Material Base and Organization: The Seventh and Eighth Centuries

In the seventh century, the sub-regions of eastern Bengal saw the rise of semi-independent rulers in the periphery, like Lokanātha and Śrīdhāraṇārāta in Samataṭa who practically issued copperplate grants on their own and only nominally acknowledged the suzerainty of their overlord. In this and the next century, the sovereign kings grew in the area where agrarian development had reached some level of advancement, like the Khadgas in eastern Vaṅga and Samataṭa.³¹ The patronage of Buddhism by those rulers continued to be recorded in their inscriptions.

The Kailan copperplate inscription, the earliest of them, is peculiar for the absence of reference to *vihāras*, except as boundary markers of the donated land tract, despite the fact that it records the donation of 25 *pātakas* of cultivated land plots both to the Three Jewels (*ratnatraya*) and to thirteen *brāhmaṇas* by *prāptapañcamahāśabda Samataṭeśvara* Śrīdhāraṇārāta, the semi-independent ruler,³² on petition of *mahāsāndhivigrahādhikṛta* Jayanātha,³³ his subordinate.³⁴ The purposes of donation stated in connection with the *ratnatraya* are (1) for perfume (*gandha*), incense (*dhūpa*), lamps (*dīpa*), garlands (*mālya*), and unguent for anointment (*anulepana*) to the venerable jewel that is the Tathāgata (Tathāgataratna), (2) for writing and reciting (*lekhanavācana*) of the *Dharma*, in the manner instructed by him (Tathāgata) (*tadupadiṣṭamārga*), and (3) for the various offerings (*upacāra*) of robes (*cīvara*), alms food (*piṇḍapāta*) and so on for the *saṃgha*.³⁵ While their correspondence to the respective *ratnas*, the Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Samgha*, is obvious, the absence of the repairs of

³¹ Furuī, *Land and Society*, 105–113.

³² *prāptapañcamahāśabda* is a title held by a subordinate ruler, indicating the privilege of using five musical instruments conferred on him by a sovereign ruler. Gopal, “Sāmanta,” 27.

³³ *mahāsāndhivigrahādhikṛta* or *mahāsāndhivigrahika*, meaning a minister of peace and war, constituted a title held by a subordinate ruler in the early medieval period. D. C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), 188.

³⁴ D. C. Sircar, ed., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization* Vol. 2: *From the Sixth to the Eighteenth Century A. D.* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 36–40. The boundary markers connected with *vihāras* are the “donated tract” (*tāmra*) of Mitrabalavihāra and the “boat path land” (*nau-daṇḍaka-kṣetra*) of Karalavihāra. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 39, lines 35, 38–39.

³⁵ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 38, lines 22–23.

broken parts of buildings among the purposes, which is usually found in land or village grants to Buddhist congregations, is notable. It also fits well with the missing reference to a *vihāra* as venue of activities and residence of monks. This absence may just be an omission, and the presence of *vihāra* is presupposed even though not mentioned. If the omission is intentional, it might mean that this *saṅgha* had a place other than a *vihāra* as center of its activities and as residence, although there is no actual evidence of this.

Whatever was the case, the mainstream of Buddhist organization went along with *vihāras*, and the *vihāras* in this period experienced a change in their material base, as discernible in the two Ashrafpur plates of Devakhaḍga, the sovereign ruler of Samataṭa and a part of Vaṅga, respectively dated years 7 and 13 of his reign.³⁶ The plates pertain to western Samataṭa or the eastern fringe of Vaṅga and record the donations of land plots to the *vihāras* of *ācārya* Saṅghamitra.³⁷ In the first plate, nine plots in seven settlements were given for the Three Jewels (*ratnatraya*) at the *vihāra* of *ācārya* Saṅghamitra, who originated from Śālīvarda, by Rājarāja or Rājarājabhaṭa, the son of king Devakhaḍga, from his own land. In the second plate, nine plots in eight settlements were donated to the four *vihāras* and *vihārikās*³⁸ established by *ācārya* venerable (*vandya*)

³⁶ G. M. Laskar, “Ashrafpur Copper-Plate Grants of Devakhaḍga,” *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1, no. 6 (1904): 88–91; Laskar, “Ashrafpur Copper-Plate Grants,” 89–90, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 41–43. The date of the first plate is based on Ganguly’s reading. D. C. Ganguly, “Date of Ashrafpur Plate,” *Epigraphia Indica* 26 (1941–42): 125–126.

³⁷ *śālīvarda-ja-ācārya-saṅghamitrasya vihāre*, Ashrafpur CPI, year 7, line 16, my own reading from the impression attached as Plate VII. Cf. Laskar, “Ashrafpur Copper-Plate,” 91; *ācārya-vandya-saṅghamitra-pādai(h) kāri(ta)---vihāra-vihārikā-ca-tuṣṭayam*, Ashrafpur CPI, year 13, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 42, lines 13–14.

³⁸ *vihārikā* presumably denotes a small *vihāra*. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 371. Garima Kaushik presupposes it to be a monastic residential complex for *bhikṣuṇīs* or a nunnery. Garima Kaushik, *Women and Monastic Buddhism in Early South Asia: Rediscovering the Invisible Believers* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 15. This supposition is clearly negated by the case of a *bhikṣusamgha* residing in a *vihārikā* within Somapuramahāvihāra, recorded in the Indian Museum plate of Dharmapāla to be mentioned below. According to Gregory Schopen, a residence of *bhikṣuṇīs*, located within a town, is called *varṣaka* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*. Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Nuns, Monks, and Other Worldly Matters: Recent Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 4–5.

Samghamitra. The descriptions of these plots, however, show that what was donated in the grants were not land plots but superior tenurial rights over them.

Most of the land plots are mentioned as “donated” (*pratipādita*), “being enjoyed” (*bhujyamānaka*), “enjoyed” (*bhuktaka*), and “being cultivated” (*kṛṣyamānaka*) by particular holders, alluding to the presence of hierarchical tenures over a land plot as confirmed by some cases. One *pātaka* of land located in newly reclaimed land of the settlement Vatsanāgapātaka was donated by Udīrṇakhaḍga, a member of the royal family, and enjoyed by Śatrughna, while the settlement itself had been donated by Bṛhatparameśvara, probably denoting one of the former kings of the dynasty.³⁹ Another *pātaka* of land mentioned in the grant dated year 13 was enjoyed by Śarvāntara and cultivated by *mahattara* Śikhara and others.⁴⁰

The descriptions of the land plots show at least four layers of tenure holders over a particular land plot, namely, (1) actual cultivators, (2) enjoyers, (3) a royal member who gave some part of land to an enjoyer, and finally (4) the king who gave the whole settlement. As the enjoyers include Prabhāvatī, the chief queen of Devakhaḍga, *sāmanta* Vaṅṭiyoka, a subordinate ruler, and Netrabhaṭa, probably a member of the royal household,⁴¹ the tenure of enjoyment seems to mean the right to extract some portion of product from a particular land plot as their share. The transferability of this tenure is connoted in the description of the 20 *dronavāpas* of land plot in Talapātaka, which had been enjoyed by an *upāsaka* and was

For *vihāras* of *bhikṣuṇīs* in the Maitraka inscriptions, see Annette Schmedchen’s contribution in this issue (above, pp. 71–73).

³⁹ *vuddha-maṇḍapa-prāpi-vṛhat-parameśvareṇa pratipādītaka-vatsanāga-pātaka-nava-ropye śrī-udīrṇakhaḍgena pratipādita śatrughnena bhujyamānaka pātaka*, Ashrafpur CPI, year 7, lines 11–12, my own reading from the impression attached as Plate VII. Cf. Laskar, “Ashrafpur Copper-Plate,” 90. For details of the plot, see Furui, *Land and Society*, 109, Table 4.6, a., Plot 5.

⁴⁰ *--śrīmete śrī-śarvāntareṇa bhujyamānaka(h) mahattara-śikharādibhiḥ kṛṣyamānaka-pātaka(h)*, Ashrafpur CPI, year 13, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 42, lines 8–9. Furui, *Land and Society*, 109, Table 4.6, b., Plot 7.

⁴¹ [*mahā*]devī-śrī-prabhāvatyā bhujyamānaka-pātaka-dvayam, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 42, line 4. *sāmanta-vaṅṭiyokena bhujyamānaka-dvy-ardha-(pātakah)*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 42, line 5. *śrī-netrabhaṭena bhujyamānaka-dvy-ardha-pātaka*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 42, line 6. Furui, *Land and Society*, 109, Table 4.6, b., Plots 1, 3–4. The name ending *bhaṭa* is shared by prince Rājarājabhaṭa, son of Devakhaḍga.

currently enjoyed by Svastiyoka.⁴² As those land plots are said to have been given to the donee “after taking away from an enjoyer in this way,”⁴³ the donations recorded in these documents amount to reallocations of the right of enjoyment to the Buddhist *vihāras*. The stratification of landed relations, which is evident in these inscriptions, enabled the *vihāras* to accumulate the right of enjoyment over scattered plots as material base of their existence and activities. The management of landholdings scattered over seven or eight settlements must have required the development of managerial capacities at the *vihāra*, though the activities of Saṅghamitra, who is said to have established plural *vihāras* and *vihārikās* belonging to him, indicate that there was still room left for the agency of an individual monk.

The eighth-century Devaparvata grant of Bhavadeva, dated year 2,⁴⁴ is related to Peranātanaviṣaya, the locality also mentioned in the Ashrafpur plates.⁴⁵ It records the donation of 7½ *pāṭakas* of land located in four settlements, namely Vāhakakhaṇḍa in Veṇḍamātī, Ekkarakoṭṭa, Mañjikkakoraka, and Koḍḍāvāra, to the Three Jewels (*ratnatraya*) in Veṇḍamātī-vihārikā.⁴⁶ Though there is no reference to the stratified land rights in this inscription, the pattern of donation, with land plots scattered over several settlements, is similar to that of the Ashrafpur plates and suggests the same kind of material base, which required a managerial organization as good as that of the *vihāra* of Saṅghamitra, managing its landholdings distributed over many villages.

Two inscriptions pertaining to Harikela, the southeastern sub-region located around the present Chittagong area, attest to the presence of Buddhist *vihāras* there in the eighth century. They are a copperplate grant and a metal vase inscription related to the reign of Devātideva, the sovereign

⁴² *upāsakena bhuktakādhunā svastiyokena bhujyamānaka-vimśatir droṇavāpā*, Laskar, “Ashrafpur Copper-Plate,” 90, lines 8–9. Furui, *Land and Society*, 109, Table 4.6, a., Plot 2.

⁴³ *yathā-bhuñjanād apanīya*, Laskar, “Ashrafpur Copper-Plate,” 91, line 16. The same sentence is written in the other plate with the last part illegible. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 42, line 12. *bhuñjana* seems to be an incorrect rendering of *√bhuj + ana* for making agentive noun.

⁴⁴ D. C. Sircar, “Copper-Plate Inscription of King Bhavadeva of Devaparvata,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters* 17, no. 2 (1951): 83–94.

⁴⁵ Laskar, “Ashrafpur Copper-Plate,” 91, line 13; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 42, line 6.

⁴⁶ Sircar, “Copper-Plate Inscription of King Bhavadeva,” 94, lines 56–59.

ruler of Harikela.⁴⁷ The first inscription, dated year 12 of the reign of Devātideva, the lord of Vijayapura,⁴⁸ records the royal donation of seven land plots (*kṣetramera*) and a large housestead (*bṛhadvāstu*) with robes (*cīvara*) in Kuṭukkahāra, *karavāla*, which could mean a kind of right to tax, in the same village, and six folds of land plots in Kalakka for a Buddhist establishment.⁴⁹ Each plot and right to tax is said to be “of 80 *pada*,” which may mean annual yield calculated as 80 in *pada*, a quarter of some currency unit, possibly *tanḍaka* mentioned in the vase inscription. The purposes of donation are said to be (1) accomplishment of uninterrupted worship (*pūjā*) and food offering (*nivedya*) for the Tathāgata, (2) enjoyment (*upabhoga*) of the *saṃgha* of present and future meritorious noble *bhikṣus* belonging to the Sthāvirīya *nikāya*, and (3) repairs of torn, shattered, and fissured parts of the Pañcatālavanavihāra.⁵⁰ This case attests to the physical presence of a Buddhist *vihāra*, activities therein, and subsistence of a community of *bhikṣus* sustained by income from landed properties and tax in more than one settlement. It conforms to the tendency observed in Samataṭa in the seventh and eighth centuries discussed above.

The metal vase inscription of Devātideva, now kept at the Bangladesh National Museum, bears not only upon the economic base of a *vihāra* but also on the organizational development within it. The inscription, referring

⁴⁷ The editions of both inscriptions are now under preparation by Arlo Griffiths and myself. The reading of the inscriptions presented in this article is based on our provisional reading, unless stated otherwise. The second inscription on a metal vase currently held by the Bangladesh National Museum was earlier edited by Gouriswar Bhattacharya. 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, 1996), 237–247.

⁴⁸ *śrī-vijayapureśvara-śrī-devātidevasya pravarddhamāna-vijaya-rājye dvādaśe vde*, Plate of Devātideva, lines 32–34. He is also called the lord of Kāmarāṅga. *śrī-kāmarāṅgeśvaraḥ*, Plate of Devātideva, lines 4–5.

⁴⁹ *kuṭukkahāre sa-cī(va)rāṇy aśīti-padika-kṣetra-merās sapta| vṛhad-vāstu caikam| kke cāśīti-padika-kara-vālam ekam kalakke cāśīti-padika-kṣetra-mera-ṣaṭkam*, Plate of Devātideva, lines 18–21. The meaning of *mera* and *karavāla* is unclear and my interpretation is based on the context and the word *aśīti-padika*, which probably indicates income estimated in a certain currency unit, prefixed to these terms.

⁵⁰ *tasya bhagavatas tri-bhuvanaika-guros tathāgatasyāvicchinnā-pūjā-nivedya-sampādanārtham āgatā(nā)gata-saguṇa-sthāvirīya-nikāya-pra(ti)[pa]n(n)ārya-bhikṣu-saṅghasyopabho[gāya ca] pañcatālavana-vihārasya ca dīrṇṇa-śīrṇṇa-sphuṭita-saṃskāra-karaṇāyā*, Plate of Devātideva, lines 13–18.

to the reign of Devātideva and dated year 77, presumably in the king's regnal years,⁵¹ records five cases of land purchase and donation, which occurred in the area called Khaṣamaka in Harikelamaṇḍala. As all the recorded cases are related to a Buddhist *vihāra* called Dharmasabhavihāra, the inscription seems to assemble several land sale documents and grants on the vase that, we may assume, was to be kept by the *vihāra*.

The section recording the first transaction takes the form of a land sale grant issued by the *adhikaraṇa* of the whole of Khaṣamaka constituted by twenty members.⁵² It announces that *mahāpradhāna mantrimukhya* Nayaparākramagomin⁵³ purchased 22 *pāṭakas* of land from people residing in the two villages and donated them for the worship and enjoyment of the *bhikṣusamgha* and for repairs of worn, broken and fissured parts of the *vihāra* at Dharmasabhavihāra.⁵⁴ With three more *pāṭakas* which seem to have been given by other people, 25 *pāṭakas* of land plots were donated to the *vihāra* and the *brāhmaṇas* belonging to the *pañcamathā*.⁵⁵ This was a case of patronage by a member of the ruling elite.

The following sections recording four further transactions simply state that some land purchases occurred, connoting that they are copies of purchase deeds. In the fourth case, the boundary markers of the donated plot are also described. One of them is the land of *mahāyānavihāra*, which attests to the existence of a monastery with Mahāyānist leaning in this sub-region.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Vase Inscription of Devātideva, lines 1–2. Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 243. Bhattacharya's identification of the era with the Burmese Era, in which year 77 corresponds to 715 CE, is unlikely in view of the clear use of regnal years in the copperplate grant of the same king. Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 240.

⁵² Vase Inscription of Devātideva, lines 2–4, Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 243.

⁵³ Nayaparākramagomin, “the leader of ministers” (*mantrimukhya*), held the title *mahāpradhāna*, which was held by landed magnates in copperplate grants of sixth- and seventh-century Bengal. He could have originated from this class of local notables. Furu, *Land and Society*, 92, 115.

⁵⁴ *bhagavad-vuddha-dharmma-purassarasya [catur]-dd[i]g-abhyāgatāryya-bhikṣusaṅghasya pūjopabhogāya vihārasya ca jīrṇa-sīrṇa-sphuṭita-pratisaṃskaraṇāya*, Vase Inscription of Devātideva, line 7. Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 243.

⁵⁵ Vase Inscription of Devātideva, lines 5–11. Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 243–244.

⁵⁶ *pūrvveṇa mahāyāna-vihāra-kṣetram*, Vase Inscription of Devātideva, line 16. Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 244.

In these cases, the residents of the Dharmasabhavihāra purchased land plots from residents of particular villages before the organizations called “both *karaṇas* in Harikelā,” by paying cash counted in a unit of currency called *taṇḍaka*.⁵⁷ What should be noted here is how the residents of the *vihāra* are labelled. In the second case, land plots were purchased by residents (*nivāsin*) of the Dharmasabhavihāra beginning with *āryabhikṣusamghācārya* Śāntibhadra, Sucarita, Somaprabha and *pādamūla karaṇins* Hastirudra and Vijayin.⁵⁸ Similarly, the residents of the same *vihāra* beginning with *āryabhikṣusamghācārya* Śāntibhadra, *varṣya* Devasiṃha, Sucarita, Somaprabha and *pādamūla karaṇins* Hastirudra and Vijayin purchased land plots in the third case.⁵⁹ These descriptions imply the division of the residents of the *vihāra* into two categories: monks, of whom two are prefixed with the titles of *ācārya* and *varṣya*,⁶⁰ and servants (*pādamūla*) including scribes (*karaṇin*). On the other hand, the description of the purchaser as the *āryasamgha* residing at the *vihāra* accompanied by *pādamūlikas* in the fifth case, and possibly by

⁵⁷ This is a currency unit mentioned in one of the inscriptions of Arakan, a sub-region of Burma whose early epigraphic culture was closely related to that of Southeast Bengal. E. H. Johnston, “Some Sanskrit Inscriptions of Arakan,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11, no. 2 (1944): 378; Arlo Griffiths, “Three More Sanskrit Inscriptions of Arakan: New Perspectives on Its Name, Dynastic History, and Buddhist Culture in the First Millennium,” *The Journal of Burma Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 332–333. I thank Arlo Griffiths for drawing my attention to this fact.

⁵⁸ *dharmmasabha-vihāra-nivāsibhir ārya-bhikṣu-samghācārya-śāntibhadra-sucarita-[so](ma)prabha-pādamūla-karaṇi-hastiruddra-vi(ja)yi-prabhṛtibhir*, Vase Inscription of Devātideva, lines 11–12. Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 244.

⁵⁹ *dharmmasabha-vihāra-nivāsibhir āryya-bhikṣu-samghācāryya-śāntibhadra-var-(ṣṣ)ya-devasiṃha-sucarita-somaprabha-pādamūla-karaṇi-hastiruddra-vijayi-prabhṛtibhiḥ*, Vase Inscription of Devātideva, line 13. Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 244. The insertion of *varṣya* Devasiṃha in the third case makes it clear that the title of *ācārya* was held by Śāntideva alone, not by Sucarita and Somaprabha in the second and third cases. If the last two held the title, they should have preceded Devasiṃha or been prefixed with the title *ācārya*.

⁶⁰ The connotation of the title *varṣya* is unclear from the context, except that it is held by a monk belonging to the *bhikṣusamgha* who occupied a position inferior to *ācārya* but superior to other monks with no titles, according to the order of precedence in the inscriptional references to them. As a derivative of *varṣa*, “year,” it may possibly denote a monk who has spent many years since his ordination. I would like to thank Norihisa Baba for suggesting this interpretation. Otherwise, *varṣya* may indicate a guest monk who temporally stays at a *vihāra* during a rainy season, as *varṣa* also means “rain.”

pādamūlas in the fourth case,⁶¹ shows that *pādamūlas* were not counted as members of the *saṃgha*.⁶² Their residence in the *vihāra* and the inclusion of scribes among them point to the administrative organization of the *vihāra* which had non-*bhikṣu* literate staff members.

The cases in this inscription show that landholdings continued to be the material base of a Buddhist *vihāra* which accumulated them to such a degree as to become a large-scale landholder. It is remarkable that the residents of a *vihāra* not only depended on the patronage of ruling elites but also made their own investments to extend their landholdings.

We may infer that in this period, the Buddhist *vihāra* saw a change of its material base to superior land rights, namely the right to a share of products from a particular land plot, corresponding to the layered land relation then prevalent. It also experienced organizational developments, which can be attested at least for one case in Harikela. Further developments will be seen in the next period under the regional kingships proclaiming to be followers of Buddhism.

⁶¹ *dharmmasabha-vihāra-nivāsināryya-saṃghena sa-pādamūlikena*, Vase Inscription of Devātideva, lines 17–18 (the fifth case). *dharmmasabha-vihāra-nivāsina āryya(sa)[-] sa-pādamūl(ā)s*, Vase Inscription of Devātideva, line 15 (the fourth case). Cf. Bhattacharya, “A Preliminary Report,” 244.

⁶² The Maitraka plates of the seventh century mention *pādamūlas* as servants belonging to *vihāras* and list their livelihood as one of the purposes of donation. For discussions, see Annette Schmedchen’s contribution to this issue (above, pp. 80–82).

4. Buddhist Vihāras under the Regional Kingdoms: The Ninth and Tenth Centuries

In the middle of the eighth century, the Pālas rose to power in North Bengal and extended their rule over both western Bengal and eastern Bihar. The Candras originating from Candradvīpa, lower Vaṅga, followed suit and integrated almost all of eastern Bengal in the tenth century. Under these two dynasties, the issuing of copperplate grants became a monopoly of the kings, who wielded stronger power than previous rulers. The king conferred extensive privileges covering a wide range of local resources and the authority to mobilize local labor power on the donees. The king and his administrative apparatus also guaranteed the privileges and authority of the donees.⁶³

All the kings of both dynasties were called *paramasaugata*, “ardent follower of the Sugata (i.e., the Buddha).” Several *mahāvihāras* flourished under them, and the establishment of the Somapuramahāvihāra by Dharmapāla is attested by the legend of clay sealings excavated from the site of Paharpur.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the number of copperplate grants recording donations to Buddhist *vihāras* is small, and the majority of the donations were made for *brāhmaṇas*. None of the eleven Candra plates published so far records any donation to a Buddhist *vihāra*, and the patronage of Buddhist establishments by the Candra kings is attested only indirectly by the exclusion of the land of the Three Jewels (*ratnatraya*) from the tract donated to Brahmanical *maṭhas* and six thousand *brāhmaṇas* in the Paschimbhag plate of Śrīcandra,⁶⁵ and the reference to a *śāsanabhūmi* of Lokanāthabhaṭṭāraka as one of the boundary markers in the second Mainamati plate of Laḍahacandra.⁶⁶ Among the twenty-four Pāla plates deciphered and published to date, only five record donations to Buddhist *vihāras*, and all of them were issued during the ninth century, under the reigns of the four kings including Dharmapāla and his descendants. Of the

⁶³ Furuī, *Land and Society*, 131–132.

⁶⁴ *śrī-somapure śrī-dharmapāla-deva-mahāvihārīyārya-bhikṣu-saṅghasya*, Dikshit, *Excavations at Paharpur*, 90, P. 304, Pl. LIX, h.

⁶⁵ *ratna-traya-bhūmi-varjjitaḥ*, D. C. Sircar, *Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan* (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1973), 68, line 54.

⁶⁶ *lokanātha-bhaṭṭārakīya-śāsana-bhūmeḥ* Sircar, *Epigraphic Discoveries*, 75, reverse lines 8–9.

last group of inscriptions, three pertain to Bengal and give us important information on the *vihāras* under the Pāla rule.⁶⁷

The earliest is the Indian Museum plate of Dharmapāla, dated year 26 of his reign.⁶⁸ It records the donation of land plots scattered over several settlements, petitioned for by *mahāsāmanta* Bhadraṇāga. He asked the king to donate the land plots for the *bhikṣusamghas* residing in (*naivāsika/nivāsin*) (1) a *vihāra* constructed by him at the village Antarāvanikā, and (2) a perfume chamber (*gandhakuṭī*) and (3) a *vihārikā* established respectively by him and his wife Saṅhāyikā at Somapura-mahāvihāra.⁶⁹ The case confirms the character of a *mahāvihāra* as a conglomeration of facilities or institutions, which has already been inferred from the Jayarampur plate mentioned above. It also shows that each facility, even a perfume chamber, had its own *samgha* with landholdings.⁷⁰ That a similar situation applied in the contemporary Nālandamahāvihāra is suggested by the sealings bearing the legends “of *bhikṣus* residing in the perfume chamber of the illustrious Dharmapāla” and “at the perfume chamber of the illustrious Devapāla,”⁷¹ though they do not clearly prove the presence of *samghas* in these facilities. The present inscription, on the other hand, shows the complicated power relation between the king and his subordinate ruler, with which the *vihāras* were involved. It becomes clearer when we read the present inscription against the two other copperplate inscriptions recording donations to the *vihāras* established by subordinate rulers.

The Jagajjibanpur and Mohipur plates were issued on petitions of the subordinate rulers with titles of military commanders. In the first plate, *mahāsenāpati* Vajradeva requested king Mahendrapāla to donate Nanda-

⁶⁷ The other two are the Nalanda plates of Dharmapāla and Devapāla related to Nagarabhukti in Bihar, so that they are out of the purview of the present study. P. N. Bhattacharyya, “Nalanda Plate of Dharmapaladeva,” *Epigraphia Indica* 23 (1935–36): 290–292; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 71–79.

⁶⁸ Ryosuke Furui, “Indian Museum Copper Plate Inscription of Dharmapala, Year 26: Tentative Reading and Study,” *South Asian Studies* 27, no. 2 (2011): 145–156.

⁶⁹ Furui, “Indian Museum Copper Plate,” 154, lines 57–66.

⁷⁰ *antarā(va)nikāyām mayā kārita-vihāra-naivāsikārya-bhikṣu-sa(m)ghā(m)ya śrī-somapura-mahāvihāre kārita-gandhakuṭī-naivāsikāya cārya-bhikṣu-saṅghāya tathā smad-rā(jñ)ikayā saṅhāyikayā kārita-vihārikā-nivāsine ārya-bhikṣu-saṅghāya ca*, Furui, “Indian Museum Copper Plate,” 154, lines 62–64.

⁷¹ *śrī-nā-dharmapāla-deva-gandha-kuṭī-vāsika-bhikṣūnā[m]*, Hirananda Sastri, *Nalanda and Its Epigraphic Material* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1942) 43, S. I, 730, Pl. IV, b; *śrī-devapāla-gandha-kuṭyām*, Sastri, *Nalanda*, 40, S. IA, 357, Pl. III, c. Emend to *gandhakuṭyām*.

dīrghikodraṅga, a settlement or an administrative unit, to a *vihāra* established by him at the same locality.⁷² Similarly, in the second plate, *mahāsainyapati* Kokkāka requested king Gopāla II for the donation of the village Kaṅkāvāsaka to a *vihāra* which he established in the same village.⁷³ The construction of a *vihāra* points to the control of each locality by these subordinate rulers and their resources accruing from it, which enabled such an enterprise. Their deeper involvement with these *vihāras* can further be detected in the purposes of the donations stated in the inscriptions.

In the Jagjibanpur plate, the purposes of donation connected with religious practice, activities, and subsistence of the *saṃgha* are expressed in a refined way:

(F)or the purpose of worship, writing and so on, for the purpose of robes, alms food, bedding, seating, preparation/equipment for medicine as a requisite for the sick and so on, for the purpose of repairs of broken and fissured parts and so on, there in relation to the venerable Lord Buddha, in relation to the seat of the entire *Dharma* guides (i.e., scriptures) beginning with the *Prajñāpāramitā*, in relation to the group of noble irreversible Bodhisattvas, and in relation to the noble *bhikṣusaṃgha* which is the eight great individuals,⁷⁴ as they deserve.⁷⁵

The Mohipur plate also lists worship (*pūjā*), offering (*bali*), milk rice (*caru*), charitable feeding (*sattra*), food (*nivedya*), repairs of broken and fissured parts (*khaṇḍasphuṭitasamskāra*) and so on, and the same

⁷² Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya, "The Jagjibanpur Plate of Mahendrapāla Comprehensively Re-edited," *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 23 (2005–2006): 61–125.

⁷³ Ryosuke Furui, "A New Copper Plate Inscription of Gopala II," *South Asian Studies* 24 (2008): 67–75.

⁷⁴ *Aṣṭamahāpuruṣapudgala* seems to be the same as the eight great individuals (*gang zag chen ya brgyad*) mentioned by Tsong kha pa, which refer to the allegorical *saṃgha*. They are a pair of the enterers to and the abiders in the four results of the Stream-enterer, the Once-returner, the Non-returner, and the Arhat. James B. Apple, "Twenty Varieties of the Saṃgha: A Typology of Noble Beings (Ārya) in Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism (Part I)," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31, nos. 5–6 (2003): 522.

⁷⁵ *bhagavato vuddha-bhaṭṭārakasya prajñāpāramitādi-sakala-dharmma-nettrī-sthānasya āryāvāivarttika-vodhisatva-gaṇasyāṣṭa-mahā-puruṣa-pudgalārya-bhikṣu-saṃghasya yathārham pūjana-lekhanādy-artham cīvara-piṇḍapāta-śayanāśana-glāna-pratayaya-bhaiṣajya-pariṣkārdy-artham khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-samādhānārtha(m)*, Bhattacharya, "The Jagjibanpur Plate," 69, lines 41–43. My own translation from the text. Cf. Bhattacharya, "The Jagjibanpur Plate," 77.

provision for the *bhikṣus* in relation to the same four entities beginning with the Buddha as the purposes of donation.⁷⁶

What should be noted is the additional clause following these purposes in both the inscriptions. It says that others would also benefit from the donation, subject to the petitioner's approval and with shares to be fixed by him, for "unobjectionable enjoyment" or complete usufruct (*anavadyabhoga*).⁷⁷ This clause alludes to the involvement of the petitioners in the management of the donated property and their persistent influence on it. In this light, the petitions submitted by subordinate rulers can be interpreted as attempts to secure for the properties under their influence the status of *śāsana* land, exempt from revenue charges and other interference by the king. While accepting the king's claim on the land in his territory and his exclusive authority to dispose of it, subordinate rulers could legitimately encroach upon his power and enhance their own through the establishment of *vihāras* and petitioning for grants. All of this implies *vihāra*-centered negotiations between the king and subordinate rulers.

The relation and power equation between both sides could be diverse, as the case of *mahāsāmanta* Bhadraṇāga of the Indian Museum plate shows. He and his wife contributed certain facilities to the *mahāvihāra* established by Dharmapāla, his overlord, and petitioned for a donation of land to them, presumably from his own territory and with the intention to cultivate a close tie with the king,⁷⁸ while securing a land grant for his own *vihāra*. This contradictory behavior indicates the complex power relation in which Bhadraṇāga was imbricated. He owed his position and authority to the king, while he needed to extend his control and resource base in his own territory. His position in relation to the king seems to have been weaker than that of his counterparts in the other two grants, who seem to have been free to concentrate on the establishment of *vihāras* in their own territories.

⁷⁶ Furui, "A New Copper Plate," 73, lines 47–50.

⁷⁷ *anyeṣām api mamābhimatānām mat-parikalpita-vibhāgenānavadya-bhogārtham*, Bhattacharya, "Jagjibanpur Plate," 69, lines 43–44. Almost the same in the Mohipur plate, except the addition of *ādy* after *bhoga*. Furui, "A New Copper Plate," 73, line 50.

⁷⁸ This is confirmed by the inclusion of the king among those whose merit would be increased by donation, a feature not encountered in the other inscriptions. *bhaṭṭāraka-pādānām mātāpitror ātmanaś ca puṇyābhivṛddhaye*, Furui, "Indian Museum Copper Plate," 154, line 61.

The Buddhist *vihāras* flourished thanks to the patronage of temporal powers which were involved in complicated relations. The enhanced control of the king and his administration over the rural society, which manifested itself in the extensive privileges conferred on the donees, strengthened the material base of the *vihāras* under their protection, though they also created room for the interference of political authority in the management of the *vihāras*, as inferable from the additional clause of the Jagajjibanpur and Mohipur plates. The *vihāras* were given an administrative unit or a village:

...accompanied by the land belonging to itself, as far as its four boundaries, with flat land, with raised ground, with additional tax, with the dues on boat landing and ferry, with the fine on the ten offences, with the right to catch thieves, exempted from all the burdens, without entry of *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas*,⁷⁹ without anything taken away, accompanied by all the tributes not going to the royal family.⁸⁰

or,

...accompanied by the land beginning with Gomuṇḍaka, as far as its own border, grass field and pasture, with flat land, with raised ground, with trees, with the watering place, with ditch and saline land, with additional tax, with the fine on the ten offences, with the right to catch thieves, exempted from all the burdens, without entry of *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas*, without anything taken away, accompanied by the contribution of all *bhāga* and *bhoga* of the king.⁸¹

The *vihāras* were thus given not only income or revenue from settlements but also an extensive range of resources and some level of judicial power. They were even conferred the power to mobilize cultivators, as suggested by the request to residential cultivators to obey the order of the donee and

⁷⁹ *Cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* seem to have been irregular troops or mercenaries, who were employed for war or police duty in rural areas and tended to bring disturbance to the residents. Furui, *Land and Society*, 135.

⁸⁰ *sva-samvaddha-bhūmi-sametaś catus-sīmā-paryantaḥ sa-talaḥ soddeśaḥ soparikaraḥ sa-ghaṭṭa-taropetaḥ sa-daśāpacāraḥ sa-cauroddharaṇaḥ parihṛta-sarvva-pīḍaḥ| a-cāṭa-bhaṭa-praveśā 'kiñcit-pragrāhyaḥ| rāja-kulābhāvya-sarvva-pratyāya-sameto*, Bhattacharya, "The Jagjibanpur Plate," 69–70, lines 45–47. My own translation from the text. Cf. Bhattacharya, "The Jagjibanpur Plate," 77–78.

⁸¹ *gomuṇḍakādi-bhūmi-sametaḥ sva-sīmā-tṛṇa-yūti-gocara-paryantaḥ sa-talaḥ soddeśaḥ sa-pādapāḥ sa-jala-sṭhalaḥ sa-garttoṣaraḥ soparikaraḥ sa-daśāpacāraḥ sa-cauroddharaṇaḥ parihṛta-sarvva-pīḍaḥ| a-cāṭa-bhaṭa-praveśaḥ| a-kiñcit-pragrāhyaḥ samasta-rāja-bhāga-bhoga-pratyāya-sameto*, Furui, "A New Copper Plate Inscription of Gopala II," 73, lines 52–54.

pay tributes properly.⁸² The enhanced material base must have required the organizational development of the *vihāras*, and this is implied also by the sophisticated description of the activities at the *vihāra*, including the writing or copying of texts, and the objects of worship extended to the seat or container of the scriptures like the *Prajñāpāramitā*, for which *bhikṣus* had to perform special rituals. The organizational development may also be represented by the absence of any individual monks in these grants, unlike their counterparts mentioned in the earlier ones. *Vihāras* or *saṃghas* residing there had come to assume a status approximating a legal person, so that they did not need any individual representing them against political powers anymore. Eminent monks were still present and their activities, especially donative ones, are recorded in stone inscriptions even in a later period, as is shown by the Nalanda inscription of Vipulaśrīmitra recording his activities traversing the *mahāvihāras* of Somapura and Nālandā in the first half of the twelfth century.⁸³ It is remarkable that figures like Vipulaśrīmitra do not appear in royal grants, in which the relation with the king and other political actors is defined. Such absence may imply a distinction between eminent monks roaming around several *vihāras* and others who remain in particular *vihāras* and manage their organization and assets.

The metal vase inscription of *rājādhirāja* Attākaradeva, pertaining to Harikela in the early tenth century, attests to the patronage of a Buddhist establishment involving the king and a subordinate ruler in this sub-region. The main inscription engraved on the body of the vase records the royal grant of a land tract “given into the hand of Dharmadatta, venerable elder, by the custom of a copper(plate grant).”⁸⁴ It mentions the construction of

⁸² *prativāsibhiḥ* kṣetra-karaiś cājñā-śravaṇa-vidheyair bhūtvā samucita-kara-piṇḍādi-pratyāyopanayaḥ kāryaḥ, Bhattacharya, “The Jagjibanpur Plate,” 70, line 48; *prativāsibhiḥ kṣetra-karaiś cājñā-śravaṇa-vidheyair bhūtvā sarvva-pratyāyopanayaḥ (kā)rya*, Furui, “A New Copper Plate Inscription of Gopala II,” 73, lines 56–57.

⁸³ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 2, 60–62.

⁸⁴ *tāmra-sthityā vandyā-sthavira-dharmadatta-haste pratipāditam*, Gouriswar Bhattacharya, “An Inscribed Metal Vase Most Probably from Chittagong, Bangladesh,” in *South Asian Archaeology 1991: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe held in Berlin 1–5 July 1991*, ed. Adalbert J. Gail and Gerd J. R. Mevissen (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1993), 335, line 16. The land tract is mentioned with minute descriptions of border landmarks and yield in the currency unit called *pada*, and so could have consisted of several individual plots. However, the relevant portion is severely damaged by later overwriting, which makes its reading uncertain. Bhattacharya, “An Inscribed Metal Vase,” 335, lines 9–16.

a *maṭhikā*, a cell or a small shrine, by *mahāpratihāra*⁸⁵ Sahadeva in the name of the Lord Muṇḍra (i.e., the Buddha) for the acquisition of merit, which is the sole cause of attaining the excellent complete enlightenment, of his parents, himself, and all sentient beings.⁸⁶ Then the practical purposes of the donation are stated as (1) the practice of regular worship of the Lord Tathāgata installed at the *maṭhikā*, (2) the provision of cloth, alms food, bedding, seating, medicine for the sick, and so on for the *saṃgha* of noble *bhikṣus* belonging to the Sthāvīrīya *nikāya* attached to the Velavihāra, and (3) repairs of his (i.e., the Tathāgata's) abode (*āyatana*).⁸⁷ The inscription on the rim of the vase records the additional royal grant of a small orchard (*vāṭikā*) of areca-nut trees and so on and the four land plots (*kṣetramera*) of 82 *padas* for the worship of the Buddha of the same *maṭhikā*.⁸⁸

The continued connection of Sahadeva with the *maṭhikā* established by him is suggested by his title and name prefixed to it in the additional grant, presumably made later.⁸⁹ The establishment of a facility in a Buddhist *vihāra* by a subordinate ruler who kept interest in it and the royal grant of landed property that he may have petitioned for are comparable to the cases of the early Pāla plates discussed above and adumbrate a degree of tension between the king and the subordinate ruler. However, in this case the donation was made for the *saṃgha* of the *vihāra* in which the facility was constructed. This is evident from the purposes including not only worship of the Buddha enshrined in the facility and repairs of his abode, presumably the *maṭhikā*, but also the usual provisions for the *saṃgha* of Velavihāra. *Sthavira* Dharmadatta received the land as a representative of the *saṃgha*. Unlike the facilities in Somapuramahāvihāra, the *maṭhikā* seems not to have had its own *saṃgha* and seems to have been under the control of the sole *saṃgha* of Velavihāra.

⁸⁵ *mahāpratihāra/mahāpratīhāra*, which can be translated as “great chamberlain,” was a title often held by a subordinate ruler in the early medieval period. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 184.

⁸⁶ Bhattacharya, “An Inscribed Metal Vase,” 333, lines 6–7.

⁸⁷ *tasyām sthāpitasya tathāgata-bhaṭṭārakasya yathā-vidhi pūjā-pravarttanāya velavihāra-samvaddha-sthāvīrīya-nikāya-pratipannārya-bhikṣu-saṃghasya cīvara-piṇḍapāta-śayanāsana-glāna-bhaiṣajyādi-sampādanāya tad-āyatanasya ca pratisamskārya*, Bhattacharya, “An Inscribed Metal Vase,” 334–335, lines 7–9.

⁸⁸ Bhattacharya, “An Inscribed Metal Vase,” 336, lines 1–2.

⁸⁹ *mahāpratīhāra-śrī-sahadeva-maṭhika-śākya-vuddha-bhaṭṭārakasya*, Bhattacharya, “An Inscribed Metal Vase,” 336, line 1.

Landholdings are also discernible in this case as the economic base of the *vihāra*. The inclusion of the orchard producing commercially valuable crop like areca-nut indicates a diversification of the economic activities on its estate, which necessitated a managerial organization competent enough to deal with a wide range of resources.⁹⁰

5. Continued Patronage: From the Eleventh to the Thirteenth Century

In the late ninth century, the Pāla kings apparently stopped issuing copperplate grants on the petitions of the subordinate rulers and concentrated their donations to *brāhmaṇas* closely connected with themselves, presumably to counter the attempt of subordinate rulers at encroachment upon royal authority.⁹¹ From then on, Buddhist *vihāras* ceased to figure as beneficiaries in the copperplate inscriptions. However, other kinds of evidence attest to the continued patronage of *vihāras* and other Buddhist establishments by the Pāla kings. The *Rāmacarita* mentions the foundation of the Jagaddalamahāvihāra by Rāmapāla in the eleventh century.⁹² In the Manahali and Rajibpur grants of Madanapāla, belonging to the middle of the twelfth century, the enclosed land (*ṽṛti*) of the Three Jewels (*ratnatraya*) included in the royal estate (*rājasambhoga*) is excluded from the tracts donated to *brāhmaṇas*.⁹³

The weakening power of the Pāla kings in the last phase of their rule, on the other hand, gave their subordinate rulers room for autonomy, so that one of them, Kalyāṇavardhana, established a *mahāvihāra* at Kuṭumvavilla as recorded in the Chaprakot stone inscription left by Vikramavardhana,

⁹⁰ Regarding the cultivation of areca-nuts for sales by merchants in near-contemporary North Bengal, see Furui, *Land and Society*, 156–157.

⁹¹ Ryosuke Furui, “Subordinate Rulers under the Pālas: Their Diverse Origins and Shifting Power Relation with the King,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 54, no. 3 (2017): 348–349.

⁹² Haraprasad Sastri, ed., Radhagovinda Basak, rev., tr. and notes, *Rāmacaritam of Sandhyākaranandin* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1969), 3. 7.

⁹³ *ratna-traya-rāja-sambhoga-varjitaḥ*, N. N. Vasu, “Copper-plate Inscription of Madanapāla,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 69, no. 1 (1900), 72, line 41; *ratna-traya-kaivartta-carmmakāra-ṽṛty-ādi-rāja-sambhoga-varjito*, Ryosuke Furui, “Rajibpur Copperplate Inscriptions of Gopāla IV and Madanapāla,” *Pratna Samiksha: A Journal of Archaeology, New Series* 6 (2015), 53, lines 43–44.

his great grandson, in the middle of the twelfth century.⁹⁴ The patronage of Buddhist establishments by both sovereign and subordinate rulers continued in eastern Bengal in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The fragmentary Vajrayogini plate of Sāmalavarman seems to record a royal land grant to a Buddhist establishment where Prajñāpāramitā and other deities were worshipped.⁹⁵ In the Mainamati plate dated year 1141 Śāka Era (1220 CE), on the other hand, Dadhiva, a subordinate ruler under Harikāladeva, donated a land plot to the Durgottarāvihārī constructed at Paṭṭikerānagarī.⁹⁶

Thus, the dependence of *vihāras* on the patronage by political authorities continued even under changed power relations. This dependence would become one element of their vulnerability in the later period, when their patrons declined in the face of the newly emerging ruling elite, whose patronage went to some forms of Brahmanism or Islam.⁹⁷

6. Management of Buddhist Vihāras and Vinaya: Accounts of Yijing

The epigraphic data, with which I have outlined the organizational development of Buddhist *vihāras* in early medieval Bengal, can be complemented by the writings of Yijing (Yijing 義淨), a Chinese Buddhist monk who visited eastern India in the last quarter of the seventh century. The most relevant is his *A Record of the Inner Law Sent Home from South Seas* (*Nánhǎi jìguī nèifǎ zhuàn* 南海寄歸內法傳), an account of the practices followed in Buddhist *vihāras* in South and Southeast Asia. It details

⁹⁴ Ryosuke Furui, “Chaprakot Stone Inscription of the Time of Gopāla IV, Year 9,” in *Centenary Commemorative Volume (1913–2013)*, ed. Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin, Nazrul Islam, Sultana Shafee, Syed Manzoorul Islam and Syed Mohammad Shaheed (Dhaka: Bangladesh National Museum, 2013), 111, lines 3–5, verses 2–3.

⁹⁵ N. K. Bhattasali, “Two Grants of Varmans of Vanga,” *Epigraphia Indica* 30 (1953–54): 259–263.

⁹⁶ Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya, “The Maināmati Copper-plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikāladeva (1141 Śāka),” *Indian Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1933): 282–289.

⁹⁷ For the patronage of the goddess worship by newly emergent *zamindars* in Bengal, see Bihani Sarkar, “The Rite of Durgā in Medieval Bengal: An Introductory Study of Raghunandana’s *Durgāpūjātattva* with Text and Translation of the Principal Rites,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22, no. 2 (2012): 341–345. For the spread of Islam in Bengal, see Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

the rules and practices of daily lives and activities of *bhikṣus* and their *saṃgha*, presumably guided by the *vinaya*, with occasional references to actual cases witnessed by Yijing himself, especially at Nālandāmahāvihāra in Magadha and Vārāhavihāra (*bāluóhēsi* 跋羅訶寺) in Tāmralipti.⁹⁸ Some portions of the account may have been composed on the basis of other texts, like chapter 36 on the disposal of the property of a deceased monk which is largely drawn from the original text of the *Vinayasamgraha*, a Mūlasarvāstivāda text which Yijing subsequently translated.⁹⁹ However, the texts copied and later translated by Yijing, which he had brought from India to Kedah, must have been the ones kept in the *vihāras* in eastern India, mainly in the Nālandāmahāvihāra where he stayed for ten years searching for scriptures, as recorded in his biography incorporated in the *Biography of Eminent Monks Who Went to the Western World in Search of the Law During the Great Tang Dynasty* (*Dātáng xīyù qiúfǎ gāosēng zhuàn* 大唐西域求法高僧傳) compiled by himself.¹⁰⁰ As such, the *vinaya* texts consulted by Yijing could have been the ones used for regulating the practices of *bhikṣus* belonging to those *vihāras*. Thus, the presumed local context of Yijing’s account, in terms of both his in-person observations and texts consulted by him, makes his accounts relevant to the present study.

The Buddhist *vihāras* described by Yijing had extensive landholdings, conforming to the delineation based on the epigraphic sources. Yijing provides us with information on the management of landholdings, which is

⁹⁸ 此皆是耽摩立底跋羅訶寺之法式也。其那爛陀寺。法乃更嚴。(T. 2125 [LIV] 214a02–04) “All these are the rules of the Bālāha Monastery at Tāmralipti, but at Nālandā Monastery the regulations are still stricter.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 63. This statement is preceded by Yijing’s remarks on monastic practices, which begins with his confession that he realized his ignorance of *vinaya* rules only after coming to India, and followed by the description of the Nālandāmahāvihāra, which flourished due to the observation of *vinaya*. T. 2125 [LIV] 213c28–214a02, 04–06. Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 63.

⁹⁹ Juan Wu, “The Relationship between the *Cīvaravastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* and Chapter 36 of Yijing’s *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuàn*,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 65, no. 1 (2022): 32–84.

¹⁰⁰ 住那爛陀寺十載求經。(T. 2066 [LI] 8b09–10) “(Yijing) stayed at Nālandā Monastery for ten years and searched for the *sūtras*.” My own translation. Cf. I-Ching, Latika Lahiri tr., *Chinese Monks in India: Biography of Eminent Monks Who Went to the Western World in Search of the Law During the Great Tang Dynasty* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 82. I would like to thank one of the reviewers for reminding me of this reference.

not detailed much in the inscriptions. According to him, the *vinaya* rule ordains that the *saṃgha*, in cultivation of paddy fields, has to share the product with its servants (*jīngrén* 淨人) or other families and take one sixth of it, with some flexibility in ratio. The *saṃgha* provides cattle and land but is not involved with cultivation in any other way.¹⁰¹ He claims that most *vihāras* in India follow this way, but some avaricious monks use male and female slaves and supervise agrarian management by themselves.¹⁰² This explanation of theory and practice of land management by the *saṃgha* is followed by an eye-witness account of a *vihāra* in Tāmralipti, where he saw householders taking agricultural produce to a square outside the *vihāra*, dividing it into three, giving one share to the *saṃgha* and taking two away. On his query, Dachengdeng (Dàchéngdēng 大乘燈 Mahāyānapradīpa), Yijing's fellow monk from Aizhou (Àizhōu 愛州) in present northern Vietnam, explained to him that the *saṃgha* members of the *vihāra*, observing the rule prohibiting them to cultivate by themselves, rented the taxable land to others and shared crops with them.¹⁰³ What

¹⁰¹ 依如律教。僧家作田。須共淨人爲其分數。或可共餘人戶。咸並六分抽一。僧但給牛與地。諸事皆悉不知。或可分數量時斟酌。(T. 2125 [LIV] 213b03–06), “According to the teaching of the *vinaya*, when the *saṃgha* cultivates paddy fields, it must share (the product) with the servants. It can otherwise (do so) with other families. All (the product) is divided into six and (the *saṃgha*) takes one (share). The *saṃgha* only provides cattle and land, and never manages all the diverse matters. It can otherwise reconsider sometimes the amount of shares.” My own translation. Cf. Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 59.

¹⁰² 西方諸寺多並如是。或有貪婪不爲分數。自使奴婢躬撿營農。(T. 2125 [LIV] 213b06–07), “Most of the monasteries in the west follow the system mentioned above. There are some avaricious monks who do not share the produce in proportion with others, but employ male and female slaves and personally manage the farming business.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 59.

¹⁰³ 初至耽摩立底國。寺院之外有一方地。忽見家人取菜。分爲三分。與僧一分。自取兩歸。未解其故。問大乘燈法師曰。斯何意焉。答曰。此寺僧徒並多戒行。自爲種植大聖所遮。是以租地與他。分苗而食。(T. 2125 [LIV] 213b18–23), “When I arrived at Tāmralipti for the first time, I saw a square field outside the monastery. Some laymen suddenly came there to fetch vegetables, which they divided into three portions, giving one portion to the Sangha and taking two away for themselves. I did not understand what was going on, and inquired of the Venerable Mahāyānadīpa about their intention. He said in reply, ‘The monks of this monastery are mostly observers of the disciplinary rules. As they are not allowed by the Great Sage to cultivate land themselves, they rent the land to others and take a share of the crops for food.’” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 60.

Yijing's account implies is a share-cropping arrangement between the *saṃgha* and its servants or local residents, with some exceptional cases of monks directly involved in agrarian management. This is likely to have been one form of management of landholdings of *vihāras*, especially in the seventh century before the transfer of extensive resources and power in a settlement became the norm of donations to Buddhist *saṃghas* under the Pāla rule and necessitated the *saṃgha* to closely supervise the management of donated tracts.

As for administrative personnel in a *vihāra*, Yijing's *Record* mentions *shòushì* (授事), *wéinà* (維那), *zhīshì(rén/-bìchú)* (知事(人/苾芻)), and *jiǎnjiào(rén)* (檢校(人)). Of them, the first two are respectively a translation and an abbreviation of the same Sanskrit term *karmadāna*, “the giver of duties,” which Yijing explains as the one who assigns various duties to monks.¹⁰⁴ *Shòushì* also strikes a *gaṇḍī* (犍稚) at the time for bathing the Buddha's image,¹⁰⁵ while *wéinà* does the same to announce the

¹⁰⁴ 授事者。梵云羯磨陀那。陀那是授。羯磨是事。意道。以衆雜事指授於人。舊云維那者非也。維是唐語。意道網維。那是梵音。略去羯磨陀字 (T. 2125 [LIV] 226b19–20, inline note), “The director of duties, or the giver of duties, is *karmadāna* in Sanskrit. *Dāna* means ‘giving,’ and *karma*, ‘action,’ i.e., one who gives various duties to the monks. This term was formerly rendered as *wei-na*, which is incorrect. In Chinese, the character *wei* means ‘a cord’ or ‘to tie together,’ while *na* stands for the last syllable of the Sanskrit *karmadāna*, and was used as an abbreviation of the word.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 135. For a discussion on *karmadāna/wéinà* in Chinese Buddhist texts including the present one, see Jonathan A. Silk, *Managing Monks: Administrators and Administrative Roles in Indian Buddhist Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127–135.

¹⁰⁵ 但西國諸寺。灌沐尊儀。每於禺中之時。授事便鳴犍稚 (T. 2125 [LIV] 226b18–19) “In the monasteries of India, at the time for bathing the Buddha's image, usually in the forenoon, the director of duties strikes a *ghanṭā*.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 135. A *Gaṇḍī*, not a *ghanṭā* (bell) as translated by Li, is a wooden beam to be struck by a short stick. Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber, “Das Anschlagen der *Gaṇḍī* in buddhistischen Klöstern – über einige einschlägige Vinaya-Termini,” in *Papers in Honour of Prof. Dr. Ji Xianlin on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday (II)*, ed. Li Zheng, Jiang Zhongxin, Duan Qing and Qian Wenzhong (Nanchang Shi: Jiangxi Renmin Chubanshe, 1991), 737–768. For a further discussion based on the textual references, visual representations, modern accounts, and fieldworks, see Ekaterina Sobkovyak, “Religious History of the *Gaṇḍī* Beam: Testimonies of Texts, Images and Ritual Practices,” *Asiatische Studien – Études Asiatiques* 69, no. 3 (2015): 685–722. I would like to thank Arlo Griffiths and one of the reviewers for these references.

time from sunset to dawn.¹⁰⁶ *Wéinà* is permitted to keep a small bowl meant to be a clepsydra in his own chamber,¹⁰⁷ and supposed to interact with servants, including women, at the kitchen for supervision.¹⁰⁸ *Zhīshì* or *zhīshìrén*, “administrator,” and *zhīshìbìchú*, “administering monk,” decides on the precedence of monks with the equal stature,¹⁰⁹ supervises food arrangements for guest monks,¹¹⁰ announces time by beating a drum,¹¹¹ and inspects the water from a well every morning.¹¹² Thus *shòushì/wéinà* and *zhīshì(rén)* are charged with overlapping duties, especially the supervision of servants for the arrangement of meals and the announcement of particular times and occasions.

¹⁰⁶ 日沒之後乃至天光。大眾全無鳴健稚法。凡打健稚不使淨人。皆維那自打健稚。(T. 2125 [LIV] 226a10–12) “From sunset to dawn, the ordinary monks are not obliged to sound the *ghanṭā* (bell), nor is it the duty of servants; the director of duties has to do it himself.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 132. *Ghanṭā* should be corrected to *gaṇḍī*, which is not “a bell.”

¹⁰⁷ 維那若房設小盃。准理亦應無過。(T. 2125 [LIV] 226a22–23) “It is reasonable for the director of duties to keep a small bowl [to mark the time] in his chamber without incurring any fault.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 133.

¹⁰⁸ 但護界分。意非防女。淨人來入厨內。豈得即是村收。假令身入村坊。持衣無不護女。維那持衣。檢校斯亦漫爲傷急矣。(T. 2125 [LIV] 217a20–23) “It is just a boundary of protection, and is not meant to guard against women. If a [female] servant comes into the kitchen, shall we deem it a village? When one carries one’s robes at the time of going to a village, it is not meant to guard oneself against women. When the *karmadāna* (director of duties) goes round to supervise monastic affairs and carries his robes with him, it is really too burdensome for him.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 81–82.

¹⁰⁹ 知事乃任彼前差。(T. 2125 [LIV] 220a03) “the duty-distributor may allow either of them to take precedence over the other in performing religious duties.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 98.

¹¹⁰ 僧徒五百臨中忽來。正到中時無宜更煮。其知事人告厨家曰。有斯倉卒事欲如何。(T. 2125 [LIV] 209b28–c01) “One day five hundred monks suddenly came at about midday, and as it was exactly noontime, it was inconvenient for the resident monks to prepare more food for the uninvited guests. The managing monk said to the cooks, ‘In such a hurry, what can we do?’” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 37.

¹¹¹ 若初夜盡時。其知事人則於寺上閣。鳴鼓以警衆。(T. 2125 [LIV] 226a06–07) “At the end of the first watch, the director of duties strikes a drum in a loft of the monastery to announce the time for the monks.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 132.

¹¹² 又見知事苾芻。晨旦井邊觀水。(T. 2125 [LIV] 213b24–25) “I also saw a *bhikṣu* (mendicant), who was the director of monastic affairs, inspect the water from a well every morning.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 61.

As for *jiǎnjiào* or *jiǎnjiàorén*, “superintendent,” a monk is appointed to this position at the time of laying the foundation stone for constructing a *vihāra*,¹¹³ or for overseeing the preparation of food.¹¹⁴ Yijing also mentions monks and nuns supervising meals, using the same word, *jiǎnjiào* as a verb.¹¹⁵ It could denote an office of temporary appointment.¹¹⁶

Yijing further reports titles of administrative staff with short descriptions in his *Biography of Eminent Monks*. Following his descriptions of Mahābodhi and Nālandā, he says that the oldest among the elders (*shàngzuò* 上座), *sthaviras*, is made the respectable master (*zūnzhǔ* 尊主), regardless of his virtues.¹¹⁷ He describes a master of the *vihāra* (*sìzhǔ* 寺主), *vihārasvāmin*, as the one who founded a *vihāra* and the guardian of the *vihāra* (*hùsì* 護寺), *vihārapāla*, as the one who arranges duties, controls gates of the *vihāra*, coordinates the *samgha* and announces matters. He also describes the *karmadāna* as the one who sounds the *ganḍī*, presumably for announcing time, and supervises meals.¹¹⁸ The last descrip-

¹¹³ 初造寺時定基石已。若一苾芻爲檢校人者。應起如是心。(T. 2125 [LIV] 216c24–26.) “When a monastery is about to be built and the foundation stone has been laid, if a monk becomes a superintendent, he has to invoke his mind as follows.” My own translation. Cf. Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 80.

¹¹⁴ 凡設齋供及僧常食。須人檢校。(T. 2125 [LIV] 207b10–11) “For the preparation of food as an offering, or as a regular meal for the monks, a superintendent is needed to oversee the process.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 25.

¹¹⁵ 比見僧尼助檢校者。食多過午因福獲罪。(T. 2125 [LIV] 207b12–13) “I have recently seen that under the supervision of monks and nuns, meals are often served after noontime. In this way they committed a fault instead of gaining bliss.” Li, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions*, 25.

¹¹⁶ Silk, *Managing Monks*, 54–55.

¹¹⁷ 寺內但以最老上座而爲尊主。不論其德。(T. 2066 [LI] 5c21–22), “Within a monastery, only making the oldest elder the respectable master, without considering his virtues.” My own translation. Cf. I-Ching, Lahiri tr., *Chinese Monks in India*, 54.

¹¹⁸ 但造寺之人名爲寺主。梵云毘訶羅波羅。若作番直典掌寺門及和僧白事者。名毘訶羅波羅。譯爲護寺。若鳴健椎及監食者。名爲羯磨陀那。譯爲授事。言維那者略也。(T. 2066 [LI] 5c24–27), “Only the one who constructed a monastery is called master of the monastery, *vihārasvāmin* in Sanskrit. If there is the one who arranges duties, controls gates of a monastery, also coordinates the *samgha* and announces matters, he is called *vihārapāla*, translated as a guardian of a monastery. If there is one who sounds the *ganḍī* and supervises the meals, he is called *karmadāna*, translated as a giver of duties. *Wéinà* is an abbreviation.” My own translation. Cf. I-

tion matches well with the depictions of *karmadāna* in the *Record* mentioned above. But the arrangement of duties, the important function of *karmadāna* related with its etymology in the *Record*, is here assigned to the *vihārapāla*. This fact indicates the overlaps in duties fulfilled by a *karmadāna* and a *vihārapāla*, as are the duties of a *karmadāna* and a *zhīshì(rén)* in the *Record* discussed above.

The administrative arrangement within *vihāras* glimpsed from Yijing's account is not necessarily corroborated by the inscriptional data. The *vihārasvāmin*, who could be a lay owner of a *vihāra* involved in its management,¹¹⁹ may be equated with the subordinate rulers who petitioned the king for donation of land or villages to the *vihāras* founded by themselves. The *vihārapāla* and *karmadāna*, the administrative offices with overlapping charges of supervision, however, are not mentioned at all. On the other hand, the *pādamūla/pādamūlika*, the only administrative staff of a *vihāra* mentioned in the inscriptions of early medieval Bengal, as non-*bhikṣu* personnel including literates according to the vase inscription of the time of Devātideva, does not find its place in the accounts of Yijing.¹²⁰

Thus, we see that Yijing's account is quite complementary to the data available from the inscriptions by providing more detailed information on management of landholdings and the administrative apparatus of *vihāras*, which are not described in the former. The picture of a *vihāra* obtained from them, an organization managing extensive landholdings and staffed by a range of administrators, shows some level of conformity to the historical developments observable in the epigraphic sources, discussed in the previous sections.

7. Concluding Remarks

As was delineated in the epigraphic evidence discussed above, Buddhist *vihāras* in Bengal, which emerged as established institutions in the early

Ching, Lahiri tr., *Chinese Monks in India*, 54. For a discussion on *vihārapāla* based on a wider range of texts, see Silk, *Managing Monks*, 137–146.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion on lay ownership of *vihāras*, see Gregory Schopen, "The Lay Ownership of Monasteries and the Role of the Monk in Mūlasarvāstivādin Monasticism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 19, no. 1 (1996): 81–126.

¹²⁰ For other inscriptional references to the *pādamūla*, interpreted rather as meaning "servant" or "attendant," see Silk, *Managing Monks*, 203–205.

sixth century, experienced a gradual process of organizational development and consolidation of their material base towards the ninth/tenth century. The organizational development manifested itself as the function of a *saṃgha* approximating a legal person and the diminishing role of individual monks, while the consolidation of the material base was accomplished through the accumulation of landholdings and then the acquisition of extensive resources in villages. The accounts of the Chinese monk Yijing give insight into the management of landholdings and the administrative organization at *vihāras*, as well as the supposedly *vinaya*-based practices that were current in this connection.

The aforementioned process pertaining to *vihāras* went along with developments in both political and economic domains: first, the growth of political powers, which consisted of several layers of rulers, to the regional kingship wielding stronger power, and second, the formation of stratified land relations. The interconnected progress of both domains brought out a condition favorable for the growth of Buddhist *vihāras* as organizations with a firm material base, by the patronage of rulers. This condition, however, also resulted in the heavy dependence of *vihāras* on temporal powers for their existence. The dependence continued in the later period and finally made *vihāras* vulnerable to the loss of patronage when their patrons declined in a new political situation. This vulnerability could have been one of the elements which contributed to the “decline” of Buddhism in India, though the concept of “decline” itself now comes under serious reviews, due to the discoveries of new evidence for the survival of Buddhism in the later period on the one hand,¹²¹ and the critical reevaluation of the inherent presuppositions of the earlier historiography on the other hand.¹²²

¹²¹ One piece of evidence for the survival of Buddhism in eastern India as late as the mid-15th century is a manuscript of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, which was copied by *karaṇika kāyastha* Bhāskaradatta residing in a village named Coindigrāma, identifiable with Chondi area in the city of Barh, Patna district, Bihar, in year 1456 CE. Shin'ichiro Hori, “A Sanskrit Manuscript of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* Dated 1456 CE from Eastern India,” *Bulletin of the International Institute for Buddhist Studies* 4 (2021): 23–27.

¹²² For the reviews of the studies on the “decline” of Buddhism and its conceptual problems, see Richard Salomon, “What Happened to Buddhism in India?,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 41 (2018): 1–25; Audrey Truschke, “The Power of the Islamic Sword in Narrating the Death of Indian Buddhism,” *History of Religions* 57, no. 4 (2018): 406–435.

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