

A Tide of Merit: Royal Donors, Tāmraparṇīya Monks, and the Buddha’s
Awakening in 5th–6th-century Āndhradeśa

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Abstract

This article stresses the importance of 5th-6th-century copper-plate charters connected to the Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty for the history of Buddhism in Āndhradeśa. It demonstrates that, contrary to earlier scholarly assumptions, and despite the paucity of archeological evidence for Buddhist activity at that time, Buddhist lineages still benefitted of lavish donations by ruling families. This study consists of three parts: the first part explores the representation of two Viṣṇukuṇḍin rulers as Buddhist kings, and shows how their portraits and their aspirations are permeated by the ideology of the Bodhisattvayāna. The second part examines one of the main recipients of royal donations, the Sthāvira/Theriya lineage of the Tāmraparṇīyas, already known from inscriptions issued under the previous Ikṣvāku dynasty. The analysis of these earlier records from Nagarjunakonda in light of little-studied copper-plates shows that the Tāmraparṇīyas had a strong institutional presence in Āndhradeśa from the mid-3rd to the late 6th century. The lineage’s connections with Laṅkā and with other Theriya centres along the Bay of Bengal are delineated through a close examination of the terminology used in the inscriptions under scrutiny, in light of co-eval records, and especially of Pāli *Vinaya* literature and historical narratives. The last part of this article focuses on a poetic allusion to the episode of the Buddha’s victory over Māra included in the opening stanza of a grant issued by king Pṛthivīśrīmūla. The evidence suggests that this record connects for the first time the water poured by Śākyamuni in his previous lives as a Bodhisattva with a flood that drove away Māra’s army from the seat of Awakening, a motif that grew—like a tide—and spread across Southeast Asia.

Key words

History of Buddhism in South India — epigraphy Āndhradeśa — Ikṣvāku and Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasties — Bodhisattva kings and the Bodhisattvayāna — Sthāvira/Theriya lineages and the Tāmraparṇīyas — Pāli *imaginaire* — *vaṃsa* literature — Māravijaya.

Introduction

I undertake here to scrutinise the religious landscape of Āndhradeśa (a domain corresponding to the modern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) in the 5th–6th centuries CE. My aim is to shed light on the Buddhist lineages established in this region, on the patronage they received from the political elite, and on the ideals and self-perceptions of both these agents. This study is grounded on the preliminary results of the project *Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa* (hereafter EIAD) that has set out to document, edit, and translate anew the whole epigraphic corpus of Āndhradeśa before the rise of the Cālukya dynasty in the 7th century CE.¹ In the process of studying this rich material, my attention was drawn, in particular, to the inscriptions in Sanskrit connected to the Viṣṇukuṇḍin rulers (*ca.* 422–612) and to one vassal—and, for some time, rival—of theirs, Pṛthivīśrīmūla (*r. ca.* 510–570).² Eleven royal grants (ten copper-plates, and one

1. This long-term project itself developed from the two-year collaborative project “From Vijayapurī to Śrīkṣetra: the beginnings of Buddhist exchange across the Bay of Bengal,” funded by a grant from the R.N. Ho Family Foundation programme in Buddhist Studies, administered by the American Council of Learned Societies, and concluded in August 2017. Its Indian wing, including project coordinator Arlo Griffiths, Stefan Baums, Ingo Strauch, and myself, initially focused on the epigraphic record dating from the period dominated by the Ikṣvāku dynasty (*ca.* 225–325 CE), before we were led to broaden its scope and to aim at a comprehensive corpus. Our inventory includes at present 625 items, excluding the *ca.* 200 inscribed potsherds recovered so far from Buddhist sites. The output of this project is being published gradually at <http://epigraphia.efe.fr/andhra>, where all inscriptions quoted in the present article are already available under their respective EIAD number. Other results of this project were published in Baums et al. 2016, while the bulk of these will appear in the proceedings of a conference held, from 31 July to 4 August 2017 at the EFEO centre of Pondicherry. The transliteration system used throughout this article is the one adopted for this corpus. The latter is compliant with ISO standard 15919, except for the consistent use of the raised circle ° to indicate independent vowel signs. Our editorial conventions are as follows: physical line numbers are given in parentheses and bold face; square brackets [] surround readings of damaged *akṣaras*; parentheses () editorial restorations of lost text; angle brackets < > editorial additions of omitted text; question marks represent entirely illegible *akṣaras*; the sign + *akṣaras* that are entirely lost; the diamond symbol ◇ horizontal space left blank in the text layout (for punctuation or other purposes); triple slash /// the left or right edge of the support if it is fragmentary.

2. I tentatively follow the chronology of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin kings argued at length in Sankaranarayanan 1977, although I am aware that it is far from having met with universal approval. See, for instance, the references cited below (n. 16) and, on the methodological problems raised by the use of royal genealogies for the reconstruction of dynastic history, see Henige 1975. With respect to Pṛthivī(śrī)mūla, on the basis of the first set of Godavari plates (EIAD 185) Sankaranarayanan situates the beginning of his reign in 510, before he rebelled against his overlord, the Viṣṇukuṇḍin Indrabhaṭṭāarakavarman (*r. ca.* 527–555) around 535 CE. A Śrīmūla of the Pṛthivīmūla family is also known as the executor (*ājñāpana*) of the grant recorded in EIAD 175, in Śaka *samvat* 488 (i.e. 566 CE), being the 11th year of Vikramendravarman II (*r.* 555–*ca.* 572). From the way Śrīmūla is described as having played a critical role in the restoration of the fortune of his overlord, it is quite clear that this figure was then a critical ally of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin ruler. Given the gap of fifty-six years between the assumed beginning of Pṛthivīśrīmūla’s reign and EIAD 175—which is the only Viṣṇukuṇḍin inscription to bear an absolute date—Sankaranarayanan (1977: 94–98) preferred to distinguish this figure from the one featuring in the Godavari grants, although he did not entirely discard the possibility that they were the same person. Two of the three Kondavidu plates (EIAD 188–189), discovered in 1987, are

stone inscription) issued by Viṣṇukuṇḍin rulers have been recovered so far (EIAD 174–184),³ mostly from the dynasty’s heartland in the Krishna-Godavari doāb or immediately on the south bank of the Krishna, but extending in the Northeast to the Vizianagaram district.⁴ Five copper-plate grants issued by Pṛthivīśrīmūla are known to us (EIAD 185–189), and they were all recovered from the Godavari and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh. While these records have attracted the attention of some historians, they have been strikingly neglected by scholars of Buddhism, who have focused almost exclusively on the Sada-Sātavāhana and Ikṣvāku periods.⁵ Those scholars interested in religious developments connected to early medieval Āndhradeśa, or in religious figures likely to have been associated with this region, such as Bhāviveka (*ca.* 490/500–570) and Candrakīrti (*ca.* 600–650), have generally privileged Buddhist scriptures and *sāstras*, or the travelogues of Chinese pilgrims, when attempting contextualization. Only rarely—and, if at all, cursorily—have they referred to inscriptions.⁶

S. Sankaranarayanan, to whom we owe the most important study of the period of regional history dominated by the Viṣṇukuṇḍins, made a remarkable effort to familiarise himself with the Buddhist notions he encountered in the epigraphic record. Still, he did not escape the more general tendency to downplay the significance of Buddhism in post-Ikṣvāku Āndhra, and the appeal the Śāsana might have had on the Viṣṇukuṇḍin rulers. In chapter 10 of *The Vishnukundis and Their Times*, dedicated to religious, artistic and cultural developments, the author

dated in the 43rd regnal year of Pṛthivīśrīmūla. This evidence supports the possibility that the political career of this individual was very long. It might have been marked by his emancipation from and eventually his reintegration into the Viṣṇukuṇḍin fold. I therefore privilege here the hypothesis of a single individual.

3. Note that an additional inscription, engraved on a rock boulder found in Caitanyapuri, in the outskirts of Hyderabad, is likely to stem from the period of Viṣṇukuṇḍin rule, since it refers to a Govindarājavihāra, bearing the name of the first important figure in this dynasty. Cf. EIAD 173, l. 5. It is however not a royal inscription, but it records the gift of a monk named Saṅghadeva. It is also the only inscription of this corpus to be in MIA.

4. One inscription (EIAD 179), from the reign of the powerful Mādhavarman (*r. ca.* 462–502), was moreover recovered from Khanapur, in the Satara district of Maharashtra. Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977: 46–48.

5. This may be measured, for instance, by reading the collection of essays recently edited by Sree Padma and Barber, on Buddhism along the Krishna river (2008). This only marginally addresses the Viṣṇukuṇḍin evidence (see the following note). For a review of this book of uneven quality, see von Hinüber 2012. For a brief treatment of the patronage of Buddhism by the Viṣṇukuṇḍins, see also Sanderson 2009: 70–72.

6. Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, who first directed my attention to the Viṣṇukuṇḍin corpus, has informed me that she is currently working towards a study that would correct this situation. So far, the only attempt known to me that includes the epigraphical data in a discussion of Mādhyamika masters may be found in an interesting contribution by Karen Lang, on Candrakīrti’s stance towards kings and the military culture (2008: 128–132). In this study, the author summarizes the contents of two copper-plate grants from Tummalagudem (EIAD 174, 175), but without analysing in great detail either of these inscriptions, and without studying first-hand the inscriptions of Pṛthivīśrīmūla. While her comments are perceptive, she makes no real attempt at connecting the data of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin records with Candrakīrti’s background.

thus states:⁷

The triumph of the *sanātana-dharma* ... over Buddhism during the age is clear from the records of the Viṣṇukuṇḍis and their feudatories and contemporaries. We have already seen that Govindavarman, a Buddhist to begin with, embraced Hinduism, perhaps under the influence of the Vākāṭaka Pravarasena. [...] Yuang Chwang [i.e. Xuanzang 玄奘], who visited the country soon after the disappearance of the Viṣṇukuṇḍis[,] informs us of the existence of some twenty monasteries, with more than 3000 brethren in the area. But the records of the Viṣṇukuṇḍi period speak of only two monasteries—one at Indrapura and the other at Guṇapāśapura. The reason for this phenomenon is not difficult to surmise. For, in spite of the great pain taken by Yuan Chwang in drawing a bright picture of Buddhism in India, his records do betray the fact that the progress of the religion of the Buddha had already been arrested.

Such a narrative of decline might to some extent be supported—and the lack of interest in previous scholarship, explained—by archaeological evidence: indeed, the dense web of Buddhist sites in the Āndhran landscape, that spread especially in the first four centuries of the Common Era, appears to have loosened after the fall of the Ikṣvākus, and few are the artistic productions that can unambiguously be tied to this particular period.⁸ Still, even if the lack of evidence for the continuous occupation of many Buddhist sites that flourished until the 4th century suggests that they had already turned into ruins under the Viṣṇukuṇḍins,⁹ the situation was far from being as dire as assumed by Sankaranarayanan. Four of the sixteen royal inscriptions of this corpus were discovered and edited over the last four decades. Interestingly, all of these more recent discoveries record donations to Buddhist monasteries, thereby placing monks on a par with brahmins as recipients of royal generosity.¹⁰ Moreover, records of the period know of six

7. Sankaranarayanan 1977: 141–142.

8. This also holds true, incidentally, for non-Buddhist art. Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977: 146–150; Bakker 1997: 90–92.

9. This feature of the landscape is observed by Xuanzang a few decades after the fall of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins, in his description of Dhānyakaṭaka (馱那羯磔迦, modern Dharanikota) or “Greater Āndhra” (大安達邏), cf. *T.* 2087, LI, 930c13–14 (= Ji 1985: 839):

伽藍鱗次，荒蕪已甚，存者二十餘所。僧徒千餘人，並多習學大眾部法。

The Buddhist monasteries are numerous, but they are for the most part deserted, and there remain [only] twenty monasteries. There are a thousand monks, most of whom follow the teachings of the Mahāsāṅghikas.

The motif of three-thousand monks is taken by Sankaranarayanan from the preceding chapter of the *Datang xiyuji* 大唐西域記, regarding the country of Andaluo 案達羅 (i.e. Āndhra) located North of Dhānyakaṭaka and having Pingqiluo 瓶耆羅 (i.e. Veṅḡ[pu]ra) as capital. Cf. *T.* 2087, LI, 330a29–b4. On the Indian name underlying the transcription 瓶耆羅, see Ji 1985: 835, n. 2. On the identification of Veṅḡpura with Peddavegi in the West Godavari district, see Mangalam 1979–1980; Sarma 2002.

10. Among the grants stemming from the Viṣṇukuṇḍin rulers, six favoured brahmins, three the Buddhist institution, and two commemorated gifts to individual deities (one Śaiva, one Vaiṣṇava). Four of the five grants stemming from Pṛthivīśrīmūla endowed Buddhist monasteries, while only one favoured brahmins.

Buddhist monasteries, some of which very richly endowed. It is therefore clear that Buddhism had a lasting appeal among the political elite of Āndhradeśa, at least until the 7th century, when a more radical shift in patronage seems to have occurred.¹¹

The period under consideration moreover bears witness to important developments for the history of Buddhism in the Deccan. Hence, as we shall see, several kings and princes directly sponsored the Buddhist institution, establishing in person monasteries, something that is unknown in Āndhradeśa under the Sātavāhanas and the Ikṣvākus. In the corpus connected with the latter dynasty, queens and ministers actively engaged in pious foundations, but kings apparently kept their distance towards Buddhists. Their titles, like those of the Sātavāhanas, insist on their performance of “Vedic” (Śrauta) sacrifices, and dedication to gods such as Mahāsenā, while evidence of their direct patronage of the Buddhism is sparse.¹² Some of the Viṣṇukunḍins rulers, not content only to act as patrons, considered themselves “Buddhists,” and in particular Bodhisattva-kings. In this

11. I am indeed unaware of epigraphic evidence for any donation to Buddhists made by the Eastern Cālukyas.

12. Under the Ikṣvākus, the only inscription attesting to the direct involvement of the king in sponsoring the Buddhist institution comes from the first set of copper-plates recovered from Patagandīgudem (EIAD 55). This is the only grant of that type preserved in the Ikṣvāku corpus. In this inscription, Ehaḥvala Cāntamūla (r. ca. 265/75–290/300), while stressing his performance of Śrauta sacrifices, endows various fields to the *mahāvihāra* of the Avaraddāraseliya renunciants (*pavvayita*). Under the Sātavāhanas and outside of Āndhradeśa, similar endowments are attested in Nasik (cf. *IBH*, Nāsik no. 2, 3, 5). In all these cases, the king acts as the provider of land to existing *vihāras*, not the donor of monastic residence, even if in inscription no. 3, he associates himself to the earlier gift of his mother. The rich amount of evidence pertaining to the Sātavāhanas recovered from Kanaganahalli and recently published does not substantially contradict the notion that the kings were not directly involved in Buddhist foundations or devotion. To be sure, one relief from that site represents a king of this dynasty holding a ewer and making a donation of flowers set on a dish to two monks. It interestingly bears the following label inscription:

rāyā sātakaṇ[i] (mahāce)[t](i)yasa r[u]pāmayāni payumāni oṇ[o]yeti
sātakaṇ[i] sātakaṇ(i) Nakanishi & von Hinüber.

King Sātakarṇi donates silver lotus flowers to the Great Caitya.

Cf. Nakanishi & von Hinüber 2014: 30, no. 7 and pl. 1; Poonacha 2013: 366, pl. LX.B. The fact that this is a narrative label, and not the record of an actual donation should be taken into consideration in the evaluation of this piece of evidence. In particular, even if von Hinüber’s identification of this king with Gotamīputra Sātakarṇi were to be accepted—and not his ancestor Sātakarṇi *tout court*, whose historicity is disputed—nothing proves that this relief dates from his reign and that it was not produced under one of his successors. In light of the fact that similar labels occur on depictions of Aśoka recovered from the site, the piece might be interpreted as a monastic attempt to visually appeal to contemporary rulers, by promoting past models of *dānapatis*. See also Zin 2012: 155–161. Similar attempts at attracting the non-Buddhist ruler’s attention may be found under the Ikṣvākus, for instance in the bilingual inscription from Phanigiri (EIAD 104), attempting to promote—in Sanskrit stanzas—the superiority of the Buddha over other gods. Cf. von Hinüber 2013a: 366–367; Baums et al. 2016: 369–377. For a discussion of royal patronage under the Sātavāhanas, see Fynes 1995; Shimada 2013: 160–163. For the suggestion that the pattern of donation highlighted here represents a “mediation” or “deflection” of the king’s generosity, see Scherrer-Schaub 2007: 775. For stimulating reflections on this pattern, see *ead.* 2014: 128–129, 156–158.

respect the scenario presented by Sankaranarayanan, according to which Govindavarman I (r. ca. 422–462) started off as a Buddhist before converting to “Hinduism,” will be shown to be unfounded.¹³ Not only did Govindavarman leave the legacy of an enthusiastic Buddhist convert, his grandson Vikramendravarman I (r. ca. 502–527) followed a similar path and aimed at perfect Awakening. Much has been speculated, over the past four decades, on the importance of the emergent Mahāyāna—and, in particular, *tathāgatagarbha* literature—under the Sātavāhanas and the Ikṣvākus.¹⁴ On this point again, no evidence with clear spatio-temporal coordinates, such as an inscription or piece of art uncontroversially connected with these two dynasties, has been found to support this view. This naturally does not mean that what we call Mahāyāna was not present in the region: there is good evidence that important scriptures related to that movement circulated there, although exactly when is uneasy to determine and requires closer consideration.¹⁵ The absence of echoes of these scriptures in the rich archeological record available—by contrast, for instance, with that of Mathurā or Greater Gandhāra—at least suggests that its relevance in the public sphere was, as far as we can ascertain, limited until the 4th century at least. By contrast, we find a clear expression of a Bodhisattva *imaginaire* consistent with that of Mahāyāna scriptures in the Viṣṇukuṇḍin record. The exploration of the representation of royal donors in these inscriptions will lead me to discuss the recipients of royal generosity. Focusing on the Tāmraparṇīyas, one of the two *nikāyas* attested in 5th–6th-century epigraphic record, I will resort to a variety of sources to clarify their relationship to Sthāvira/Therīya lineages in Laṅkā and to the broader Buddhist world, before considering a significant aspect of their Buddhology.

Royal donors and the Bodhisattva ideal

In the present section, I focus on the way Govindavarman I and his grandson Vikramendravarman I are presented as Buddhist donors in their inscriptions and those of their successors. Three inscriptions in particular require close scrutiny: the two sets of copper-plates found in Tummalagudem (EIAD 174, 175, see Figs. 1–2), in the Nalgonda district of Telangana, and the second set of copper-plates found in Patagandigudem, in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh (EIAD 180, see Fig. 3). While the first two inscriptions are available in good editions by Sankaranarayanan and Mirashi, and have been much debated by historians to settle the chronology of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins,¹⁶ the latter is little known

13. See below, especially pp. 12–13.

14. This line of interpretation, promoted by Alex Wayman, has been influential. See, for instance, Wayman & Wayman 1974: 1–8; Wayman 1978; Rosen Stone 1980; Wayman & Rosen Stone 1990; Barber 2008; Mitrikeski 2009. For further discussion, see Tournier 2017: 284–286 and nn. 117, 119.

15. For a recent synthesis on the literary motifs transmitted in a closely related group of *tathāgarbha sūtras*, which point to Āndhradeśa, see Radich 2015: 61–83, 199–205.

16. The relative chronology of these two charters and the identity of Govindavarman featuring as

and has been available so far only in two very problematic editions.

The first set of Tummalagudem plates (EIAD 174) is an exceptionally rich document showing how the ideology of the gift promoted by Buddhist scriptures to royal donors was transposed into the genre of charters. In this overtly mahāyānist tract, the donor is described as follows:¹⁷

rājñām viṣṇukuṇḍinām amalavipulasakalakulatilakena [...] (6) grāmakṣetra(7)-
hi[ra]ṇyadviradaturagagobalīvarddaśayanāsanayānapānabhojanabhājanabha-
vanavasanābharaṇakanyā(8)dāsīdāsasahasrāñām dātrā °anekadevāyatanavihā-
rasabhāprapātaḍākodupānā(9)rām[a]pratisaṃskārapūrvvakaraṇenālamkṛtasa-
kaladigantareṇa bhikṣudvijā[n]ātha[yāca]kavyā(10)dhitadīnakṛpaṇajanopabhu-
jyamānanyāyādhitavatibhavadhanasamudayenāsa[kṛ]dasakṛtsa[r]vva(11)sva-
tyāginā sakalāśāstrārthaśravaṇaparijñānād iha paratra cānanyaca[kṣ]u-
[ṣ]ā vi[d]vacchūramahā(12)kulīnajanasaṃśrayeṇa sakalasaṭvadhātutṛāṇyot-
pādītamahābodhicittena mahārājaśrī(13)govindavarmanā
8. -**taḍākodupānā-** -*taḍākodupānā-* Sankaranarayanan, Mirashi.¹⁸ 9. -**kārapūrvva-** so Mirashi;
-*kārapūrvva-* Sankaranarayanan.¹⁹ 10. -**sa[r]vva-** so Mirashi; -[*sva*]sarvva- Sankaranarayanan.
12. -**mahābodhicittena**] em.; -*mahābodhicigitena* Is.

the main donor in EIAD 174 have not been definitively settled. I tentatively follow here the interpretation of Sankaranarayanan, according to which the issuer of the grant was Govindavarman I, grandfather of Vikramendravarman I, who was himself the grandfather of Vikramendravarman II (r. ca. 555–572), the issuer of the second Tummalagudem grant (EIAD 175). Formally, however, EIAD 174 is at odds with all other Viṣṇukuṇḍin grants, in that it does not include, in its central part or *dispositio*, the royal injunction addressed in direct speech to a variety of officers to respect and enforce his decision, but it contains instead a narrative account of the gift of land made by Govindavarman. It is moreover so laden with Buddhist phraseology that there is little doubt that monks of the *vihāra* endowed by this grant assumed an unusually large role in its composition. Considering that the very same *vihāra*, established by Govindavarman's chief queen, is endowed by the two charters recovered from the same site, and in light of the fact that they are palaeographically very similar, it is therefore possible that EIAD 174 was produced as a (likely modified) copy of a lost or damaged original grant by Govindavarman I, to accompany the charter issued by Vikramendravarman II. Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1974; 1977: 37–38. On the existence of such copies, see Salomon 2009: 111–112, 123–126. For different views on the subject, see Rama Rao 1965; 1966–1967; Mirashi 1982. Mirashi, writing without knowledge of Sankaranarayanan's monograph, points to several weaknesses in that scholar's reconstruction but it contains serious deficiencies of its own. It also does not account for the fact that the depiction of Govindavarman in EIAD 174 is fully consistent with that of the Buddhist king of that name known from other grants. If Mirashi's reconstruction were to be accepted, then one would have to imagine a Govindavarman (II) modelling himself onto his ancestor's legacy as an ideal Buddhist donor.

17. EIAD 174, ll. 3–13.

18. Sankaranarayanan, followed by Mirashi, erroneously suggests to emend *-odapāna-*. On *udupāna*, already found in Aśokan inscriptions, see *BHSD*, s.v.

19. It seems necessary to understand here *-apūrvakaraṇena*, following the silent emendation of Sankaranarayanan, who translated “by constructing afresh” (1974: 12). If we take into consideration the several orthographic irregularities in this inscription, including those affecting vowel length (for instance, l. 26: *sth[ā]pita* in lieu of *sth[ā]pitā*), this emendation seems justified. Alternatively, *pratisaṃskārapūrvakaraṇena* could perhaps be rendered as “by carrying out repairs as the former work,” but in the present context it makes better sense to assume that the directions were adorned by the combination of new construction and repair. The compound *apūrvakaraṇa* brings to mind the phrase *apūrvadattya udakapūrvam atisṛṣṭaḥ*, commonly occurring in Vākāṭaka inscriptions, to stipulate that a gift formally handed over through a ritual pouring of water was not previously

The great king Śrī-Govindavarman, who is an ornament to the entire great and spotless family of the Viṣṇukunḍin kings [...] the giver of thousands of villages, fields, pieces of gold, elephants, horses, cows, bulls, beddings and seats, vehicles, drink and food, dishes, dwellings, garments, ornaments, brides, male and female slaves;²⁰ who has adorned all directions by repairing and building anew many temples, monasteries, halls, cisterns, tanks, wells, and pleasure-groves (*ārāma*); whose array of wealth and riches, which he has lawfully acquired, is being enjoyed by monks, brahmins, those without a protector, beggars, the sick, the poor and the wretched people; who has relinquished, time and again, everything that he owns; who has an unequalled eye on this and the other world on account of his learning and understanding (*śravaṇaparijñāna*) the meaning of all treatises (*sarvasāstra*); who is a refuge for the learned, the brave, and those of noble birth, who has conceived the thought of the superior Awakening (*upāditamahābodhicitta*) in order to save the whole realm of sentient beings (*sattvadhātu*).

This is a crystal clear idealised depiction of a royal Bodhisattva moved by compassion and particularly practicing the perfection of generosity (*dānapāramitā*), but also an inclusive and eclectic king heeding all relevant sources of knowledge.²¹ The allusion to the conception of the *bodhicitta* comes as the crowning element in an array of qualities. Inscriptions of Govindavarman's successors that allude to his Buddhist leanings are consistent with this picture of a generous and learned king. In the Patagandigudem plates, set II (EIAD 180), issued by his grandson Vikramendravarman I, Govindavarman is presented like this:²²

given. See, for instance, Mirashi 1963: 8, ll. 14–15 (Poona copper-plates of Prabhāvatīguptā); 13, ll. 23–24 (Jamb plates of Pravarasena II); 19, ll. 17–18 (Belora Plate of Pravarasena II, set A).

20. The following passage of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*'s *Dānapaṭala* comprises a list having several elements in common with this inscription:

yāni punar imāni vicitrāṇi hastyāśvarathayānavāhanāni vastrālamkāraṇi praṇītāni ca pānabhojanāni nṛtagītavāditaśikṣā nṛtagītavāditaḥjanāni ca gandhamālyavilepanam vicitraś ca bhāṇḍopaskaraḥ udyānāni gṛhāṇi striyaś ca paricaryāyai vividheṣu śilpakarmasthāneṣu śikṣā. ity evamrūpaṃ ratikrīḍāvastu bodhisattvaḥ cittaprasādahetor arthibhyo 'nuprayacchati.

However, a Bodhisattva gives away objects [associated with] pleasure and amusement, things such as variegated elephants, horses, chariots, vehicles and carriages, clothing and ornaments, excellent food and drink, training for dancing, singing, and instrumental music, equipment for dancing, singing, and instrumental music, perfume, flower garlands, and ointment, various instruments and utensils, gardens, houses, women for sexual intercourse, and training in assorted subjects of arts and craftwork, to those who ask so that they would conceive *prasāda* in their mind.

Cf. *BoBhū* (W) 118.13–20, translation after McCombs 2014: 280. An even more detailed list may be found in *Gv* 144.22–45.10.

21. On the five sciences (*vidyā*), one “internal” (*adhyātma-*) and four “mundane” (*laukika-*), that were considered essential by treatises such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* to the cultivation of the path to Buddhahood and thus “faisaient partie intégrante de la panoplie culturelle du Bodhisattva,” see Seyfort Rugg 1995: 101–108.

22. EIAD 180, ll. 5–8. The variant readings of the editions by Ramachandra Murthy (first published in Hanumantha Rao et al. 1998: 207–210, and republished in Ramachandra Murthy

... ṣaḍabhijñadarśanābhiprasādopapāditasu(6)gataśāsanāvetyaprasādasyāneka-
mahāvihārapraṭiṣṭhāpana(7)ratnatrayaparicarato samadhigatavipulapuṇyasaṁ-
bhārasya (8) mahārājaśrīgovindavarmanḥ ...

... the great king Śrī-Govindavarman, whose perfect faith in the Teaching of the Sugata [or: *the Sugata and the Teaching*], was born from the trust [caused by] a vision of Him who is endowed with the six super-knowledges (i.e. the Buddha), who honoured the triple jewels through the establishment of many *mahāvihāras*, and acquired a broad accumulation of merits ...

In the long first compound, we see together two terms based on the noun *prasāda*²³ which, I would suggest, point to two stages in the acquisition of “pellucid” (*prasanna*) feelings akin to faith by Govindavarman. The latter, *avetyaprasāda* consists in a specific kind of *prasāda* arising from a correct understanding (*ava√i*) of the Buddhist truths.²⁴ This correct understanding echoes the above-mentioned characterisation of Govindavarman as someone who studied and understood the scriptures. This *prasāda* commonly takes the three jewels as object, to which *śīla* is sometimes added. The present passage focuses on either one or two of these *prasādas*—whether *-sugataśāsana-* is understood as a *tatpuruṣa* or, less likely, as a *dvandva* compound. Interestingly, this perfect “faith” appears to have developed from another kind of confidence (called here *abhiprasāda*), which was itself born from the seeing of an individual possessed of the six super-knowledges (*abhijñā*). The mastery of the six *abhijñās* is not exclusive to the Buddha, and is shared by some of his disciples. However, the context of both the compound and of the overall passage, pervaded with ideas characteristic of the Bodhisattvayāna, invites us to see here a reference to the/a Buddha.²⁵ For such a “visual” experience of profound impact to happen in a post-*parinirvāṇa* context, it should be either mediated by a substitute to the Buddha’s

2004: 166–177) and by Padmanabha Sastri (2004: 176–178) have not been recorded here. The poor quality of both editions is obvious enough, and the inclusion of the apparatus in would have unnecessarily increased the length of this contribution. Variants of both previous editions are however recorded in our digital edition.

23. On the broad semantic field of *prasāda* and the great difficulty of rendering this into English, see Rotman 2009: 66f.

24. On this concept, the emergence of the variant *abhedyaprasāda* in texts mostly transmitted in the Northwest, and the spread of lists of four “perfect” or “unwavering faiths,” see the detailed discussion in Schlosser & Strauch 2016: 78–98.

25. The adjective *ṣaḍabhijñā* does not seem to occur very frequently to qualify the Buddha, but its inclusion among the Teacher’s epithets in the *Amarakośa* is worthy of notice. Cf. *Amk* I.12, str. 14. It also occurs, among epithets in *-jñā*, in the following stanza from the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (*MSV* I.13.14–15/Ms. 144b10):

dharmajña nayajña pudgalajña tvāṁ vande ṣaḍabhijña sarvadaiva |
kṣetrajña mune parāparajña tvāṁ vande śirasā nayānayajña ||

O knower of the Dharma, knower of the proper way, knower of individuals, I constantly pay homage to you, who possess the six super-knowledges; O knower of the field, Muni, knower of the higher or lower dispositions [among beings], I pay homage to you, knower of the proper and improper ways.

presence (be it an image, a relic, or a human agent), or be miraculous in nature. The very choice of the epithet *Ṣaḍabhijña* points to the superior faculties of the character thus designated, which allow him to work wonders. The way the motif of Govindavarman’s arising of faith is inherited and re-worked in the second set of Tummalagudem plates—issued under his great-great-grandson Vikramendravarman II—supports this interpretation. The first member of the donor’s lineage is indeed described in similar terms.²⁶

... ṣaḍabhijñaprātihāryyadarśa(4)nānugrahajanitasugataśāsanābhiprasādasya vibudhabhavanapratisparddhiśobhā(5)sa[m]udayānekamahāvihārapratiṣṭhāpanādhitātānantabrāhmapuṇyasambhārasya mahā(6)rājaśrīgovindavarmmaṇaḥ ...

3. -prātihāryya-] so Mirashi; -prātihārya- Sankaranarayanan.

... the great king Śrī-Govindavarman, whose trust in the Teaching of the Sugata [or: *in the Sugata and the Teaching*] was born from the favour of a miraculous vision of Him who is endowed with the six super-knowledges, whose accumulation of boundless Brahmā-merit has been obtained through the foundation of many *mahāvihāras* that produced a brilliance rivalling with that of the residence of the gods ...

The first compound of this passage, inserting -*prātihārya*- between *ṣaḍabhijña*- and -*darśana*-, makes clear that Govindavarman’s vision was, according to the tradition spread among his successors, of miraculous nature.²⁷ This visionary experience was understood as the turning point in the king’s “conversion” to Buddhism. A close connection between *prātihāryadarśana*—in that context, understood as the vision of a miracle caused by a living Buddha—the emergence of *prasāda*, and the entering onto the Bodhisattva path may be found in the first story of the *Avadānaśataka*.²⁸ There are further echoes between the motifs transmitted by these royal documents and what is narrativised in

26. EIAD 175, ll. 3–6.

27. My interpretation of the compound differs from that of Sankaranarayanan. In his first edition of the inscription (Sankaranarayanan 1974: 15, 18), he mistakenly edited -*prātihāryadeśanā*-, translating the whole compound “who had faith in Sugata’s (Buddha’s) instructions born out of compassion of *Ṣaḍabhijña* (the Buddha) in (delivering) sermons with the miracle of mind-reading.” While he later corrected his edition of -*deśanā*- into -*darśanā*-, he still interpreted the whole passage as pointing to the miracle of mind-reading (cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977: 175, n. 3). For a possible allusion to king *Siṃhavarman* (II)’s vision of the Buddha, in a curious early-12th-century inscription from *Amaravati* revisiting the *Pallava* past, see Hultsch 1890: 27, ll. 38–39. For a recent (if speculative) reading of this inscription, see also Walters 2008.

28. In this narrative, the brahmin *Pūrṇa*, having witnessed how Śākyamuni miraculously passed on the food placed in his begging-bowl to those of his ten thousand *bhikṣus*, is described as follows (*AvŚat* I.3.16–4.1):

tataḥ prātihāryadarśanāt pūrṇaḥ prasādajāto mūlanikṛtta iva drumo hṛṣṭatuṣṭapramudita udagraprītisaumanasyajāto bhagavataḥ pādayor nipatyā praṇidhim kartum ārabdhāḥ |

Then, because of the witnessing of this miracle, *Pūrṇa* conceived *prasāda* and, like a tree cut at the roots, he fell at the feet of the *Bhagavant*, thrilled, pleased, and rejoiced, conceiving an intense joy and gladness, and he started to make an aspiration [to Buddhahood].

avadāna literature: in both passages alluding to Govindavarman’s transformative experience, the seeing of the Buddha and the arising of *prasāda* form a logical sequence with his making of gifts.²⁹ Only gifts made by the faithful produce abundant merit, and the allusion to the generation of *brāhmapuṇya* is most interesting in this context. Indeed, besides the reliquary inscription of the king of Apraca Indravarman (dating *ca.* 5th/6th CE),³⁰ EIAD 175 is to my knowledge the only inscription alluding, in the context of donation, to this kind of merit. The *brāhmapuṇya*, appropriating the achievement of pre-existing meditative practices (*dhyāna* or *brahmavihāra*), entails a rebirth among the Brahmā gods for an entire *kalpa*.³¹ The mention of this kind of merit in EIAD 175 was probably informed by discourses interpreting the foundation of a monastery as generating *brāhmapuṇya*. A *sūtra* preserved in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, for instance, lists four types of activities bringing about (*prā√sū*) Brahmā-merit, the second of which reads as follows:³²

punar aparaṃ yaḥ pudgalo pratiṣṭhitapūrve pṛthivīpradeśe cāturdiśe bhikṣusaṅghe vihāraṃ pratiṣṭhāpayaty ayaṃ dvitīyaḥ pudgalaḥ brāhmaṃ puṇyaṃ prasavati kalpaṃ svargeṣu modate |

punar aparaṃ yaḥ] em. Gnoli; *punar ayaṃ* Ms. pudgalo pratiṣṭhitapūrve] Ms.; pudgalaḥ apratiṣṭhitapūrve Gnoli (silent emendation). cāturdiśe bhikṣusaṅghe] Ms.; cāturdiśasya bhikṣusaṅghasya em. Gnoli.

Moreover, that individual who establishes a *vihāra* for the community of monks of the four directions in a place where there had been no previous foundation, he is the second individual generating Brahmā-merit. He revels a *kalpa* in heaven.

The insistence of the canonical passage on the foundation of the *vihāra* in a place in which no foundation existed before³³ appears to be reflected in the phrasing of the first set of Tummalagudem plates, which—if we accept Sankaranarayanan’s emendation—uses **apūrvakaraṇa* to refer to the same idea. This again suggests a conceptual continuity between the two sets, and underlines that both inscriptions found together in the same village offered a coherent

29. Cf. Rotman 2009: 65–87, developing on what he calls the “seeing-*prasāda*-giving-prediction” typology in the so-called *Divyāvadāna*.

30. Cf. Salomon & Schopen 1984; Baums 2012: 207–208.

31. On this interesting category that would deserve closer scrutiny, see La Vallée Poussin 1924: 250–251, Martini 2011: 157–158, n. 83 and especially Palumbo 2013: 288–295, 300–302.

32. Cf. *SBhV* II.206.19–21/Ms. fol. 499b3–4. Among the sources transmitting a fourfold list of *brāhmapuṇya*, (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin versions of the pericope generally agree in including the establishment of a *vihāra* or *ārāma*, while the Chinese version of the *Ekottarikāgama* instead mentions the repair (Ch. 補治) of a monastery (Ch. 寺). Cf. Palumbo 2013: 301, n. 36; *T.* 125, II, 656b4–5.

33. A similar idea, developing on the first kind of activity producing *brāhmapuṇya*, concerned with the establishment of relics or *stūpas*, is developed in the *Pūjāsevāpramāṇapaṭala* of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, in a passage dealing with the case where neither a *tathāgata* nor a *tathāgata*’s *caitya* is to be encountered (*asammukhībhūta*). He who, in such circumstances, would build *stūpas*, shrines (*gaha*) or chambers (*kūṭa*, probably standing for *gandhakuṭī*) would obtain many Brahmā-merits (*anekabrāhmapuṇyaparigṛhīta*). Cf. *BoBhū* (W) 232.5–11; (D) 159.22–160.6.

portrait of the same ruler. It is therefore clear that Govindavarman left the legacy of a pious Buddhist long after his death, and this was particularly remembered in inscriptions recording donations to the Saṅgha. He is however not portrayed as an exclusivist, and even in EIAD 174 his foundation of temples of gods and his donations to brahmins are also stressed. I propose to understand accordingly Govindavarman’s characterisation, in the first set of Ipur plates of his son Mādhavarman (r. ca. 462–502), as being “blessed by the feet of the Bhagavant Śrīparvatasvāmin” (*bhagavacchrīparvatasvānipādānudhyāta*).³⁴ This god, unknown outside the Viṣṇukuṇḍin corpus, is the tutelary deity of that dynasty.³⁵ The epithet in *-pādānudhyāta* was introduced into the record by Govindavarman’s son, who was himself a devout supporter of brahmins and performer of Śrauta sacrifices. It hints only at the alignment of the king with a familial cult, not at an individual preference. This evidence can therefore not be used, as was done by Sankaranarayanan, to suggest that Govindavarman would have started off as a Buddhist before converting to “Hinduism.”³⁶ Therefore, if any movement at all can be traced in the king’s religious affiliation, it is from his traditional gods to the the Buddha and his Śāsana, but such a “conversion” did not necessarily lead in practice to the relinquishment of one’s *kuladevatā*.³⁷ This interpretation is consistent with the portrait given of Mādhavarman’s son Vikramendrarman I, in the second set of Patagandigudem plates:³⁸

bhagavacchrī(4)parvatasvānipādānuddhyāto [...] (15) nnavi[k]ramasvagu-
ruprasādādhigatatrika(16)liṅgaveṅgīviṣayādhipatyah śrutaprajñāmedhākavitva-
vā(17)gmitvādibhir atīsayaguṇair upeto mahābodhisatvah śrīviṣṇu(18)kuṇḍi-
vākātakakuladvayalālāmbhūtaḥ paramakāruṇika (19) śrīmān vikramendra-
varmmā

paramakāruṇika] understand *paramakāruṇikaś*.

... the illustrious Vikramendrarman, who is blessed by the feet of the Bhagavant Śrīparvatasvāmin, who obtained governorship over the districts of Trikaliṅga and Veṅgī as a favour from his own father [or: *because of his faith in his own teacher*] and [thanks to his] discipline and valour,³⁹ provided with the

34. EIAD 177, l. 1. This inscription is incidentally silent as to the Buddhist leanings of Govindavarman, calling him, *inter alia*, a *paramadhārmika*. On the phrase *pādānudhyāta*, see Ferrier & Törsök 2008.

35. The epithet is commonly used in the corpus and it is unspecific. In the Tummalagudem plates, set II (EIAD 175, l. 2), it is used to qualify the Viṣṇukuṇḍin family as a whole.

36. Besides the quotation cited above (p. 4), see Sankaranarayanan 1977: 36–40. In his discussion, the scholar identifies Śrīparvatasvāmin with the god Mallikārijuna of Śrīśaila. This identification is also accepted by Bakker (1997: 46) but it lacks positive evidence. The name Śrīparvata is shared by several mountains, starting with the hill located in the vicinity of the Ikṣvāku capital Vijayapurī. Cf. EIAD 20, l. 2; 48, ll. 6–7.

37. This is notwithstanding the fact that both *Vinaya* literature and *sūtras* of the Bodhisattvayāna at times prescribed the committed Buddhist—whether a monk/nun or a Bodhisattva—not to venerate the gods of the “allodoxes.” Cf. Tournier 2012: 384.

38. EIAD 180, ll. 3–4, 15–19.

39. The combination of *naya* and *vikrama* is common in the description of kings. In the Tummalagudem plates, set II (EIAD 175, l. 3), *viṣṇuvikramanayasampad-* occurs as an epithet of

superior qualities such as learning, wisdom, intelligence, poetship,⁴⁰ and eloquence, a great Bodhisattva who is an ornament to both families of the illustrious Viṣṇukuṇḍins and Vākātakas,⁴¹ supremely compassionate [or: *devout worshiper of the Compassionate One* (i.e. the Buddha)] ...

Several epithets in this rich characterisation of Vikramendravarman need to be elucidated. Among them, *paramakāruṇika* could, at first sight, be interpreted as simply pointing to the prominent compassion of the royal Bodhisattva. The same term occurs as an epithet of the Buddha in the Pṛthivīśrīmūla corpus,⁴² and it is also well attested in literary sources.⁴³ But besides alluding to the fact that Vikramendravarman shares the key virtue of compassion with the Buddha,⁴⁴ the syntactic position of the epithet suggests another interpretation. Indeed, epithets in *parama-* are commonly used to mark the religious affinities of rulers in inscriptions.⁴⁵ In our corpus, such an epithet is generally located immediately

the whole Viṣṇukuṇḍin family. One can detect here, as elsewhere, the influence of earlier phraseology. Hence, both epithets are combined in the compound *bhaktinayavikramatoṣita-* in the Eraṇ inscription of Samudragupta. Cf. Sircar 1965: 269, st. 4. Both are similarly paired in Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*. Cf. *JM* 144, chap. 22, st. 69.

40. The second set of Tummalagudem plates (EIAD 175), l. 10, issued by Vikramendravarman II, who was his homonym's grandson, similarly calls him a great poet (*mahākavi*). There are again Gupta antecedents to such a characterisation. In his Allahabad *praśasti*, Samudragupta is indeed referred to as having earned the title of "king among poets" (*kavirājan*). Cf. Sircar 1965: 267, l. 27.

41. This epithet alludes to the fact that Vikramendravarman I was the son of a Vākātika princess married to Mādhavavarman. Cf. EIAD 175, ll. 9–10; 182, l. 10. The identity of the Vākātika ruler with whom a matrimonial alliance was struck is not agreed upon, and conclusive evidence is missing. While Sankaranarayanan suggested it was Pravarasena II (r. ca. 422–457), Bakker argues that it was instead the latter's son Narendrasena (r. ca. 457–475). Mirashi, on the other hand, pointed to the most important king of the Vatsagulma branch, Hariṣeṇa (r. ca. 460–478). According to this hypothesis, Hariṣeṇa made this alliance after having conquered Āndhradeśa. While it is unsure that such a conquest ever happened, Vārahadeva's inscription at Ajanta cave XVII suggests Hariṣeṇa claimed a superior status over kings of neighbouring regions, including Āndhra. Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977: 39–40; 1997: 34–35, 45f.; Mirashi 1963: xxxi, 108, ll. 14–15. Whatever might have been the branch with whom the Viṣṇukuṇḍins were allied, it is clear that they took great pride in being associated with such a glorious line of kings. They might also have used this connection to legitimate the Viṣṇukuṇḍin expansion into Vākātika territory.

42. The Kondavidu plates, set II, open with the following stanza (EIAD 188, ll. 1–2):

jayati śāsanam apratimaśriyaḥ
paramakāruṇikasya mahāmuneḥ
niravaśeṣajagaddhitakāriṇi
sthitam ananyasame śamavartmani

Victorious is the Teaching of the Mahāmuni, of incomparable lustre, supremely compassionate, which was established in the unique and unequalled path towards pacification (i.e. *nirvāṇa*), benefitting the entire world.

43. For example, the epithet occurs twice in *stotra*-like verses of the *Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchā*. Cf. *RP* 51.8–9, 53.13–14.

44. A more explicit comparison of the compassionate activity of a king with that of the Buddha may be found in a copper-plate grant of Harṣavardhana, where the king's brother, Rājyavardhana II, is said to be "entirely devoted to the good of others, like the Sugata" (*sugata iva parahitaikarataḥ*). Cf. Agrawal 2003: 224, l. 6.

before the king's name (preceded by *śrīmān* or *mahārāja*).⁴⁶ Therefore, it seems likely that this epithet functions as an indicator of Vikramendravarman's religious orientation, and a variant of the more common *paramasaugata*, an epithet attributed to him by his grandson, in EIAD 175.⁴⁷

A double entendre was likely intended in at least one other compound of this passage, that including *-svaguruprasādādhigata-*. The context of acquisition of the governorship invites us to interpret *guru* as pointing to Mādhavarman, who was the Viṣṇukuṇḍin overlord at the time. However, the use of *prasāda* echoes here the earlier characterisation of Govindavarman. That there appears to be a conscious play on the double referent of *guru* is supported by the central part of the record, informing all future kings of Vikramendravarman's endowment:⁴⁸

viditam astu bhavatā(m) veṅgiviṣaye savāṭakaḥ kḷovela(22)nāmā grāmaḥ
kḷoyūranāmā ca koṇḍūramaṇivelapra(23)tyāsannaḥ °āryyatāmraparṇīyaṁ
mahāvihāravāsinaṁ (24) kṣemācāryyavaṁśapradyotakaram asmākaṁ tathāga-
taśāsa(25)nāvātāraparamagurum asādhāraṇaśrutaprajñāśīla(26)samādhisaṁpan-
nam ācāryyasaṅghadāsam uddiśya tacchiṣyana(27)vakarṁmālamkṛtāya caturd-
digabhyāgatāryyasaṅghaparibhogā(28)ya °asanapure smatpratiṣṭhāpitatrilokā-
śrayarājamahāvi(29)hārāyāsmatparamaguror mmaddhyamasthānīyasya mahā-
rājaśrīmādhavava(30)rmmaṇo nujñayā svavaṁśyapramukhānām sarvvasatvā-
nām anuttarajñānāvā(31)ptaye [...] (32) mayā dattāv

Be it known to you that I have given, in the region of Veṅgī, the village named Kḷovela—together with its fields—and that named Kḷoyūra, in the vicinity of Koṇḍūra and Maṇivela [...] having assigned (*uddiśya*) them to master Saṅghadāsa, my supreme *guru*, who is [like] an incarnation of the Tathāgata's Teaching [or: *who has introduced (me) to the Tathāgata's Teaching*], who is endowed with unparalleled learning, knowledge, virtue, and concentration, who is a noble Tāmraparṇīya, a resident of the *mahāvihāra*, who makes radiant the [spiritual] lineage of master Kṣema. [These gifts, made] with the permission of the great king Śrī-Mādhavarman as a representative (*madhyamasthānīya*) of my supreme *guru*, are for the royal *mahāvihāra* named Trilokāśraya established by me, at Asanapura—which is adorned by new constructions and by [Saṅghadāsa]'s disciples—for the enjoyment of the noble community coming from the four directions; [the merit produced by this gift] is for the attainment

45. On these epithets, see Sircar 1966: 235–37; Schmiedchen 2010–2011; Sanderson 2015: 201.

46. For instance, in the Ramatirtham plates of Vikramendravarman's successor Indrabhaṭṭāarakavarman (EIAD 181, l. 6), the ruling king is introduced as *paramamāheśvaraḥ śrīmān indravarmṁākhyā[khyo] rājā*; in the first set of Kondavidu plates (EIAD 187, ll. 6–7), *paramamāheśvaraḥ* immediately precedes *śrīmān pṛthivīśrīmūlarāja(h)*; in the second set, the same indication of Śaiva leanings is followed by *paramabrahmaṇya* (EIAD 188, l. 11). In EIAD 186 (l. 14), both epithets are followed by *dharmnavijayin*.

47. Cf. EIAD 175, l. 10. In Vikramendravarman II's Chikulla plates, recording a donation to the three-eyed Somagireśvaranātha (i.e. Śiva), the donor is called like his father a *paramamāheśvara* (cf. EIAD 182, l. 18). Interestingly, the Buddhist leanings of his grandfather Vikramendravarman I are not mentioned, while Govindavarman is altogether ignored. This selectiveness, reflecting a hegemonic attempt at reconstructing a lineage that is religiously homogeneous, has parallels in the Maitraka records. Cf. Schmiedchen 2010–2011: 158.

48. EIAD 180, ll. 21–32.

of the supreme knowledge by all beings, priority being given to the members of my own lineage.

We notice in this passage two instances of the epithet *paramaguru*: one is a clear reference to the *ācārya* Saṅghadāsa, the second is more difficult to interpret. Indeed, in that second case, *asmatparamaguror* is governed by the following genitive *madhyamasthānīyasya*, which itself qualifies the ruling king. The word *madhyamasthānīya* is rare—in fact, I did not find any occurrence of the compound in the literature—but it appears to point to Mādhavavarman as the representative, and possibly the conceptual equivalent, of the teacher Saṅghadāsa. This brings to mind the concept of *gurusthānīya* commonly encountered in Buddhist literature, as a generic category pointing to someone having the status of (or substituting) a venerable person, whether that person be a religious figure or a respected family member.⁴⁹ The present paragraph therefore appears to play on the equivalence between father and teacher. The teacher himself stands for the Buddha’s Dharma-embodiment,⁵⁰ provided I am justified in interpreting *tathāgataśāsanāvatāra-* as the appropriation of the non-Buddhist notion of embodiment, to refer to what would be more commonly termed *nirmāṇa*.⁵¹ Alternatively, and perhaps concurrently, *avatāra* marks the “introduction” of the prince into the Dharma,⁵² and can allude to his “conversion,” a motif already

49. The term occurs, for instance, with a specific spiritual referent, in the famous phrase of the *Vajracchedikā* equating the spot of earth where the text is recited to a true shrine: *tasmimś ca prthivipradeśe śāstā viharaty anyatarānyataro va vijñāgurusthānīyaḥ*. Cf. *Vaj* 108; Schopen 1975: 148–149, 174. It commonly occurs with a broad meaning in the neighborhood of especially parents, *ācārya* and *upādhyāya*, in *AvŚat* II.135.5–6, 162.4–5, 163.3–5; *SBhV* I.185.25–27. These four figures are commonly given priority over other beings in the formal assignments of merits of donative inscriptions, see below, n. 63. Finally, the following passage of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* restricts the epithet *paramagurusthānīya* to parents:

na ca bodhisattvaḥ mātāpitaraṃ sarveṇa sarvam arthibhyo ’nuprayacchati. tathā hi bodhisattvasya mātāpitaraṃ paramagurusthānīyam āpāyakaṃ poṣakaṃ samvardhakaṃ. **paramagurusthānīyam**] D; *paramagurusthānīyam* W.

A Bodhisattva does not, under any circumstances, give away his parents to those who ask, in so far as parents, who nurtured, nourished and raised the Bodhisattva, stand as the most venerable people.

Cf. *BoBhū* (W) 118.25–28; (D) 83.12–14, translation after McCombs 2014: 281.

50. On the related perception of the spiritual adviser as the Teacher, that is the Buddha himself, in Mahāyāna literature, see the survey of the notion of *śāstrisaṃjñā* in Skilling 2009a.

51. This would not be the only use, within our corpus, of a term with a non-Buddhist ring to describe embodiment. Among the many epithets borne by the Buddha in the Tummalagudem plates, set I (EIAD 174, ll. 14–15), it is said that his “embodiment (*mūrti*) is well-adorned by the eighteen exclusive attributes of Buddhas [while he is] marked by the thirty-two marks of a great man.” (*aṣṭādaśāveṇikabuddhadharmasamalaṅkṛtamūrter dvātriṃśatmahāpuruṣalakṣaṇavaropala-kṣītasya*). I would argue that the use of *mūrti* similarly represents the appropriation of a primarily non-Buddhist vocabulary. Admittedly, the term occurs in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, within the cycle of the future Buddha’s birth, to describe the latter’s “embodiment adorned with the thirty-two marks of a great man” (*dvātriṃśatā mahāpuruṣaṇaiḥ samalaṅkṛtamūrteḥ*). Cf. *SBhV* I.43.15–17. This *Vinaya* text, however, and particularly the description of the Buddha’s origins and birth, is permeated by references to the brahmanical Epics, so this does not disprove my suggestion.

52. See, for instance, *BoBhū* 140.25–27.

encountered in the description of Govindavarman. The stanza of homage introducing the grant already alludes to the Buddha's lasting presence in his Dharma, and implies the identification between the Buddha and Vikramendravarman I:⁵³

jayati jagaddhitahetor apratihataśāsanasthitis satataṁ
saddharmmacakravarttī munis trilokāśrayaḥ śrīmān. ||

Victorious is the illustrious refuge of the triple world, the Muni, who set(s) in motion the wheel [or: *universal ruler*] of the Saddharma, and who, for the sake of the world, constantly remains in his unimpeded Teaching.

The royal imagery conveyed in this stanza goes beyond the common depictions of the Buddha in kingly garb. The key notions of this stanza are clearly polysemic. The choice, for instance, of *apratihataśāsana-* to refer to the Dharma has distinct echoes in epithets borne by kings in earlier inscriptions.⁵⁴ The genealogy of the notion thus informs its use in EIAD 180. As is well-known, *śāsana tout court* can mean both the Buddha's Teaching, the royal rule and his edict or charter.⁵⁵ Moreover, the choice of the epithet *trilokāśraya*, uncommon in literary texts,⁵⁶ is probably meant to reflect the name of the monastery founded by Vikramendravarman, called Trilokāśrayavihāra. Given the well-attested tradition for temples and *vihāras* to be named after their founder, one is tempted to assume that Trilokāśraya was an epithet taken by Vikramendravarman himself. Indeed, most of the later rulers from the Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty assumed *birudas* in -*āśraya*. For example, in the opening verse of EIAD 175, Vikramendravarman II is

53. Cf. EIAD 180, ll. 1–2 (Āryā metre).

54. The earliest attestation of the epithet that I know of comes from the Hirahadagalli copper-plate (EIAD 140) of the early Pallava ruler Skandavarman (I), who ruled over part of Southern Āndhradeśa in the early 4th century CE. Cf. Bühler 1892a: 2–10. There (p. 6, ll. 10–11), the phrase *apratihatasāsanassa anekahirogakoḍḍigohalasatasahasappadāyino* qualifies king Bappa, and echoes closely the phrase *hiraṇakoṭṭigosatasahasahalasatasahasapadāyisa savathesu °apratihatasamkapasa* found in numerous occurrences, as epithets of Cāntamūla, in the Ikṣvāku corpus. See e.g. EIAD 4, ll. 4–6; 5, ll. 4–6; 6, ll. 3–5. It therefore seems likely that the Viṣṇukuṇḍins borrowed this epithet from the Pallava kings, who themselves had rephrased an earlier *apratihatasamkapa* (Skt. *apratihatasamkalpa*). The Ikṣvākus themselves were probably inspired by the common epithet *apatihatacaka* (Skt. *apatihatacakra*) used by the Sātavāhana kings and, in Orissa, by Khāravela. For references and useful discussion of this early evidence, see Ollett 2016: 45–50. In Buddhist texts of the Middle Period, the use of *apratihataśāsana* is rare, while we encounter it very frequently in *mantras* transmitted in the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa*. See, for instance, *Mmk* 17–20.

55. As made clear in this inscription itself (EIAD 180, st. 5).

56. The stanza as a whole comes close to the homage to the Jina *qua* Trilokeśa found in two 5th-century Kadamba grants:

jayaty arhantṣu trilokeśaḥ sarvabhūtahite rataḥ (var. -hitamkaraḥ)
rāgādyariharo 'nanto 'nantajñānadṛgīśvaraḥ ||

Victorious is the Arhant, lord of the triple world, who delights in the welfare of all beings, destroyer of lust and so on, the boundless one, the lord endowed with boundless knowledge and vision.

Cf. Gai 1996: 71, ll. 1–2; 130, l. 16.

called Uttamāśraya and the son of Satyāśraya; in the first set of Polamuru plates (EIAD 184), Govindavarman II and his son Mādhavarman IV are respectively called Vikramāśraya and Janāśraya.⁵⁷ So far, this pattern had not been observed in the inscriptions of the early rulers of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty. According to Sankaranarayanan, the first king of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty to assume such a title was in fact Indrabhaṭṭāarakavarman-Satyāśraya.⁵⁸ If my interpretation is accepted, it is not only relevant for the formation of royal titles in the Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty. It is also fully coherent with the more general trend, at work in the Patagandigudem inscription, to establish equivalences between the crown, the Buddha, and princely Bodhisattvas.

The self-representation of Vikramendravarman I as a Buddha-to-be is further confirmed by the formula of assignment of the merit produced by his lavish endowment of his eponymous *mahāvihāra*. The rather clumsy insertion of the phrase *svavaṁśyapramukhānām sarvvasatvānām anuttarajñānāvāptaye* between two syntagms, indicating respectively Mādhavarman's permission to endow the monastery and the tax benefits accompanying the gift, betrays its being a pericope. This obviously derives from a formula of assignment of merits so common in short donative records that Lüders called it “the ordinary phrase of post-Kuṣān Buddhist inscriptions.”⁵⁹ To refresh the reader's memory, the formula, prominently studied by Gregory Schopen,⁶⁰ conforms to the following pattern:

(1) Presentation of the pious gift and of the sponsor:⁶¹

deyadharmo 'yaṁ [+ title]⁶² + name.

(2) Formal assignment of the merit produced:

yad atra puṇyaṁ tad bhavatu [+ prioritisation of the beneficiaries of the gift]⁶³ + *sarvāsattvānām* (in later examples, often *sakalasattvarāśer*) +

57. Cf. EIAD 175, l. 1; EIAD 184, ll. 6, 14.

58. Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977: 13, 60, 113.

59. Cf. Lüders 1961: 189.

60. Schopen has repeatedly come back to the issue. See in particular Schopen 1979; 1985; 2000. Two of his students have also revisited the problem and have attempted to update the inventory of inscriptions identified as representative of the Mahāyāna. Cf. Morrissey 2009: 183–219; McCombs 2014: 311–386. The latter's inventory is the most comprehensive so far, although it takes as a basis the corpus of inscriptions edited by Tsukamoto (cf. *IBH*), whose major lacunae—concerning Āndhra—have been discussed in Baums et al. 2016: 357–358. In this digital age, the production of an online database of Mahāyāna-related inscriptions is a desideratum.

61. This simple formula occurs not infrequently in inscriptions without being followed by anything else. Some of these are discussed in McCombs 2014: 328–334.

62. For monastic donors, their title is indicated as *bhikṣu* or, more frequently, *sākyabhikṣu*, *ācārya*, *bhadanta*; lay donors are sometimes called *paramopasāka*, *paramopasikā*, but one also finds other titles like *vihārasvāmin*.

63. Very commonly, this consists in the clause *ācāryopādhyāyamātāpitṛpūrvaṅgamāṁ kṛtvā*, hence alluding to four prominent kinds of venerable persons (*guru*).

anuttarajñānāvāptaye [+ sometimes: 'stu or iti].⁶⁴

This outline allows us to understand how the composer of EIAD 175 consciously extracted the last building block of the second module of this formula. To this he added, as an optional specification of the recipient, an allusion to the whole Viṣṇukuṇḍin lineage. This therefore constitutes further evidence of the pervasive influence of Buddhist ideas—and Buddhist agents—on the chancery practices of this dynasty.⁶⁵ The formula expresses a “universalist” and somewhat missionary aspiration that all beings, starting with the Viṣṇukuṇḍin kings—whatever their religious leanings—may once realise the supreme knowledge (*anuttarajñāna*), that coexists with perfect Awakening.⁶⁶ EIAD 175 also appears to bear the first uncontroversial attestation of the *anuttarajñāna* formula in a donative inscription mentioning a *nikāya*.

This tends to disprove a view forcefully put forward by Schopen, according to whom this formula never coexisted with any named school. While Schopen did not consider the Viṣṇukuṇḍin evidence closely,⁶⁷ the doubtful genuineness of several other instances appeared not to challenge his view substantially. For instance, reviewing the well-known Kura inscription of Toramāṇa Ṣāhi, Schopen has tried to explain away the fact that this inscription, containing the *anuttarajñāna* formula, records a gift to the Mahīśāsaka teachers. Noting that the name of the recipients appears to have been altered,⁶⁸ Schopen has argued that “since the formula *nowhere else occurs in association with a named mainstream monastic order* but always with the Mahāyāna, it is likely that the record originally read not Mahīśāsaka, but Mahāyāna.”⁶⁹ This however reflects a treatment of the *nikāyas* and Mahāyāna as mutually exclusive categories, a distinction that is slightly (*dé*)*passée* and arguably problematic.⁷⁰ It is certainly

64. On the interpretation of the formulae involving the second imperative (*a*)*stu*, see Tournier 2014: 40–42.

65. On this topic in the context of Maitraka inscriptions, see von Hinüber 2013a.

66. For arguments in favour of the equation of *anuttarajñāna* and *samyaksambodhi*, see Tournier 2014: 29–42; McCombs 2014: 319–26.

67. Schopen’s postscript to the reprint of his 1979 seminal article, however, makes it clear that he had become aware of this important evidence from post-Ikṣvāku Āndhra, and considered it important material for the reconceptualisation of the issue he called for. Cf. Schopen 2005: 246.

68. See the note in Bühler 1892b: 240, n. 7.

69. Schopen 2000: 15.

70. Schopen’s view is in part influenced by his understanding of *śākyabhikṣu* as a kind of “code name” for *mahāyānikas*, a view that has been shown to be untenable. Cf. Tsai 1997: 109–111; Cohen 2000; Cousins 2003 (despite the obvious weaknesses of these three contributions); Seyfort Ruegg 2004: 13–14. A balanced review of the problem may be found in McCombs 2014: 326–345. To summarise my view on this issue, I would agree especially with Cohen and McCombs that the title *śākyabhikṣu* is primarily a statement of symbolic kinship. This participates in a rhetoric that already current in the early period of Indian Buddhism, but which is developed and refined during the Middle Period, as part of Buddhist readjustment to the challenges caused by the rise of the brahmanical “orthodoxy,” for which descent, genealogy, and purity played a prominent role. This readjustment is best observed in Buddhist narratives about Śākyamuni’s royal lineage, on which see Tournier *forthcoming* b. Although the followers of the Bodhisattva path did not have the exclusivity on such claims, the epithet might have been particularly favored by them, since

contradicted by an increasing body of evidence from the Pāla period. In his latest publication on the subject, Schopen indeed cites a 9th/10th-century inscription of unknown provenance in Bengal, at present preserved in the private collection of the Poddar family at Kolkata. In this inscription, a Mūlasarvāstivādin and Mahāyānist (*pravaramahāyāyin*) *śākyabhikṣu* also dedicated an image using the *anuttarajñāna* formula.⁷¹ Arlo Griffiths and I have recently identified two 9th-century inscriptions on images connected with Kurkihār (Bihār). In both inscriptions, following the very same pattern as the one of the Poddar collection, the donor is characterised as a “Mahāsāṅghika, resident of the Pūrvaśaila [monastery]” (*mahāsāṅghika-pūrvaśailavāsin*) and interestingly stemming from the region of Veṅgī (*śrīmadveṅgiviṣayavinirgata-*) in Āndhradeśa.⁷² This suggests that part of the evidence considered with skepticism by Schopen needs to be revisited.⁷³ More importantly, this points to the necessity of a more nuanced approach to the coexistence of *nikāya* and so-called Mahāyāna identities in Buddhist inscriptions, as elsewhere. The methodological point has already been repeatedly made, but has, in my opinion, not yet frequently materialised in actual contributions to the soteriological orientations of individuals belonging to given lineages during the Middle Period.⁷⁴

Tāmraparṇīyas from Āndhradeśa and the Pāli *imaginaire*

Although master Saṅghadāsa, who inspired great devotion from Vikramendravarman, is unknown from other historical records, internal evidence helps us clarify his religious identity and lineage. His being a noble Tāmraparṇīya

they liked to define themselves as the true sons of the Buddha. On *jinaputra*, one of the epithets by which they stressed this filiation, see Skilling & Saerji 2012.

71. Schopen 2005: 22, n. 35, referring to Mitra 1998, and observing that this precious evidence will “help sort-out the complex, late interrelationship between the Mahāyāna and the Mūlasarvāstivāda that is embodied, for example, in a historical figure like Guṇaprabha.”

72. This new evidence, and its importance for the history of Śaila lineages will be discussed in detail in Tournier *forthcoming c*.

73. I think in particular of the Kura inscription, whose direct examination from the stone would be necessary. Since the first part of the name *mahīś[āsakānām]* appears not to have been tampered with, it might for instance be conceivable that the record initially read *mahāsāṅghikānām*. For other instances in which the name of a *nikāya* was altered into another one, see Salomon 2009: 117–118. Schopen’s skepticism as to the occurrence, suggested by Cohen (1995: 10–13; 2006: 331), of an Aparāśaila monk within an *anuttarajñāna* formula at Ajanta cave XXII is however fully justified. Cf. Schopen 2000: 17; Morrissey 2009: 69–71; McCombs 2014: 342, n. 86. I will return to this inscription in Tournier *forthcoming a*. Finally, at the moment I remain agnostic with respect to the genuineness of the Mathura inscription, dated from the year 20 of Kaniṣka, edited in Falk 2002–2003: 36–41, given the terminological oddities and the art-historical arguments suggesting that it is a fake. If the whole inscribed Kapardin were proven genuine, this would be by far the earliest attestation of the coexistence of the *anuttarajñāna* formula with a named *nikāya* (here again: Mahāsāṅghika).

74. Cf. Tournier 2014, 2017 (especially chapter 3), and *forthcoming a*, all exploring the symbiotic relationship between given milieux (respectively Theriya, Mahāsāṅghika, and possibly Mūlasarvāstivādin) and the Bodhisattvayāna.

features prominently in the string of epithets that he bears. Tāmraparṇīya and Aparāśaila⁷⁵ are the only two *nikāyas* to be referred to by name in the Viṣṇukuṇḍin and Pṛthivīśrīmūla corpus. The Tāmraparṇīyas themselves, besides the inscription of Vikramendravarman under discussion, appear as the recipients of one of the grants from the reign of Pṛthivīśrīmūla, recovered from an unknown place in the undivided Godavari district (EIAD 186, see Fig. 4). This records the gift by Pṛthivīśrīmūla to his son Harivarman of the village of Kaṭṭuceṛuvul,⁷⁶ while Harivarman presents it to the universal community, for the use of the Tāmraparṇīyas residing at the monastery he had himself founded at Guṇapāśapura. While the order placed at the core of the record is issued by the ruler, his son is closely associated to the grant, which concludes as follows:⁷⁷

[°u]ddiśya tāmraparṇīyān· śāsana(m) harivarmanā
 rājñā kṛtam iha stheyād idam ācandratāraḥ || © ||
 a. tāmraparṇīyān·] em.; *tāmraparṇīyāt·* Is.

May this charter made by the king Harivarman in favor of the Tāmraparṇīyas remain in force here as long as moon and stars will last.

The identity of these Tāmraparṇīyas is elusive and has been much debated.⁷⁸ It might seem redundant or unoriginal to revisit the issue only a few years after the publication of a detailed study by Lance Cousins. However, although the erudition of the late scholar is not in question, I find myself unable to agree with many of his arguments on early Buddhist *nikāyas*, the Tāmraparṇīyas included. My point of method is plainly historical and concerns the hierarchisation and critique of sources. I here place the epigraphic evidence from Āndhradeśa at the core of my analysis, since these documents have the major advantage of stemming from this milieu, and of not projecting onto it doctrines or narratives from the outside. These inscriptions are all the more precious in that they contain a wealth of information, not only about the Tāmraparṇīyas' institutional presence, but also about their self-representation, their scriptural transmission, and even—as we shall see—their Buddhology. I will argue that the better known Nagarjunakonda corpus needs to be considered in the light of the

75. An Aparāśaila *navakarmika* is mentioned in two grants of Pṛthivīśrīmūla, EIAD 188 and 189.

76. It is worth noting that this toponym is identical to the name of the modern village—spelt Kallacheruvu—near which the hamlet of Patagandigudem is located. Cf. Ramachandra Murthy 1999: 114. While it is tempting to identify these two places, the two Tāmraparṇīya monasteries alluded to in both grants are clearly distinct. The modern village of Kallacheruvu is moreover quite distant from the Nagaram island, in the East Godavari district, where the city of Guṇapāśapura is believed to have been located. Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977: 94–95. Compare Ramesan 1962: 243. Finally, the very name of Kaṭṭuceṛuvul might have been fairly common, for another grant by Pṛthivīśrīmūla endows the monastery of Vardhamāni (probably modern Vaddamanu), in the Guntur district, with yet another village whose name is spelt Kalvaceṛuvuḷa. Cf. EIAD 187, l. 8.

77. EIAD 186, ll. 34–35.

78. See, in particular, Bareau 1955: 204; Skilling 1993: 155–169; Cheng 2012; Cousins 2001, 2013.

little-studied Viṣṇukuṇḍin inscriptions. While I do not wish to underestimate the changes that affected this lineage between its appearance in the record in the late 3rd century and the 6th century,⁷⁹ it remains that the small corpus of inscriptions stemming from this group displays a coherent rhetoric that may have been inspired by a similar literary tradition. The scriptural, historiographical, and doxographic sources I will here privilege either circulated in Āndhradeśa, or stemmed from a milieu which we can reasonably consider as either connected to or well informed of the religious landscape of that particular region. For instance, I believe that, in the particular context of Sthāvira/Theriya transmission(s) in Āndhradeśa, there are good arguments to consider Pāli sources. Indeed, we have reasons to think that a literature close both linguistically and conceptually to the tradition centred on the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura circulated in Southeastern India. Thanks largely to the work of Petra Kieffer-Pülz, we now know that a Theriya *Vinaya* tradition in Pāli—distinct from that of the Mahāvihāra—was well established in the region, at least between the 4th and the 10th century.⁸⁰

In what follows, I set aside the early epigraphic occurrence of Middle Indo-Aryan terms corresponding to Tambapaṇṇi(-dīpa) or Tambapaṇṇaka/Tambapaṇṇika that do not imply the presence of—or affiliation to—a Buddhist lineage.⁸¹ Two inscriptions in which the term Tambapaṇṇidīpa occur within the characterisation of a Theriya lineage⁸² were recovered from Nagarjunakonda (EIAD 20 and 61). The latter (Figs. 5–6), engraved on a finely executed *buddhapāda* found at site no. 38, may be dated, on palaeographical grounds, to the second half of the 3rd century CE. It reads as follows:⁸³

79. I am, for instance, in full agreement with Collett Cox’s assessment (2009: 53–55) of the scholarly reconstruction of the shifting contours of early Buddhist *nikāyas*. In particular, Cox warns against the well-spread ahistorical reading of school labels, and the tendency to understand them as pointing to discrete, stable entities, without paying due attention to the conditions of emergence and to the evolving referents of such labels.

80. Kieffer-Pülz has demonstrated the South Indian origins of several works and authors of *Vinaya* commentaries. The earliest of these works was the *Andhakaṭṭakathā*, most probably composed in Āndhradeśa (P. Andhakarattṭha) and whose composition predates the 4th/5th-century CE *Samantapāsādikā*, where it is quoted—and criticized—as much as nineteen times. This early commentary was well-known as an independent work and considered authoritative by authors of later sub-commentaries, such as the 10th-century *Vajirabuddhiṭṭikā*. Kieffer-Pülz has moreover suggested that the *Andhakaṭṭakathā* was composed in Pāli, and represented an exegetical tradition distinct from that of the Mahāvihāra. This tradition was also perceived by later commentators as distinct from that of the Abhayagirivihāra. Cf. Kieffer-Pülz 1993; 2010; 2013b.

81. This is the case in the inscription left by Bodhirakhita in a Bodhgaya railing dating from the early centuries BCE. Cf. Barua 1934: 68 = *IBH*, Bodh-Gayā no. 10: *bodhirakhitasa tabapanakasa dānam*. Given the brevity of this inscription, we do not know whether Bodhirakhita was a monk or a layman, and it is impossible to read in this early label anything else than an indication of provenance.

82. In Amaravati, we find one inscription mentioning a great “Vinaya expert of the Theriyas” (*theriyāna mahavinayadharasa*) in a drum frieze inscription (EIAD 537), cited in Cousins 2001: 143. No further characterisation of the lineage of this master, whose name is missing, is however preserved in this record.

83. The site numbers used here correspond to those featuring on the map published in Soundara Rajan 2006: 6, fig. 2. An improved site map is available on <http://epigraphia.efeo.fr/andhra>.

sidham ◊ °acariyana[m] theriyana[m] vibhajavādāna[m] kasmiraga[m]dhārayavana-
vanavāsata[m]bapa[m]nidipapasādakana[m] (2) mahāvīhāravāsina[m] navamga[m]sathu-
sasana °athavyamjanavinichayavisāradāna[m] °ariyavamsapavenidharana[m] (3) vi-
hāre bhagavato padasa[m]ghādāni patīṭhapita savasatāna[m] hitasukhathanāya ti
1. °acariyana[m] theriyana[m] °ācariyana[m] theriyāna[m] Sircar & Lahiri.⁸⁴ 2. mahāvīhāravāsi-
na[m] mahāvīhāravāsina[m] Sircar & Lahiri. -navamga[m]sathu-] -navamgasathu- Sircar
& Lahiri. Understand *navamga-* °athavyamjanavinichayavisāradāna[m] °athavyajanavinichaya-
visaradana[m] Sircar & Lahiri. 3. padasa[m]ghādāni patīṭhapita] pādasa[m]ghādā nipatīṭhapito
Sircar & Lahiri.⁸⁵

Success! In the *vihāra* of the Theriya teachers, proponents of analytical distinctions, who brought the faith⁸⁶ to Kashmir, Gandhāra, the [country of the] Yavanas, Vanavāsa, and the island of Tambapaṇṇi, residents of the *mahāvīhāra*, who are experts at determining the meaning and letter of the ninefold division of scriptures,⁸⁷ who hold the line of transmission of the lineage of the noble ones, this pair of footprints has been established, for the good and well-being of all beings.

This well-known inscription, written in a form of Middle Indo-Aryan that is particularly close to Pāli, contains a set of descriptive terms that has rightly attracted the attention of scholars. Here, the Theriya lineage in question is not presenting itself as based in Laṅkā, but merely includes Tambapaṇṇidīpa as one of the four regions that it converted. That Laṅkā was considered as the current centre of this lineage *could* be implied by its characterisation as *mahāvīhāravāsin*, provided the term is taken to refer to the Mahāvīhāra of Anurādhapura. The epithet is however ambiguous, since it could also well point to a local monastery in Vijayapurī (i.e. Nagarjunakonda).⁸⁸ This is further complicated by the fact that the only *mahāvīhāra* otherwise attested in the Nagarjunakonda corpus was in the possession of the Aparamahāvinaseliyas.⁸⁹ Also, a chapter colophon inserted

84. One expects here °ācariyāna[m] theriyāna[m], similarly to EIAD 44, l. 8, reading °acariyāna[m] bahusutīyāna[m]. The vocalic lengthening of the genitive plural ending is not consistently marked in this inscription, as also indicated by *-pavenidharana[m]* (l. 2). More generally, this inscription like others in the corpus does not always mark long vowels when we expect them.

85. The expected orthography is here *pādasa[m]ghādāni*, but note that in one of the inscribed *buddhapādas* from Phanigiri (EIAD 109), the orthography is also *padasa[m]ghāda* (read by von Hinüber 2013b: 11, n. 16 as *pādasaghāda*). Note furthermore the syntactic agreement between the substantive, in nominative plural neuter (in function of dual), and the past participle *patīṭhapita*, in an uninflected nominative singular.

86. On similar uses of *prafsad* in the context of conversion of countries, see Skilling 1993: 168, n. 13; Cousins 2001: 141, n. 23.

87. On the ninefold division of scriptures, specific to Pāli textual transmission and that of several Mahāsāṅghika groups, see Tournier 2017: 45, n. 186 and the references quoted therein.

88. Cf. Sircar & Lahiri 1959–1960: 249 for the local interpretation and Cousins 2001: 142–146 for the view that it points to the Great Monastery of Anurādhapura. Both Skilling 1993: 168–169 and Gethin 2012: 38 are cautious and do not commit themselves to either view. On the concept of *mahāvīhāra*, see Durt & Forte 1983.

89. Cf. EIAD 10, 21. In EIAD 20, l. 3, a *mahāvīhāra* is also alluded to, among the places where the *upāsikā* Bodhisirī made a gift. It is unsure whether this *mahāvīhāra* is to be identified with the

within the *Cullavagga* of the Pāli *Vinaya* displays a phraseology very close to that of this inscription.⁹⁰ Since the two formulae follow a closely related model, one may think that both characterisations of the teachers as *mahāvihāravāsins* pointed to the—in these Theriyas’ view—Great Monastery *par excellence*, at Anurādhapura. Cousins goes as far as to state that “all references to the Mahāvihāravāsins in isolation seem to designate the school of the Great Monastery in Anurādhapura and I do not believe that the case can be different here—in a sentence referring specifically to *nikāya* allegiance.”⁹¹ However, when the two Viṣṇukuṇḍin allusions to *mahāvihāravāsins* in the context of donations to Tāmraparṇīyas are taken into consideration, it is clear that the label pointed to local monasteries. Otherwise one should assume that the two occurrences of the term *mahāvihāra* found within a single sentence,⁹² both in the Patagandigudem plates set II (EIAD 180) and in the Godavari plates, set II (EIAD 186), had different referents: one local, one translocal. In both inscriptions, however, the interpretation according to which the *mahāvihāravāsins*—respectively Saṅghadāsa and unnamed monks—were called so because they resided within the “great monastery” founded by the royal sponsor should be preferred.⁹³ While the gap of a couple of centuries existing between the Nagarjunakonda and the Viṣṇukuṇḍin evidence prevents us from forcing this interpretation onto the earlier material, the evidence presented here at least calls for some caution when assuming that the Theriya monks established at Vijayapurī had a strong sense of belonging to the *mahāvihāra* at Anurādhapura. It is not, after all, impossible, that two *mahāvihāras*—one Seliya, one Theriya—coexisted around the major centre of Vijayapurī, since we know that, under Pṛthivīśrīmūla, the Aparasailas and the Tāmraparṇīyas had each a “great monastery” at Guṇapāsapura.

A clearer link with Laṅkā is found in yet another record from Nagarjunakonda (EIAD 20, see Fig. 7a–b). This is a long inscription engraved on floor slabs of an apsidal shrine at site no. 43, called Culadharmagiri by the inscription itself. Its *raison d’être* is to dedicate the foundation of the fully

Aparamahāvinaseliya establishment at Vijayapurī, or with another great monastery, either in the Ikṣvāku capital or elsewhere. Inscriptions dating from the Ikṣvāku period or earlier know of at least two other *mahāvihāras* along the Krishna river, in Dhañṅakaḍa (Skt. Dhānyakaṭaka) and Pithuṇḍa respectively. Cf. EIAD 407, ll. 6–7; EIAD 55, ll. 5, 13.

90. Cf. *Vin* II.72:

ācariyānaṃ vibhajjavādānaṃ tambapaṇṇidīpapasādakānaṃ mahāvihāravāsīnaṃ vācanā
saddhammatṭṭhitiyā ti.

[*vibhajjavādānaṃ*] em., following Horner 1963: 94, n. 7; *vibhajjavādānaṃ* C^o; *vibhajjapadānaṃ* E^o.

Cousins cites this passage as possibly the earliest occurrence of the term *vibhajjavāda* as the name of a school. He notes that, since this passage is not commented upon by Buddhaghosa, it is difficult to date it. Cf. Cousins 2001: 135. We now know of an earlier instance of the Gāndhārī equivalent of the same expression (G. *vivarjavada*), as an antonym of *mahasarvastivada*, in a 1st-century-CE Gāndhārī polemical treatise. On the two designations and their possible referents, see Cox 2009.

91. Cousins 2013: 29. See also *id.* 2001: 141–142.

92. On both these passages, see above, p. 14, and below p. 32.

93. Skilling’s presentation of EIAD 186 inscription as pointing to “Mahāvih[ā]ra of Tāmraparṇ[ī]” (2009: 71) uncritically reproduces a wrong statement made in *Indian Archaeology 1997–1998 – A Review*: 206–207.

equipped *caityagr̥ha*, and its dedication to a lineage of Theriya masters sharing close affinity with the Theriya-Vibhajjavādins featuring in EIAD 61.⁹⁴ Both inscriptions share a similar rhetoric, boasting about the countries converted by the lineage. EIAD 20 expands considerably upon the list of countries found in EIAD 61.⁹⁵ The recipients of the *caityagr̥ha* founded by the *upāsikā* Bodhisirī are described in these terms:⁹⁶

... (°a)[ca]m̄tarājācarīyānaṁ ◊ kasmīragam̄dhāracīnacilāta ◊ tosalī°avaram̄ta ◊ -
 veṁgavanavāsī ◊ ya[vanada](m)i[lapa]luratambapaṁnidīpapas[ā]dakānaṁ ◊ the-
 riyaṁnaṁ ◊ tambapa[m]ṅakānaṁ ◊ supariḡahe ...
 (°a)[ca]m̄tarājācarīyānaṁ] ...ta[rā]jācarīyānaṁ Vogel. kasmīra-] kasmira- Vogel.
 -tosali-] -tosali- Vogel. -veṁgavanavāsī-] -vaṁgavanavāsī- Vogel; em.
 vaṁgavanavāsī-. -ya[vanada](m)i[lapa]lura-] -ya[vana]da[mila]palura- Vogel.

... in the possession of those who are supreme teachers of kings, who brought the faith to Kasmīra-Gandhāra, Cīna-Cilāta; to Tosali and Avaranta; to Vaṁga, Vanavāsī, [the country of the] the Yavanas, the Damilas,⁹⁷ the Paluras and to the island of Tambapaṅṅī; the Theriyas, Tambapaṅṅakas ...

In this long and fascinating epigraph, the recipients of the primary gift it records are characterised not only as Theriyas but as Tambapaṅṅakas. Since the inscription is dated from the 14th regnal year of the second Ikṣvāku ruler Māṭharīputa Siri-Vīrapurisadata (r. ca. 240/50–265/75), this is the earliest datable occurrence of this label to point to a specific branch of the Theriyas. The fact that Tambapaṅṅaka appears shortly after the mention of Tambapaṅṅidīpa, being the last country among those converted by the Theriyas, led Vogel to equate both places and to translate “(monks) of Tambapaṅṅa (Ceylon).”⁹⁸ It seems indeed reasonable to assume that, since the two terms occur in close vicinity, they point to the same place, although there is not enough ground for certainty.⁹⁹ What is

94. Sircar and Lahiri (1959–1960: 249) as well as Skilling (1993: 169) proposed to identify both groups. Sarkar (1960: 69) thinks that both monastery sites 38 and 43 were inhabited by different lineages from Laṅkā. What informs his distinction is however a difference in monastery plan between these two sites. I would not consider this difference in itself to be necessarily representative of a distinction between *nikāyas*, especially since the self-representation of both Theriya lineages present at both sites is so closely related.

95. The materiality of both inscribed objects should be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the respective lengths of their formulas. While EIAD 61 is a small donative record, whose written surface is only 43cm wide, EIAD 20 is a most impressive record written across large floor slabs (today broken into three pieces): the written surface of that record extends over no less than 6m.

96. Cf. EIAD 20, l. 1 and Fig. 8.

97. Despite Schalk’s statement to the contrary, the allusion to Damilas is reasonably secure. The estampage preserves fairly clearly the first and third *akṣaras*, while the second one could only have been *mi* or, less likely, *vi*. The inspection of the stone did not help to settle the issue, since it has incurred further damage since the 1930s. Compare Schalk & Vēluppillai 2002: 314–316.

98. Cf. Vogel 1929–1930: 23.

99. There are two reasons that invite us to be cautious here. First, while the toponym unambiguously points to Laṅkā when augmented by the suffix *-dīpa*, the referent of Tambapaṅṅī/Tāmraparṅī itself is far from stable, and the latter expression commonly points to a region in

important for the present purposes, is that all the early epigraphical attestations of the name of this lineage demonstrate it was strongly established in Āndhradeśa. The two other epigraphic occurrences of the name known to me are indeed both from Āndhradeśa and from the Viṣṇukuṇḍin period. It is therefore possible that the name of the lineage arose from a referent that was exterior to the region in which it was actually current: this foreign land might have been considered as a source of authentic transmission.¹⁰⁰ In any case, it is striking that the Theriya lineages established in Laṅkā did not assume the title Tambapaṇṇiya in the period under consideration. The term indeed never characterises a specific Theriya figure or group in early Pāli sources.¹⁰¹ When it does, in 5th–6th-century sources, those thus qualified tend to have a close connection with South India.¹⁰² In Sanskrit

Southern India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, where a river of that name flows. See, for instance, Barua 1946: 112–115; Sircar 1971: 315–317; Cousins 2013: 21–29. Furthermore, EIAD 20 itself could imply there being a distinction between the Tambapaṇṇakas and monks from Laṅkā. Within an elaborate list of the places, located across the Ikṣvāku realm, in which the lay donor Bodhisirī sponsored pious foundations, one finds the mention of “a temple of the Bodhi-tree at the *vihāra* of the Sinhalese” (*sīhaḷavihāre bodhirukhapāsādo*). Cf. EIAD 20, l. 3. This label might suggest that a distinction was intended between Sīhaḷa and Tambapaṇṇaka.

100. One might perhaps compare here this situation to that of the Haimavatas, whose early stronghold was—judging from extant epigraphic evidence—in Vidiśā. This is far from the Himālayas from which they appear to derive their name. On this evidence, see Willis 2001.

101. Here, I fail to agree with Cousins (2013: 30 and n. 58) who takes the occurrences of *tambapaṇṇiyā* within two stanzas occurring numerous times in the *Parivāra*—on which see n. 123—as “certainly nominative plural,” being “a name for the monks of the island.” While his interpretation is not grammatically impossible, it is syntactically much more likely that *tambapaṇṇiyā*, the final word of both stanzas, agrees with *idha* and *dīpe* respectively. This is also the interpretation of the *ṭīkās*, as admitted by Cousins himself, and it is also supported by the Chinese version of a closely related text, the *Shanjian lü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙, in *T.* 1462, xxiv, 684b25–26. See also Jayawickrama 1962: 55–56. In the *ca.* 4th-century *Dīpavaṃsa*, *tambapaṇṇika* occurs only once, as an epithet that designates inhabitants of Laṅkā to be converted by Mahinda (cf. *Dīp* 63, chap. XII, st. 23).

102. The case of Buddhadatta, who lived around the 5th/6th century, is here particularly clear. The scholar, thought by later chronicles to have been a contemporary of Buddhaghosa, assumes the title Tambapaṇṇiya in the colophon of his *Vinayavinicchaya* and *Uttaravinicchaya*. This title occurs along with the mention of Uragapura, a city generally identified with modern Uraiyur, near Thanjavur. Cf. Sircar 1939: 147–149; Lamotte 1958: 384; Schalk & Vēluppillai 2002: 388. The long *explicit* (*nigamana*) in fairly elegant verses immediately preceding this final statement in the first of these works preserves very rich information about its context of composition. Hence, Buddhadatta is said to have resided on the banks of the river Kāverī at the monastery of Veṇhudāsa in a place called Bhūtamaṅgala. He further states to have completed his work “when he who is the immovable Accutavikkanta, the joy of the Kalamba (or Kalabbha) family, ruled the earth” (*accutavikkante kalambakulanandane* [var. *kalabbha*°] *mahiṃ samanūsānte*). Cf. *Vin-vn* 229, st. 3170–3171, 3179. Finally, in the *nigamana* of his *Abhidhammāvatāra*, Buddhadatta is said to have resided at a monastery of Kāverīpaṭṭana (modern Poompuhar) which had been founded by Kaṇhadāsa. Cf. *Abhidh-av* 138, st. 1409–1412. While the identity of the dynasty (whether Kadamba or Kaḷabhra) and the kings alluded to in these verses has been disputed, it remains that the rich “peritexts” to Buddhadatta’s oeuvre locate him unequivocally in Tamil Nadu, that is, in a region that might have been called Tāmraparṇī. Cf. Sircar 1939: 236–237, n. 2; Norman 1983: 131–132; von Hinüber 1996: 155–156; Schalk & Vēluppillai 2002: 388–390, 409–411. That the *ca.* 13th-century *ṭīkā* on the *Vinayavinicchaya* attempts, under completely different historical circumstances, to interpret this title as pointing to Buddhadatta’s coming to (or fame in)

śāstras and their Chinese and Tibetan translations, a label corresponding to Tāmraparṇīya or Tāmravarṇīya for a school credited with a given doctrinal stance emerges in the 4th century, before spreading in later sources.¹⁰³ In sources composed in India we find no explicit mention of the geographic spread of the Tāmraparṇīyas. It might however be significant that Bhāviveka (*ca.* 490/500–570), the author who mentions them most frequently, has strong association with South India in general and with Āndhradeśa in particular.¹⁰⁴ His familiarity with the scriptures and doctrines of the Tāmraparṇīyas may thus be better explained by his exposure to this lineage in South India, rather than by an awareness of the religious landscape of Laṅkā.¹⁰⁵ All the evidence combined leads us to see in the

Tambapaṇṇī, here possibly understood as Laṅkā, is of little bearing on its original meaning. Cf. *Vin-vn-pt* (CSCD) II.398. We have much less information with respect to Dhammasiri, the *ca.* 5th–6th-century author of the *Khuddasikkhā*. The *explicit* of the latter text simply mentions him as *tambapaṇṇiyaketu*. It is unclear whether this author, who is generally thought to have been from Laṅkā (cf. Kieffer-Pülz 2015: 435), was thus defined as the banner of the Tamapaṇṇīyas, or of Tambapaṇṇī, as the sub-commentary of this text has it. Cf. *Khuddas* 121.26–27; *Khuddas-nt* (CSCD) 479.

103. A thorough survey of these sources is presented in Skilling 1993: 154–169. The earliest occurrence of the word as a school label may be that found in Vasubandhu’s *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*, whose earlier translation was prepared by Pimu-zhixian 毘目智仙 (fl. 516–541). cf. *T.* 1608, xxxi, 780a27, tr. Cheng 2012: 106; *T.* 1609, xxxi, 785a14, tr. Lamotte 1935–1936: 250. Cheng (2012) and Cousins (2013: 32–35) add little to Skilling’s survey, besides convincingly suggesting that the term *Tāmraśāṭīya (Tib. Gos dmar sde), not attested in Indian sources outside the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, derives from the interpretation in Tibet of Tāmravarṇīya as “copper-clothed,” and its likely back-translation into Sanskrit. Cf. *Mvy* § 9020. All known Chinese renderings of the name of the school (銅色, 銅鑠/鑠, 赤銅葉, 多摩羅跋) suppose underlying words corresponding to Skt. Tāmraparṇīya or Tāmravarṇīya. There is further evidence that *-varṇīya* could have been interpreted as robe by translators from Indic languages. In the *Śārdulakarṇāvadāna*, the phrase *abhijit sarveṣāṃ dakṣiṇāpathikānāṃ tāmraparṇīkānāṃ ca* is rendered 牛主南方赤衣 in the *Modejia jing* 摩登伽經 (*T.* 1300), doubtfully attributed to Zhu Lüyan 竺律炎 (var. Zhu Jiangan 竺將炎) and Zhi Qian 支謙. Cf. *Śārd* 35–36.

104. Xuanzang’s lengthy account of the master’s life is found, within the *Xiyuji*, in the chapter on Dhānyakaṭaka, since his body—not unlike that of Mahākāśyapa—was believed to be preserved inside a mountain located to the south of that city until the descent of Maitreya. Cf. *T.* 2087, LI, 930c25–931b3. On this legendary account, see Eckel 1992: 11–21. On more general associations of Bhāviveka with the South see, for instance, Chattopadhyaya 1970: 186; He & van der Kuijp 2014: 305. I know so far of seven mentions of the Tāmraparṇīyas in works attributed to this Mādhyamika master:

(1)–(2) A similar statement on the shared view of Tāmraparṇīyas and Sautrāntikas about the nature of *nirvāṇa* is found in chapter 3 of the **Tarkajvālā* and in the **Prajñāpradīpa*, cf. Iida 1980: 196; *T.* 1566, xxx, 128c10–12 (the latter is misattributed in Cheng 2012: 110). A similar discussion mentioning both schools occurs also in the **Madhyamakaratnapradīpa* (cf. Lindtner 1986: 188–189), whose attribution to Bhāviveka is however highly problematic.

(3)–(5) Chapter 4 of the **Tarkajvālā* mentions them twice, and in a third instance quotes from their scriptures. Cf. Eckel 2008: 115, 120, 171; 311, 314, 353.

(6) A mention of the Tāmraparṇīyas, identified as “outsiders” (Ch. 外道) occurs within a discussion of the doctrine of *anātman*, in the **Prajñāpradīpa*, cf. *T.* 1566, xxx, 118b4–5.

(7) The **Hastaratna* mentions their view according to which space (*ākāśa*) is a conditioned entity (*samskṛta*). Cf. *T.* 1578, xxx, 274b24–25; La Vallée Poussin 1933: 111.

105. Hence, Cheng’s argument to suggest that “the school referred to by Vasubandhu and Bhavya

Tāmrparṇīyas mainly an Indian branch of the Sthāvira/Theriyas, although they possessed strong links with their brethren in Lankā, as what follows will further clarify.

The first epithet assumed by the monastic lineage in EIAD 20 is characteristic of these Theriyas' self-representation. I have reconstructed this epithet as (°a)[ca]m̄tarājācariya, on the basis of the occurrence of the compound in EIAD 69.¹⁰⁶ This inscribed pillar, recovered from site no. 12, stems from the same monastery as EIAD 20. In both records, the compound *acantarājācariya* introduces a series of titles characterizing the lineage of the recipients, who in both instances should be Theriya (Vibhajjavādin) monks.¹⁰⁷ Sircar remained puzzled by the meaning of the compound, and tentatively suggested it pointed to the name of a king or of a place.¹⁰⁸ The context of occurrence of this epithet in

was located in Sri Lanka" (Cheng 2012: 114–115) is weak, and relies exclusively on later sources composed in China.

106. Sircar (1961–1962: 212) already remarked that the two inscriptions share the same expression. In his *editio princeps* of EIAD 20, Vogel (1929–1930: 22, n. 3) suggested a reconstruction *bhadam̄tarājācariyānam̄*.

107. EIAD 69 must have originally been running through several pillars, only the first of which has been recovered. After the dating formula, and before the text breaks off at the bottom of the preserved pillar, we read (EIAD 69, ll. 3–6):

[s](i)ripavate vijayapuriya puvadisābhāge vihāre cu[la]dhammagiriyaṃ °acantarājācariyānam̄ sakasamayaparasamaya[su]-

[s](i)ripavate] [*si*]ripavate Sircar. -*parasamaya[su]*-] -*parasamayasa*- Sircar.

In Siripavata (Śrīparvata), in the monastery on the Culadhamma hill in the eastern part of Vijayapurī, to teachers of kings of neighboring countries, (who distinguish ?) well (between ?) their own standpoint (*samaya*) and the standpoint of others ...

The pair *sakasamaya* (Skt. *svasamaya*) / *parasamaya*, as far as I know rarely occurs outside of Pāli commentarial literature. Interestingly, both qualities feature in a passage of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (also found in the *Vibhaṅgha-aṭṭhakathā* attributed to the same author), discussing the way to explain dependent arising among Vibhajjavādins:

... tassā atthasaṃvaṇṇanam̄ karontena vibhajjavādimaṇḍalam̄ otarivā ācariye anabbhācikkhantena sakasamayaṃ avokkamantena parasamayaṃ anāyūhantena suttaṃ appaṭibhāhantena vinayaṃ anulomentena mahāpadese olokontena dhammaṃ dīpentena atthaṃ saṅgahentena tam ev' atthaṃ punarāvattetvā aparehi pi pariyāyehi niddisantena ca ...

... one who is making a commentary on the [Paṭiccasamuppāda] should make it, [only] after having entered the circle (i.e. the community) of the Vibhajjavādin(s). [He should do so] without misrepresenting the teachers, without departing from his own standpoint, without giving rise to another standpoint, without setting aside the Sutta, while conforming to the Vinaya, paying attention to the [four] great authorities, revealing the letter, grasping the meaning and explaining that meaning in other ways after rephrasing (*āvattetvā*) it.

Text and translation after Cousins 2001: 170–171 (with modifications). Cf. Vism 522.18–24; Vibh-a 130.2–8. Considering that EIAD 69 belongs to the same *vihāra* as EIAD 20, and in the light of the strong claims featuring in EIAD 61, which mentions explicitly the Vibhajjavāda, it is likely that the heavily charged terms *sakasamaya* and *parasamaya* pointed to a similar expression of Theriya self-representation as the one articulated in the *Visuddhimagga*.

108. Cf. Sircar 1961–1962: 212: "The expression *acham̄tarāj-ācariya* would mean 'teachers of (or from) Acham̄tarāja' or better 'teachers of the Acham̄tarāja school or community.' Unfortunately we do not know of any king or locality called Acham̄tarāja or a community of

EIAD 20 allows to clarify its meaning and role within the elaborate title assumed by the Tāmraparṇīyas. Towards the end of the record, Bodhisiri’s foundation is indeed said to have been established for the “supreme well-being and happiness” (*acantahitasukhāya*, standing here for *nirvāṇa*) of the group of relatives associated to the gift, as well as the whole world.¹⁰⁹ It is therefore tempting to understand *a(c)canta-* similarly as a synonym of *parama-* also in the epithet *acantarājācariya* and meaning “supreme teachers of kings.” The later qualification, in EIAD 180, of Saṅghadāsa as Vikramendravarman’s *paramaguru*, aligns very well with this epithet thus understood. There is however an important difference between the two records: while in EIAD 180, the prince stresses himself his privileged relationship with the master who had introduced him to the Buddha’s Teaching, in EIAD 20 the epithet reflects a claim that is not confirmed by any record emanating from Ikṣvāku kings or princes. In other words, only the Viṣṇukuṇḍin inscription could be read as pointing to a symbiotic relationship between princely donor and spiritual adviser (*dānapati / kalyāṇamitra*).¹¹⁰

The use of the epithet in EIAD 20 and 69 may in fact point to a status claimed to have been acquired by the Theriya teachers outside of Āndhradeśa, in which case it might constitute one of the rhetorical devices used to attract the Vīrapurisadata’s attention.¹¹¹ This interpretation is supported by the pairing of the epithet with the long compound that immediately follows in EIAD, namely a long list of countries claimed to have been “converted” by Theriya teachers. These realms form two concentric circles, including not only some of the distant lands in the North and Northwest, but also all the major neighbours of Āndhradeśa.¹¹²

Buddhist teachers characterised by that name.”

109. Cf. EIAD 20, l. 3.

110. On the way this complementarity was conceptualised, primarily in Tibet, see Seyfort Ruegg 1995. In the Indian, pre-tantric context, very little is known—at least, to me—about the kind of ritual duties royal preceptors such as Saṅghadāsa could have played at court, and how this could have encroached on the prerogatives of the *purohita*. For a fascinating exploration of this dynamic, in a Śaiva, tantric, and Kashmirian context, see Sanderson 2004.

111. Further evidence of such as strategy may be found in EIAD 20. This record indeed starts by paying homage to the “Bhagavant, born in the lineage that descended from the hundreds of excellent sages [stemming from] king Ikṣvāku” (*bhagavato °ikhākurājapavararisatapabhava-vamsasambhava*). This homage draws on a trope attested in the first place, in a polemical context, in the *Ambaṭṭhasutta* (*DN* I.92.6–93.16), the motif being extracted and woven into elaborate narratives about Śākyamuni’s royal pedigree in the 3rd to 5th-century literature. EIAD 20 preserves the only occurrence, in the whole corpus of Ikṣvāku inscriptions, making a direct link between the Buddha’s temporal lineage and that of the rulers of Vijayapurī. The implication is that both the Buddha and the Ikṣvākus stem from the very fountain-head of kingship, thereby establishing an affinity between rulers and the Śāsana. I shall return to the issue in Tournier *forthcoming* a. See meanwhile the observations in Salomon & Baums 2007: 216–218; Tournier 2017: 233–239.

112. Besides the two first pairs of toponyms, pointing to the distant Northwest and the Himalayan borderlands, all following names point to more proximate neighbours. Besides the obvious Vaṅga and Damila, Tosalī and Palura are to be located in Orissa, Avaranta (Skt. Aparānta) in coastal Maharashtra, and Vanavāsi in Karnataka. The only exception to division between distant countries (in the first part of the list) and less distant ones (in the second part) is the mention of the Yavanas. It *might* be the case that Yavana points here to the Romans, who had outposts along the coast of Āndhradeśa and left a mark on its material culture. For an earlier discussion of these toponyms

That land has interestingly been left out, in order to keep it at the centre of this circle. The correspondence between the lists contained in the Nagarjunakonda corpus and those transmitted in Pāli historiography and, in particular, in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the *Mahāvāṃsa*, and in the *Bāhiraṇidāna* of the *Samantapāsādikā*, has been noticed several decades ago by Étienne Lamotte.¹¹³ Despite the differences of details between the lists, the fact that they are always framed by the same countries, i.e. Kasmīra-cum-Gandhāra (in the *Dīpavaṃsa*: Gandhāra only) and Tambapaṇṇidīpa/Laṅkādīpa, and that they always allude to Vanavāsi and the country of the Yonas shows a conceptual affinity between these two kinds of sources. In all versions of the Pāli chronicle, the spread of disciples of the Buddha, situated immediately after the third council, is introduced by a reflection of Moggaliputta Tissa. He who is the patron of the Vibhajjavāda is said to foresee that, in the future, the Teaching of the Buddha would flourish especially in the borderlands (*paccantima-janapada*).¹¹⁴ The latter concept therefore appears to constitute a key principle around which lists of countries converted by the Theriya lineage took shape.

In this light, one may speculate that the prominent use of the epithet *acantarājācariya* by the Theriyas of the Culadhammagiri monastery at Vijayapurī might have been influenced by the possible semantic echo between *acanta-* (Skt. *atyanta*)—whose primary meaning in this context must be supreme, but which literally means “beyond the boundaries”—and *pacanta-* (Skt. *pratyanta*)—meaning “bordering.” The latter concept indeed occurs in epigraphical discourses in relation to circles of countries perceived as peripheral to the main centre of power. Hence, (*praty*)*anta* already introduces, in the second rock edict of Aśoka, a list of distant countries (including Tambapaṇṇī).¹¹⁵ The Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta similarly subsumes under the category of *pratyantarṇpatis* the rulers of regions located outside of Āryāvarta.¹¹⁶ The compound *paccantarāja* is also found in Pāli commentaries, where it similarly refers to the rulers of countries other than/and peripheral to Majjhimadesa (Skt. Madhyadeśa), in other words the “borderlands” (*paccantajanapada*).¹¹⁷

and ethnonyms, see Vogel 1929–1930: 7–8.

113. Cf. Lamotte 1958: 320–39. See also Cousins 2001: 160–68, with the useful table p. 162.

114. The *Samantapāsādikā* version of Moggaliputta Tissa’s reflection reads as follows:

kattha nu kho anāgate sāsanaṃ suppatitṭhitam bhaveyyāti. ath’ assa upaparikkhato etad
ahosi: paccantimesu kho janapadesu sāsanaṃ suppatitṭhitam bhavissatīti.

“Where will the Teaching be firmly established in the future?” Then, as he examined [this problem], this occurred to him: “The Teaching will be firmly established in the border countries.”

Cf. *Sp* I.63.21–24 = Jayawickrama 1962: 182.12–15. A similar reflection may be found in the Chinese parallel, in *T*. 1462, xxiv, 684c12–15, tr. Bapat & Hirakawa 1970: 43. See also *Dīp* 53, chap. viii, st. 1; *Mhv* 94, chap. xii, st. 1–2.

115. Cf. Bloch 1950: 93, ll. 16–20, where Girnar reads *praccantesu* against the more simple *a(m)tā* of the other versions.

116. Sircar 1965: 267, l. 22.

117. Cf. *Sv* III.721.4–6; *Pj* II I.74.20–24. Discussions attempting to promote Pāli, understood as Māgadhī—the “natural language” and the language of the noble ones (*ariya*)—distinguish it from the vernaculars, if not the “barbarian” (P. *milakkha*) dialects of several regions. Several of these

These parallels therefore might suggest that a similar idea was at play in the carefully crafted formula EIAD 20.

Whether this allusion to the rulers of border regions was present or not, what is clear is that both the Theriyas who composed the *vaṃsa* narratives transmitted to us, and the Tambapaṇṇakas present at Nagarjunakonda shared a similar view of their centrality in the historical spread of the Dharma.¹¹⁸ The rhetoric developed in both the historiographical and in the epigraphic records possesses formal affinities with and is the spiritual equivalent of a *digvijaya*. Like royal claims to have conquered the limits of the world, the Theriya self-glorification should not be taken at face value.¹¹⁹ Rather than reflecting an actual historical memory of a missionary campaign initiated, under the aegis of Aśoka, by a well-defined lineage,¹²⁰ the convergence of the epigraphic evidence and the Pāli *vaṃsas* testifies to the blooming of a self-glorifying rhetoric in closely related Theriya milieux, from the late 3rd century onwards.

A further element of continuity between the Ikṣvāku and the Viṣṇukunḍin inscriptions mentioning the Theriya(-Tambapaṇṇaka)s or Tāmrapaṇṇiyas may be found in their insistence on lineage. While EIAD 61 defines the inhabitants of

regions are interestingly included in the Nagarjunakonda list. Hence, for instance, the *Sammohavinodanī*, doubtfully attributed by tradition to Buddhaghosa, lists the languages of the Oṭṭas (probably for Oḍḍa ≈ Tosālī and, possibly, Palura), Kirātas (= Cilāta), Yonakas, Damiḷas, as well as the Andhakas (i.e. Telugus), who are interestingly missing in our inscription. Cf. *Vibh-a* 388.4–8. See also Collins 1998: 49 and, on Buddhaghosa’s ideology of language, Skilling 2010: 10–15.

118. Recently, Becker (2016) has attempted to demonstrate the existence of echoes between visual narratives of Āndhradeśa and the late *Mahāvāṃsa*. While the new interpretation she offers of an Amaravati relief from the British Museum raises interesting questions on the shared rhetorics about the establishment of Buddhism in both Āndhra and Laṅkā, her argument remains inconclusive. The article is moreover weakened by its second part (pp. 75–77), where the author suggests an identification of a monk represented on a beautiful *toraṇa* relief from Phanigiri with the ascetic Soṇuttara, featuring in chapter 31 of the same *vaṃsa*. This is plainly wrong. As was apparently pointed out to the scholar at the very conference from which this article stems, this identification relies on an obvious misreading: on the relief, a finely executed peacock stands by the monk as he faces frightening *nāgas* (one of them multi-headed). Whatever be the identification of the relief as a whole, this scene plays on the well-known opposition between the two animals, which lies for instance at the background of the *Mahāmāyūrī* cycle of narratives. Becker refuses to see the peacock and wishes to interpret it instead as a magically elongated arm, which is a distinctive motif in the Soṇuttara narrative. In sum, more work is needed along the lines explored by Becker to determine whether visual narratives could hint, like EIAD 20 and 61, at the circulation of *vaṃsa*-type narratives in Āndhradeśa.

119. Compare the—in my view sane—skepticism of Lamotte (1958: 326–327), when he asserts that “[i]l fallait toute la naïveté d’une pieuse femme pour les [i.e. the Theriya monks of Nagarjunakonda] croire sur parole” with Cousins’ assessment (2001: 164) that “it seems much more likely that the story of the spread of Buddhism by Vibhajjavādin missionaries is correct in substance.”

120. On the quasi-absence of school labels in inscriptions preceding the turn of the Common Era, and what this suggests of the lack of clear-cut *nikāya* boundaries in that period, see Tournier 2017: 15–19; *forthcoming c*.

monastery site 38 as those “who hold the line of transmission of the lineage of the noble ones” (*ariyavaṃsa-pavenidhara*),¹²¹ Vikramendrarvarman’s record presents Saṅghadāsa as someone “who makes radiant the lineage of master Kṣema.” It is significant that this statement again finds a close parallel in historical narratives transmitted within the Mahāvihāra. The *Parivāra* and the *Samantapāsādikā* share a description in verse form of a lineage that, from Upāli onwards, transmitted the *Vinaya*.¹²² From the time of Mahinda and his companions, the precious *traditum* reached the island of Tambapaṇṇī.¹²³ After enumerating seventeen names, from Mahinda to Cūḷanāga, the following stanza reads as follows:¹²⁴

121. My interpretation of this compound differs from that of Sircar & Lahiri 1959–1960: 249, and Cousins 2001: 145. Both see here an allusion to the four “noble traditions” set forth in the eponymous *sutta* of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, the recitation of which played an important ritual role in Laṅkā (cf. Rahula 1956: 268–273). I do not wish to underestimate the importance of the notion of four *ariyavaṃsas* among Theriya circles. However, the fact that the epithet is syntactically valorized by its position as the last qualifier of these masters in my opinion gives it a recapitulative force. Semantically, I hold the term *pavenidhara* to have the same meaning as P. *pavenipālaka*, which occurs in the *Visuddhimagga* within the discussion of the appropriate teacher after the disappearance of the Buddha and his key disciples:

evarūpo hi tantidharo vaṃsānurakkhako pavenipālako ācariyo ācariyamatiko va hoti, na attano matiko hoti.

Such a person indeed holds the tradition, guards the lineage, and protects the line of transmission, he is a master following the opinion of [past] masters, not his own opinion.

Cf. *Vism* 80, § 64. The concluding epithet of EIAD 61 therefore appears to make a broader statement about the tradition held by the line of masters just described. While I am unable to disprove entirely the interpretation of the above-mentioned scholars, the curious reasoning leading Walters to suggest that the *Ariyavaṃsa* was in fact the chronicle of the Abhayagiri monks, with whom he wants to identify—again on thin evidence—the Tambapaṇṇakas of Nagarjunakonda is certainly unacceptable. Cf. Walters 1992: 304, n. 98. On the little we know of the chronicle transmitted by the Abhayagirivihāra, see Cousins 2012: 90.

122. Cf. *Vin* V.2.36–30; *Sp* I.62.3–63.18 = Jayawickrama 1962: 181.3–182.9. The *Parivāra* introduces the account by stating that the rule under discussion—in the first instance, the first Pārājika—has been “transmitted by the succession [of teachers]” (*paramparābhata*). This lineage is cited as many as nine times throughout the text. The Pali Text Society edition has systematically avoided the repetition of these verses, while the Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana (Burmese) edition reproduces the passage in full four times. Cf. *Vin* V (CSCD) 6–7, 12–13, 84, 85, 97–98, 100, 145–146, 147. Buddhaghosa’s commentary introduces a gloss between the first two stanzas, focused on Upāli and his successors, which he terms *acariyaparamparā*, and the group of verses starting with Mahinda, labelled *porāṇa*.

123. The portion of the lineage dealing with Laṅkā is framed by the following two stanzas, of similar construction:

ete nāgā mahāpaññā jambudīpā idhāgatā
vinayaṃ te vācayimṣu piṭakaṃ tambapaṇṇiyā
[...]

ete nāgā mahāpaññā vinayaññū maggakovidā
vinayaṃ dīpe pakāsesuṃ piṭakaṃ tambapaṇṇiyā

These elephants, of great wisdom, came here from Jambudīpa, and these taught the *Vinaya-piṭaka* in Tambapaṇṇī.

[...]

These elephants, of great wisdom, knowers of the Vinaya, experts in the Path, made the *Vinayapiṭaka* shine forth in the island of Tambapaṇṇī.

124. *Vin* V.3.12–13; *Sp* I.63.1–2 = Jayawickrama 1962: 181.23–24. The parallel passage in the

dhammapālitanāmo ca rohaṇe sādhipūjito
tassa sisso mahāpañño khemaṇāmo tipetaḥakī.

b. rohaṇe] *Vin, Sp; rohaṇo* Jayawickrama d. tipetaḥakī] *Vin; tipetako Sp, Jayawickrama.*

And Dhammapālita, well revered in Rohaṇa;
His disciple, of great wisdom, named Khema, holder of the Tipiṭaka.

My analysis of the Ikṣvāku corpus has suggested that the Tāmraparṇīya monks established in Āndhradeśa were familiar with sources depicting the spiritual conquest of the known world in terms similar to those of the known Pāli *vaṃsas*. It is striking that, in the *Samantapāsādikā*, the lineage featuring Khema occurs immediately before the textual module depicting the conversion of the borderlands by the envoys of Moggaliputta Tissa. Although I am aware that Khema is a fairly common name,¹²⁵ I find it very tempting to identify the *tipetakin* of the *paramparā* with the *ācārya* of the Viṣṇukunḍin record. This must remain at this stage a mere suggestion, an invitation at looking for further echoes between epigraphic and literary discourses about lineage across the bay of Bengal, and across language boundaries.¹²⁶

Further affinities between the Tāmraparṇīyas established in Southern India and their brethren in Laṅkā may moreover be inferred from the examination of the technical vocabulary employed in the Godavari plates, set II (EIAD 186). Indeed, even if it is written in Sanskrit as was—from the 5th century and before the rise of Telugu as an epigraphic language around the 7th century—the rule for royal grants, the record of the endowment by Pṛthivīśrīmūla of the *mahāvihāra* founded by his son bears distinct echoes with Pāli *Vinaya* literature. In the formal announcement of the endowment, Pṛthivīśrīmūla describes how he has given the village of Kaṭṭuceṇuvul to his son Harivarman, who had gained great fame in battles, before describing the “deflection” of the gift to the Noble Community.¹²⁷

°anena ca madanumatena hari(21)varmmarājena mahāvihāranivāsinaṃ
navakarmmavyāpārādhikṛtam anumatya (22) guṇapāśapuragiritataṣvaprati-

Shanjian lü piposha is in prose and reads (T. 1462, xxiv, 684c6–7):

專那伽付曇無婆離。曇無婆離付企摩。

Cūlanāga handed down [the *Vinayapīṭaka*] to Dhammapālita; Dhammapālita handed it down to Khema.

The silence of this version about Rohaṇa supports the interpretation of *rohaṇe* as a toponym and not a personal name.

125. On the various homonyms, see Malalasekera 1960, vol. 1: 723–725. On the author of the *Nāmarūpasamāsa/Khemappakaraṇa*, of uncertain date (but likely much later), see Norman 1983: 152.

126. In an earlier issue of this journal, I have noticed a similar echo between the representation of Mahānāman’s lineage at Bodhgaya, as consisting of Samyuktāgāmins descending from Mahākāśyapa, and a tradition recorded in Buddhaghosa’s *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, according to which the great disciple was put in charge of transmitting the *Samyuttanikāya* at the first council. Cf. Tournier 2014: 26.

127. EIAD 186, ll. 20–24.

ṣṭhāpitamahāvihāranivāsyāgatānā(23)gatacāturddiśāryyavarabhikṣusaṅghacatuṣ-
pratyayaparibhogārtha(24)n dattas sarvvaparihāreṇa

And by this Harivarmarāja, with my approval, [this village] has been given, with all [fiscal] exemptions, for the enjoyment of the four requisites by the community of noble and excellent monks of the four quarters, current and future residents of the Mahāvihāra that he has himself established on the slope of the hill of Guṇapāśapura, entrusting it to the resident of the Mahāvihāra who has been appointed to the office of construction.

The long compound describing the dedication of the gift to the universal community (*cāturdiśasaṅgha*) contains two interesting clues about the Vinaya terminology that influenced the composition of this grant. First, the use of *catuspratyaya* to refer to the four requisites is infrequent. In the corpus of Āndhradeśa inscriptions—and, to my knowledge, in the whole epigraphic corpus of South Asia—the expression is only found once elsewhere, in the first set of Kondavidu plates (EIAD 187) also issued by Pṛthivīmūlarāja, in a context where the lineage of the recipients is not mentioned.¹²⁸ Within the pool of Buddhist *Vinaya* texts preserved in Indian languages—hence mostly stemming from the Theriya, (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin and Mahāsāṅghika lines of transmission—only Pāli sources use *paccaya* (alongside the older *parikkhāra*) in this context, while the technical term used by other scriptural traditions is consistently *pariṣkāra*.¹²⁹ In conformity with this pattern, the two inscriptions recording grants from Pṛthivīśrīmūla to Aparāśaila monasteries have *pariṣkāra* instead of *pratyaya*.¹³⁰

Similarly, the *dvandva āgata-anāgata*, distinguishing between those who have arrived and will arrive in the future to reside at a given monastery, is uncommon in Indian inscriptions,¹³¹ and the term occurs almost exclusively in Pāli literature. Occurrences of the compound may thus be found in the Pāli *Vinaya*'s discussion of how residences should be dedicated to the Saṅgha, the *locus classicus* being the gift of the Jetavana by Anāthapiṇḍada.¹³² The adoption

128. Cf. EIAD 187, ll. 12–13: *caturvīdhapratyayaparibhogāya*, in a context that does not mention explicitly the *cāturdiśasaṅgha*, and does not bear the second terminological element (i.e. *āgata-anāgata*) that I consider characteristic.

129. As already remarked by Edgerton (*BHSD*, s.v.), “*pratyaya* in BHS is not used as equivalent of *pariṣkāra* in this sense, as Pali *paccaya* is alleged to be used by both Childers and PTSD.”

130. Cf. EIAD 188, ll. 15–16; EIAD 189, ll. 16–17.

131. I know of one other occurrence in Nasik cave no. 10, dating from the rule of the Ābhīra king Śivadatta. Cf. *IBH*, Nāsik no. 16, l. 9. This inscription does not mention the *nikāya* in control of the Triraśmiparvatavihāra endowed by this gift. The only *nikāya* mentioned, in earlier Sātavāhana inscriptions, is that of the Bhādrāyaṇīyas, in two records recovered by the entrance of cave no. 3 (cf. *IBH*, Nāsik no. 4, 5). This earlier evidence from a different cave does not allow us to determine with any certainty the *nikāya* that benefitted from the Ābhīras' generosity.

132. Cf. *Vin* II.147.13–29 (where the merchant of Rājagṛha asks the Buddha how to dedicate the sixty residences that he has built for the Saṅgha), II.163.35–164.25 (similar enquiry, by Anāthapiṇḍada, for the Jetavana). See also *Vin* I.305.4–14 (division of the property of a deceased monk). The phrase *āgatānāgatassa cātuddisassa saṅghassa* occurring in these three passages is commented upon in *Sp* VI.1215.11–13: *āgatānāgatassa cātuddisassa saṅghassā ti āgatassa ca*

of a terminology that can be mapped onto prescriptive literature in Pāli supports the possibility that the Tāmraparṇīyas were Sthāvira/Theriya monks whose *Vinaya* was at least close to the one of the Mahāvihāra.

The two technical expressions I have commented upon, in EIAD 186, do not occur in the earlier grant by Vikramendravarman, which makes no mention of the four requisites and prefers *abhyāgata* to *āgatānagata*.¹³³ It is, however, remarkable that both expressions occur in a roughly coeval inscription recovered across the bay of Bengal, near Vesālī in Arakan. The relevant portion of this fragmentary copper-plate grant recording a gift by a queen of the Candra dynasty, reads as follows:¹³⁴

... veditam etad astu vo yathā pareṇa ///
svakāritavihāre ratnatrayopayogāya catuspratyayanimittaṃ bhagnasphuṭi///(ta)
kimmājuvdevyā °āgatānāgatajetavanavāsisthaviracāturddiśāryyabhikṣusaṅgha ///
saṃpradāno deṅgūtanāmā ttrisāhasriko grāmo nisṛṣṭo ...

Let it be known to you that ... Kimmājuvdevī endowed the village called Deṅgūta yielding three thousand [pieces of standard currency as revenue] as a gift to ... the community of noble monks of the four quarters, current and future residents of the Jetavana, the Sthaviras, to be used for the Three Jewels in the *vihāra* she had herself commissioned to be built [and, in particular] for the four requisites [and] (for the repair of) broken and shattered [parts] ...

Sircar reckoned that “it is difficult to say whether the original Jētavana [in Śrāvastī] is referred to in our record or it was an establishment in the neighbourhood of Arakan or elsewhere called by that ancient name.”¹³⁵ The

anāgatassa ca [Bp inserts: *catūsu disāsu appaṭihatacārassa*] *cātuddisassa*. This gloss is absent from *T.* 1462. The occurrence of the compound in Pāli sources led Hirakawa 1964 (quoted in Silk 2008: 96, n. 100) to suggest that the expression was exclusive to the Pāli *Vinaya*. Silk observes however that “a similar expression is attributed at least once to the Kāśyapīyas,” namely in the *Fo benxing ji jing* 佛本行集經 (*T.* 190, III, 861b20–21), where the Buddha recommends the bourgeois *Kalanda(ka) (Ch. 迦蘭陀) to “give [his] bamboo grove to the whole great community, whether present or future, of the four directions” (招提若在未來一切大眾). Silk however nuances this finding: he remarks that “there are considerable complications with the expressions in this text.” Whatever be the case, the evidence of *T.* 190 does not weaken the present argument, since the epigraphic attestations of the Kāśyapīyas stem from Northwestern India and they are unlikely to have been established in Āndhradeśa. Provided the *Fo benxing ji jing* is trustworthy, and that the affinity assumed in some doxographic treatises between the Kāśyapīyas and the Vibhajyavādins were to be correct, then the evidence *might* be interpreted as the indication that *āgata-anāgata* was common to the *Vinaya* terminology of several schools of the Vibhajyavāda group.

133. The expression *nānādigabhyāgata-*, closely paralleling *caturdigabhyāgata-* of EIAD 180, repeatedly occurs in inscriptions of the Maitraka corpus. Cf. Bühler 1875: 175, l. 8; 1876: 207, l. 7; 1877: 12, l. 4. The latter reference is also cited in Njammasch 2001: 231.

134. Cf. Sircar 1967: 65, ll. 10–13, cited in Silk 2008: 96, n. 100. Sircar dates the inscription to the early 6th century, but the issue of dating the corpus of Arakan inscriptions has been revisited recently by Griffiths 2015: 319–333. On the donations made to Buddhists under the Candra dynasty, see also Sanderson 2009: 84–86.

135. Sircar 1967: 63. See also Gutman 1976: 104–105.

overall context of the grant, and the analogy of construction with the *dispositio* of EIAD 186, to my mind suggests that this was the name of the very monastery founded by Kimmājuvdevī. I would also suggest that the shared terminology of these two grants is best explained by the common link of their recipients with the Theriya lineage and Pāli *Vinaya* literature.¹³⁶ We indeed know of existing links, although at a later period, between Arakan and Buddhist monks from Laṅkā. The Candra dynasty moreover appears to have had connections to Āndhradeśa.¹³⁷ It is therefore all the more tempting to see in the name Jetavana an allusion to the monastery of that name in Anurādhapura, the main centre of the Jetavanīyas. In the eyes of the 8th-century doxographer Vinītadeva, the Jetavanīyas constituted one of the three main branches of the Sthāviras, themselves one of the four “great schools” (*mahānikāya*).¹³⁸ Since it is used in composition with the epithet Jetavanavāsin, it is even possible that *sthavira* served here as an indicator of the *nikāya* of these monks.¹³⁹

The foregoing discussion has shown that the Tāmraparṇīyas, while mainly established as an identifiable group in South India, had clear familiarity with historiographical narratives and *Vinaya* literature in Pāli. These Sthāviras were part of a broader network operating across the “Buddhist Mediterranean”¹⁴⁰ through which texts, masters, and ideas circulated. The Pṛthivīśrīmūla corpus bears a last piece of evidence in this connection, to which I shall now turn.

136. Note that the term *bhagnasphuṭi(ta)* does not mirror the usual phraseology of Pāli texts, which show *khaṇḍaphulla* in such context. The expression *bhagnasphuṭita-* occurs however in Maitraka grants, cf. von Hinüber 2013a: 368, 372, 374, n. 30.

137. An 8th-(or 9th-)century *praśasti* mentions the gift of Ānandacandra to the *bhikṣus* in the realm of king Śīlamegha, a title which was bore by several kings from Laṅkā. Interestingly, the same Ānandacandra is said to have sprung from the Śaivāndhra lineage, which could point to the rulers of Āndhradeśa. Cf. Johnston 1944: 372, 378–379, 382. Gutman (1976: 50) connects them to the Purāṇic Śailāndhra, stemming from Śrīśailam. However, instead of being the result of a textual corruption, the element Śaiva- might point to the religious leanings of this particular lineage, also called Īśānvaya in st. 42 of the same inscription. As noticed by Griffiths, in the Vesālī copper-plate, all the rulers are characterised as *paramamāheśvara*, which may point to such a lineage. Moreover, in the recently edited inscription from Odein, written in the same script type as the Vesālī inscription, and marking a donation to a Buddhist monastery by king Dharmavijaya, a competing lineage to his own “Bird-lineage” is called the “Rudra-lineage.” Cf. Griffiths 2015: 291, 293, 317–318.

138. See, for convenience, Bareau 1955: 24–25; Skilling 2009b: 66–69. On the scheme of four *mahānikāyas* emerging in sources dating from the 7th century onwards, see Tournier 2017: 262–263 and nn. 28–29.

139. I have previously argued (Tournier 2014: 43, n. 164) that *sthavira* was generally used in donative inscriptions as a way to indicate the venerable status of a monk, and not his school affiliation. In this particular context, however, it seems unlikely that *sthavira* is used as a way to restrict the beneficiary of the gift only to those having been ordained for over ten years. According to Skilling (2009: 66), the name of the school would be distinguished by its *vṛddhi* form in the few available Sanskrit occurrences. However, *Sthavira* occurs without *vṛddhi* in at least one other occurrence where it points to a *nikāya*, namely in the 11th-century inscription from Lopburi, where the loan-word Mahāyāna-Sthavira occurs. Cf. Cœdès 1929: 22–23, no. 19.

140. On this notion see, for instance, Fräsch 1998.

Flooding Māra's army with the water of merits

The opening of the second set of the Godavari copper-plates (EIAD 186), contains a motif that accords particularly well with the Pāli *imaginaire*, and in fact anticipates a Buddhological development that will become pervasive throughout Southeast Asia. The two opening verses of this inscription are composed in Mālinī meter and read as follows:¹⁴¹

jayati munir udagrakhyātacandrāmśujāla-
pracayarucirakīrttiśrīr ajeyasya yasya
jagad idam abhiṣiktan dakṣiṇāmbhobhir uccaiḥ-
kṣubhitasalilanāthasparddhibhir mmārasainyaiḥ || (1)
tadanu jayati bhūmnā mūlarājas samantād
vitatarucirabhāsvallokavikhyātakīrttiḥ
bahusamarajayopāttonnataśrīr ajeyas
svakavaraguṇapāśābaddhaniḥṣeṣalokaḥ || (2)

1c **dakṣiṇāmbhobhir**] so Sankaranarayanan (silent emendation); *dakṣiṇāmbhobhir* Is. 2c **bahusamarajayopāttonnataśrīr**] em.; *bahusamarajayopāttonnataśrīr* Is. Sankaranarayanan. 2d **svakavaraguṇapāśābaddhaniḥṣeṣalokaḥ**] em.; *niṣṣeṣalokaḥ* Is. Sankaranarayanan.

(1) Victorious is the Muni, whose fame and fortune are radiant by the many webs of beams of the lofty and celebrated moon, the water of whose gifts have anointed this world [and] who is invincible for Māra's troops as they vie with the lord of the highly agitated waters!¹⁴²

(2) Victorious is, after him, the Mūlarāja, whose fame is wide-spread, radiant, splendid and renowned on all sides, throughout the earth; who is invincible, having gained the highest fortune by many victories in battle; who has tied to himself the entire world by the noose of his own excellent virtues (*svaka-vara-guṇa*) [or: by the noose of the ropes of his own braids (*sva-kavara-guṇa*); or: to his own excellent (city of) *Guṇapāśa(pura)*!]

This *ad hoc* composition alludes, via a well-crafted *śleṣa*, to the current place of residence of the king, Guṇapāśapura, where the monastery being granted is located.¹⁴³ The second stanza plays on the various components of the king's name: besides *mūlarāja*, the immediately preceding *bhūman* stands for *prthivī*,

141. EIAD 186, ll. 1–6.

142. An alternative interpretation of this stanza would take the compound ending in *-sparddhibhiḥ* as an attribute of *dakṣiṇāmbhobhiḥ*. The second part of the stanza could accordingly be translated: “the water of whose gifts consecrated this world [and] rivalled the ocean as they were stirred up by Māra's army.” While this interpretation is syntactically possible, its meaning is unsatisfactory, and I am at least unaware of any allusion to the ocean being stirred up by Māra's attack. I believe that the context (an evocation of the influential scene of the Māravijaya) incites us to take *mārasainyaiḥ* as being governed by *ajeyasya*. I thus explain the word order by the constraints of the metre and the alliterative effect of the collocation *ajeyasya yasya*, and take these genitives to govern *pādas d* and *c* respectively.

143. After the second stanza, the body of the text indeed starts with *svasti vijayaguṇapāśapurāt*, and so on. The Kondavidu plates, set III (EIAD 189), are also issued from the same place, possibly located in the Godavari delta (see above, n. 76).

while his royal splendour (*śrī*) is praised in the third *pāda*.¹⁴⁴ Each of these components of the king's name, in turn, echoes expressions in stanza 1. There is indeed a clear parallelism between stanzas 1 and 2, with respect both to the themes of invincibility (*ajeya*), fame (*kīrti*) and fortune (*śrī*), through a series of concatenations.¹⁴⁵ This mirroring effect is further reinforced by the structure of the two verses, introduced by the same verb.¹⁴⁶ On some level, this suggests an identification between the Buddha and the ruling king, even if the latter does not present himself, in the body of the inscription, as a “Buddhist,” much less as a Bodhisattva-king. Beyond this apparent mismatch, the mechanism at work here is representative of broader dynamics of royal ideology, intent on defining the liminality of the king between the human and the divine domains.¹⁴⁷

The identification of the “lord of the highly agitated waters” (*kṣubhitasalilanātha*) in stanza 1 is not entirely straightforward and must be postponed to a later point in this discussion. What is already apparent at this stage is the correlation between the flood or tsunami involved in the defeat of Māra's army and the water poured down in the past by Śākyamuni, to ritually prepare his gifts. Water, besides belonging to the gift's ritual framing, serves also as its very metaphor. This is a means to allude to the countless gifts made by the Bodhisattva in former lives. In biographies of the Buddha that are likely to have been composed in South Asia, the past gifts of Śākyamuni are often given an important place when he calls the earth to witness, at the apex of his conflict with Māra.¹⁴⁸ I

144. There is thus no ground to consider, with Ramesan (1962: 242), that Mūlarāja *tout court* is the name of a distinct king, ancestor of Pṛthivīśrīmūla.

145. On the use of concatenation in classical *kāvya*, see recently Salomon 2016.

146. In doing so, the poet follows a pattern—*jayati* + deity / *tadanu jayati* + king—probably deriving from Gupta models. See, for instance, the Junagadh inscription of Skandagupta, which, like our inscription, opens with two Mālinī stanzas. A similar pattern, with a first stanza in Mālinī and a second stanza in Sragdharā, can be observed in the Tumain inscription of the reign of Kumāragupta I. Cf. Sircar 1965: 308, st. 1–2; 297, st. 1–2. A similar construction using Āryā metre may be observed in the Lohaner copper-plate inscription of the Eastern Cālukya king Pulakeśin II. Cf. Khare 1956: 39, st. 1–2. Other inscriptions present the pattern *jayati* + Buddha / *tato jayati* + Saṅgha. See, for instance, Sircar 1965: 373, st. 1–2 (Mallāsarul copper-plate; metre Āryā and Upagīti); Melzer 2006: 267–268, st. 1 (Schøyen copper-scroll; metre Śikharinī). I am grateful to Dániel Balogh for attracting my attention to this pattern and for providing references.

147. For a balanced synthesis on the overwhelming scholarship on the issue, and a discussion on how royal ideology materialised in South Indian history, with a focus on the Pallavas, see Francis 2013: 3–15. For considerations on Buddhist recasting of dharmaśāstric royal theory, taking place for instance in the influential *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, see Scherrer-Schaub 2014: 135–145.

148. Cf. *Ja* I.74.11–30. *T.* 184, III, 471b2–7, translated in Zürcher 1978: 100; *T.* 185, III, 477c7–12; *T.* 186, III, 521b21–26; *T.* 190, III, 791a26–b2; *Lal* (L) 340.13–341.2. Interestingly, in the *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (*T.* 184) attributed to the Han translator Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳, the *Taizi ruiying benqijing* 太子瑞應本起經 (*T.* 185) translated by Zhi Qian 支謙 (194/199–253/258), and the *Puyao jing* 普曜經 (*T.* 186) translated by *Dharmarakṣa in 308 CE, the two groups of verses within which the reference to the Bodhisattva's past gifts are preserved, are identical: *T.* 184, III, 471a15–471b22 = *T.* 185, III, 477b20–c26 = *T.* 186, III, 521b5–c11. For a detailed study of the shared materials existing between these three sources—which I can not fully assess, given my ignorance of Japanese—see Kawano 2007: 18–143, who provides a synoptic edition of the three groups of stanzas under discussion at pp. 126–128. See also Matsuda 1988. On

was unable to locate, in the context of these recapitulations of the Bodhisattva's perfect giving as he stands on the threshold of Awakening, a specific allusion to the water that he had poured. Several (human) lives of the Bodhisattva might however have been implied by the reference. The Bodhisattva's life as Viśvāntara/Vessantara naturally comes to mind, as it is singled out in discussion between the future Buddha and Māra in the *Jātakatṭhakathā*.¹⁴⁹ It is marked by seven hundred great gifts, sealed by the pouring of water, and is commonly represented in the art of Āndhradeśa.¹⁵⁰ His life as the rich *purohita* Velāma also deserves particular attention, since his generosity was proverbial in Nagarjunakonda, and his gifts were constantly compared to streams of water. In the *Jātakatṭhakathā*, he is said to have given away the seven jewels “as if making into one stream the five great rivers” (*pañca mahānadiyo ekoghapuṇṇaṃ katvā viya*), which obviously points to the ocean as the receptacle of all rivers.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Velāma's story generally gives an important role to the water-pouring gesture. As the Bodhisattva is about to dispense lavish gifts to brahmins, the water contained in the golden ewer he holds miraculously freezes. This leads him to realise that no one in the world is fully worthy of his gifts/fees (*dakṣiṇīya*).¹⁵² In the version of the episode told in Buddhaghosa's *Manorathapūraṇī*, Velāma then performs an act of truth according to which “if, by the power of the giver, this gift will be purified, let the water having come out [of its golden ewer] go into the ground.”¹⁵³ The insistence of this passage on the purificatory force of the water-pouring preceding a worthy donor's gift is echoed, in Pṛthivīśrīmūla's inscription, by the allusion to the anointment (*abhiṣeka*) of the entire world by the Bodhisattva.¹⁵⁴ In this particular context, the presentation of the Buddha as

the problems associated with the traditional attribution of *T.* 184 and the hypothesis that the received text represents a revised and expanded version, see Nattier 2008: 104–109.

149. This text naturally reflects the Mahāvihāravāsins' specific insistence on this birth as the antepenultimate life of the Bodhisattva. This chronology was, however, not shared by other Buddhist schools. Cf. Tournier 2017: 237–238.

150. Two inscribed reliefs bearing the label *vesatariya* have been found in Kanaganahalli, cf. Poonacha 2013: 369–370, pl. LXIII, LXIV; Nakanishi & von Hinüber 2014: 89–90. For representations of the Bodhisattva Viśvāntara holding a ewer or a flask of water at sites along the Krishna river, see Rosen Stone 1994, fig. 30, 251, 254.

151. Cf. *Ja* I 228.18–24. For further references, both literary and epigraphic, see Baums et al. 2016: 83–84, n. 75, and the numerous references provided by Lamotte in the work cited in the next note. On the two representations of this *Jātaka* in Kanaganahalli, one of which depicting Velāma holding a ewer, see Poonacha 2013: 368, pl. LXII.

152. The version of the episode known and retold in the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論 (*T.* 1509) focuses on the confirmation that the Bodhisattva stands as the most worthy recipient of gifts in a Buddha-less world. The miracles surrounding the water-pouring ritual gesture are interpreted as a confirmation that Velāma will indeed reach Buddhahood. See Lamotte 1944–1980, vol. 2: 677–688; vol. 5: 2250–2251.

153. *AN-a* IV.183.10–12: ‘*sace dāyakassa vassenāyaṃ dakkhiṇā visujjhissati, udakaṃ nikkhamitvā paṭhavim ganhātu' ti cintesi*. A retelling of this episode is found in the late *Suttasaṅgahatṭhakathā*, the latter text being commented upon by Heim 2004: 98–99.

154. Discussing the ritual use of water, as alluded to in late “Theravāda” sources, Heim notices (2004: 99) that “[w]ater functions not so much for cleansing or washing away of impure qualities but rather as providing ‘sanctification’ by adding pure and good qualities.”

sanctifier of the world and, in a way, the very source of royal power, contributes to the fuller parallelism between him and the ruler in the opening stanzas.

What the Buddha is said to have done in his past lives moreover echoes what the ruler, in his quality of prominent giver (*dānapati*), is meant to be doing here and now. While EIAD 186 says nothing of the ritual framing of the gift of the village of Kaṭṭuceṛuvul, the more detailed and more narrative record of Tummalagudem I (EIAD 174) describes how, “[Govindavarman] presented [to the universal community] the two villages named Embudala and Peṇṇapara, having first given water.”¹⁵⁵ While the pouring of water is a ritual practice also recommended by Dharmaśāstric literature,¹⁵⁶ and mentioned frequently in inscriptions regardless of the religious denomination of the recipients, its early inclusion within Buddhist practice is shown by its common figuration at *stūpa* sites. In a well-known, ca. 1st-century-BCE, representation of Anāthapiṇḍada’s gift of the Jetavana on a Bharhut medallion,¹⁵⁷ the rich merchant is represented holding a golden vessel, and pouring it in front of the “perfumed chamber” (*gandhakuṭī*) standing for the Buddha. This gesture is included in the later narrative of the episode in the prologue (*nidānakathā*) to the *Jātakatṭhakathā*:¹⁵⁸

mahāseṭṭhi suvaṇṇabhimkāraṃ ādāya dasabalassa hatthe udakaṃ pātetvā ‘imaṃ jetavanavihāraṃ āgatānāgatassa cātuddisassa buddhappamukhassa bhikkhusaṅghassa dammī’ ti adāsi.

The great merchant, taking a golden ewer, poured water on the hands of Him who is endowed with the ten powers (i.e. the Buddha), and [saying] “I give this Jetavana monastery to the community of monks headed by the Buddha, of the four quarters, current and future,” he gave [it] away.

In Pāli commentaries, the pouring of water is commonly referred to with the compound *dakkhiṇodaka*,¹⁵⁹ a term which is perfectly mirrored in

155. EIAD 174, ll. 23–24: *dvāv em[b]u[d]alapeṇ[n]aparanāmadheyau grāmau °udakadāna-pūrvvakaniṃ atisṛṣṭau*. Although *udakadāna* has a broad semantic spectrum and can just mean a “gift of water” (cf. *CPD*, s.v.), the particular act referred to here must be identical to that alluded to in EIAD 186. In other epigraphic records, the same idea is commonly expressed by *udakapūrvam*, frequently followed by *atī√srj* in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions. See the references cited above, n. 19.

156. Cf. Kane 1941: 867 and n. 2035; Heim 2004: 89.

157. Cf. Huntington 2012: 48, fig. 11.

158. Cf. *Ja* I.93.13–15 = *Ap-a* 97.33–98.2. The above-mentioned Vinaya account of the same event (n. 132) does not allude to the water-pouring gesture, but only to the formula of donation to the universal community, without stipulating that the Saṅgha is “headed by the Buddha” (*buddhappamukha*). Mention of both the water-pouring and of the recipients of the gift as *buddhappamukha*, but without the characterisation of the Saṅgha as *cātuddisa*, occurs in the same *Vinaya*’s account of the offering of the Veḷuvana by king Bimbisāra. Cf. *Vin* I.39.14–18. See also Bareau 1963: 336–339. On the ritual, legal, and economic implications of the word *buddhappamukha*, see Schopen 1990: 189–191; Silk 2002: 149f.

159. See, for instance, *Sv* I.133.17–23; *Sp* V.1135.13–29; 1143.5–10; VI.1221.28; 1257.2–8; 1284.6–8, and the references cited in *DP*, s.v. For a discussion of procedures involving

dakṣiṇāmbhas used by the poet in EIAD 186. Compounds similarly constructed, with *dakṣiṇā* as first element and a word for water in the second element, do not occur outside of Pāli texts to point to this specific ritual act. In light of the other terminological affinities existing between this inscription and the literature of the Mahāvihāra, it is likely that Skt. *dakṣiṇāmbhas* represents another calque of a corresponding Pāli word.

A further piece of evidence of this comes from the broader Buddhological context in which the expression occurs in EIAD 186. It is striking that the connection made there between the water-pouring ritual and the flood chasing away Māra’s army is not attested anywhere in South Asian Buddhist literature of the first millennium CE. As far as I am aware, the earliest literary source in which the two motifs are paired is the *Paṭhamasambodhi*. This late cycle of texts, centred on the Buddha’s last life, probably took shape in Thailand, and in its oldest recoverable form is posterior to the mid-12th century.¹⁶⁰ Within the description of the Awakening cycle, one finds the following passage:¹⁶¹

tadā vasundharā vanitā bodhisattasambhārānubhāvena attānaṃ saṅghāretuṃ asakkontī pathavitalato uṭṭhahitvā itthisāmañātāya bodhisattassa purato ṭhatvā: tāta mahāpurisa ahaṃ tava sambhāraṃ jānāmi tava dakkhiṇodakena mama kesā allīyanti idāni parivattayissāmi ti vadantī tāvad eva attano kese parivattitvā vissajjesi. tassā kesato yathā gaṅgodakaṃ sotaraṃ pavattati. atha te mārasenā patiṭṭhātuṃ asakkontā palāyimsu.

[*ṭhatvā*] em.; *thatvā* E° *vissajjesi*] Cœdès 1968; *vīssajjesi* E°.

Then the lady Vasundharā, unable to withstand the force of the accumulation (of merits) of the Bodhisatta, emerged from the surface of the earth in the guise of a woman and stood before the Bodhisatta [saying:] “Oh great being, I know your accumulation of (merits)! My hair is overflowed by the water of your gifts (*dakkhiṇodaka*), and I will now wring it out.” Speaking in this way, she wrung her hair and let [the water] free. The flow that came out of her hair was like the

dakkhiṇodaka in Vajirabuddhi’s *Anugaṅṭhipada*, of likely South Indian origins, see Kieffer-Pülz 2013a, vol. 2: 1049–1059. The *Shanjian lü piposha* does not seem to have any expression parallel to *dakkhiṇodaka* in the *Samantapāsādikā*.

160. The *Paṭhamasambodhi* indeed cites Buddharakkhita’s *Jinālanakara*, which was composed in 1156 CE. On the relationship between these two texts, see Balbir 2007. On the presumed Sanskrit sources for the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, see *ead.*: 337, n. 12; Guthrie 2004: 84–85.

161. I here quote from the version of the text edited by Cœdès in *Paṭham* 134.17–135.4. This key passage was already quoted in Cœdès 1916: 118–120; 1968: 224. As noted by Balbir (2007: 342), this passage “is specific to the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, and appears to be deliberately so, as the version of the *Jinālanakāra* is in conformity with the classical depiction with the earth shaking, the terrestrial noise, and the roaring noise in the sky caused by a thunderbolt.” During the transmission of the *Paṭhamasambodhi* itself, this section was enriched on several occasions. Indeed, immediately after this prose paragraph, the version of the text printed by Cœdès quotes verses introduced by *yathāha*, which retell the episode and contain this particular motif. While these verses do not belong to the *Jināl*, this appears to indicate that other sources shared this motif, and might have been quoted for that reason. An early manuscript in Thai *khiin* script of the *Paṭhamasambodhi*—copied in 1479 CE and thus preceding all witnesses collated by Cœdès—does not transmit these verses. Cf. Guthrie 2004: 86–87. Moreover, verses additional to the edited version have been inserted in Ms. H of Cœdès, dated 1786 (cf. *Paṭham* 296, appendix KK).

Ganges River. Then the army of Māra, unable to withstand the flood, was routed.

Although the narrative does not look foreign to the Indian *imaginaire*, its details are at odds with the earlier descriptions as well as depictions of this key event found or transmitted in the subcontinent. First, the motif of the hair-wringing deity, reminiscent of the descent of the Ganges, has not been found in any Indian representation of the Māravijaya. More importantly, the flood chasing away Māra's army is, before the composition of the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, only found in iconographic representations from outside India posterior to the 7th century, on which I shall return below. EIAD 186 therefore provides not only the earliest evidence of this motif, but also the only attestation found so far in South Asia. The fact that the inscription was found, and perhaps composed, in an area corresponding to the present Godavari district, in close proximity to the coast, suggests that the legend had already been adjusted in Southern India so as to incorporate a maritime imagery. In other words, the south-eastern transmission of the story of Māra might have led to a shift of focus, along the bay of Bengal, from earthquake to seaquake. This evolution might have been facilitated by the awareness of the fact that tsunamis could be the direct consequence of earthquakes, and depictions of earthquakes before the Buddha's Awakening as elsewhere, commonly assert that the earth shook "together with the ocean."¹⁶² In one of the versions of the events preserved in the *Mahāvastu*, Māra is moreover said to flee immediately after this awe-inspiring earthquake, and to fall in the Nairāñjanā river.¹⁶³

In other versions of this narrative cycle, preserved in the Sanskrit *Lalitavistara*, the *Fangguang da zhuangyan jing* 方廣大莊嚴經 (T. 187)—being its closest Chinese parallel—and in the *Fo benxing ji jing* 佛本行集經, water is differently involved in the episode directly following the earthquake. A first earth deity (in the Sanskrit text: the great earth goddess called Sthāvarā) emerges as the Buddha calls her to witness, fully adorned with jewels. In the two Chinese texts, the goddess moreover carries an ornate jar filled with flowers (and, according to T. 190, jewels).¹⁶⁴ This episode is followed by an earthquake knocking down Māra and his army, after which a second deity intervenes. In the *Fo benxing ji jing*, the scene is described as follows:¹⁶⁵

162. Besides the passage discussed in the following note see, for instance, *Lal* (L) 92.1–4; (H) 458.1–4, and the reference discussed in Ciurtin 2009: 85. The latter article is more generally informative on earthquakes and their relation to waters. It also discusses the shift from earthquakes to seaquakes in Buddhist narratives—an evolution which the author believed to have happened in Southeast Asia.

163. *Mvu* II.412.18–413.10. Senart has heavily emended the passage, which deserves to be re-edited; the task is however complicated here by the fact that the earliest manuscript—and fountain-head of the manuscript tradition of Nepal—transmits the passage considered in a very altered form. Cf. Yuyama 2001, vol. 1, fol. 239b3–4. Still, the presence of the motif of Māra falling on the river with his army is secure.

164. Cf. *Lal* (L) 319.3–7; T. 187, III, 594c24–26; T. 190, III, 791a21–26.

165. T. 190, III, 791b25–27. The same event is further repeated in a verse section, in 792a1–2. See

爾時彼處別有地神，將於一瓶涼冷之水，灑魔王上，而告之言：『汝魔波旬，速疾急起，走向自宮 ... 』

Then, in that place there was another earth deity which, sprinkled the cold water which was in a jar on king Māra and said to him: “You, Māra Pāpīmant, should quickly arise and come back to your palace!”

In none of these texts is there any link being made between the water poured on the defeated Māra and that associated to the Bodhisattva's gifts. In visual representations of the episode, a deity carrying a vase is frequently represented from the Gupta period onwards (Fig. 9), sometimes associated to a second deity, adopting a more forceful posture.¹⁶⁶ The jar-carrying deity is to be identified with the first deity in the above-mentioned sources, since the pot she carries contains flowers or jewels, instead of water.¹⁶⁷ The bejewelled jar therefore points to Vasudharā as the provider of all goods. Brought by the goddess in an attitude of devotion, it might have been interpreted in some circles as a reminder of the riches relinquished by the Bodhisattva in his past lives.¹⁶⁸ There however does not seem to be a direct connection with the water-pouring rite.¹⁶⁹ Around the 7th or 8th century we see surfacing, first in Arakan, the hair-wringing earth-deity in representations of the Māravijaya. This motif, replacing the jar of earlier and contemporary Indian depictions, is thereafter attested at Bagan and in Cambodia, respectively from the late 11th and the 12th century onwards, before spreading throughout Southeast Asia.¹⁷⁰

also *T.* 187, III, 59c5a5–7; *Lal* (L) 342.5–8. While both Chinese sources agree in qualifying this second deity as an earth deity, the *Lalitavistara* terms it a tree-deity (*vrkṣadevatā*).

166. On these “two witnesses” in India, see especially Leoshko 1988a; 1988b; 2001; Bautze-Picron 1998. Xuanzang, while describing representations of the Māravijaya at Bodhgaya, also relates a version of the story that knows of two earth deities. Cf. *T.* 2087, LI, 907b1–6.

167. Besides the Ajanta example given as Fig. 9, another clear example is provided by a pedestal of a lost Māravijaya from Bodhgaya, dedicated in the late 6th–early 7th century by two monks from Lankā. See Leoshko 1988b: 46 and fig. 8. The inscription has been discussed in Tournier 2014: 23, 38.

168. This is suggested by the following passage of the *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* 過去現在因果經, translated by Guṇabhadra in the first half of the 5th century (*T.* 189, III, 640b13–19):

說此語已，于時大地，六種震動，於是地神，持七寶瓶，滿中蓮花，從地踊出，而語魔言：『菩薩昔以頭目髓腦，以施於人，所出之血，浸潤大地；國城妻子象馬珍寶，而用布施，不可稱計，為求無上正真之道，以是之故，汝今不應惱亂菩薩。』

Once [the Bodhisattva] had said this, at that time the great earth quaked in six ways, and from it, an earth deity, having filled a jar made of the seven jewels with lotus flowers, sprung out of the earth and said to Māra: “The Bodhisattva has formerly given away to others his head, eyes, marrow and brains, the blood that came out [of his self-sacrifice] has permeated the great earth! He donated his kingdom, capital, wife and children, elephants and horses, as well as his jewels, [the number of which] cannot be calculated to seek the way to the supreme, perfect Awakening! Therefore, you should not harass the Bodhisattva!”

169. This is how Gangoly (1943: 3) interpreted the pot held by the earth deity in her hands. On this motif, see also Leoshko 1988b: 42–44, 50.

170. See the detailed discussion in Guthrie 2004: 30–58. I would like to thank the author for

The suspicion that the motif might have had Indian origins has been nurtured since the publication, a century ago, of a post-Angkorian stele by George Cœdès, along with the corresponding passage of the *Paṭhamasambodhi*.¹⁷¹ The fact that the earliest attestation of the hair-wringing earth deity occurs in Arakan probably no more than a century after Pṛthivīśrīmūla, that is to say in a realm that, as we have seen, was connected to Āndhradeśa, is most significant. This leads me to suggest that EIAD 186 might be the precious witness of an emerging motif. This inscription is indeed the first to evidence a connection between the water poured by the Bodhisattva in past lives, and the flood that plays a key role in Māra's defeat. Admittedly, by contrast to the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, the earth-deity does not clearly appear as the instrument of this defeat. As said above, the referent of *kṣubhitasalilanātha* is ambiguous, but the most likely hypothesis is that it points to the ocean or to its personification as the god Sāgara. Hence, the possible intervention of the (or rather: an) earth deity in stirring up the waters was either unknown to the poet who composed these verses, or kept silent. Still, when the stanza is considered in light of the parallelism existing with the following one, it is intriguing that the latter does allude to the braids of the king. Could the latter motif have served to establish a parallel between the means by which Pṛthivīśrīmūla symbolically exerted his rulership and the way by which the army of Māra was defeated? It would be speculative to answer this question affirmatively, and I would rather leave it open until more evidence emerges. We can nevertheless safely contend that EIAD 186 retains a kernel of the mytheme that we see attested shortly afterwards across the Bay of Bengal. This provides us with some evidence to think about early steps in the formation and transmission of a most influential narrative across the Buddhist world.

Conclusion

I hope that what precedes has succeeded in demonstrating the richness of the epigraphical corpus associated to the Viṣṇukuṇḍins and Pṛthivīśrīmūla, and its pertinence for the history of Buddhism in the middle centuries of the first millennium. An attention to the way two members of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty were represented in a public display of their generosity towards the Buddhist monks provides us with one of the rare cases in which the propaganda of the Bodhisattvayāna appears to have been taken on board by Indian rulers. Much has been written, and on the basis of very thin evidence, about the Vākāṭaka Hariṣeṇa's Bodhisattva *ethos* and his active involvement in the patronage of Ajanta. Meanwhile, slightly posterior evidence in the Eastern Deccan has unjustly

sharing with me a copy of her interesting dissertation.

171. Cf. Cœdès 1916: 121; Gangoly 1943: 5. More recently, Guthrie commented (2004: 86):

The existence of hair-wringing earth deity iconography at Angkor, Bagan and Arakan means that older versions of the Māravijaya episode, if not the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, must have also existed in Sanskrit although they will probably never be found. It is safer to argue that the Northern Thai authors were reworking a very old well-known story in the language of their day.

been neglected, despite its relevance for the history of Buddhism. Two Buddhist rulers emerge from our data: in both the cases of Govindavarman—as represented by his successors—and Vikramendravarman I, a personal move towards the Śāsana is presented as the result of an encounter with a charismatic figure, either seen in a vision or as a “substitute” of the Teacher made of flesh. While the donations of the grants often adopt an universalist and apparently oecumenical stand, mentioning for instance that the donations are intended for monks “treading the three vehicles,” or belonging to the eighteen *nikāyas*,¹⁷² the monastic orders that appear to have had the royal ear and which directly benefitted from donations belong to two distinct strands, one associated with the Mahāsāṅghika nebula (the Aparasāilas) and one belonging to the Sthāvira fold (the Tāmraparṇīyas). Focusing here on the latter, I have shown how the epigraphic record of Āndhradeśa contains interesting clues with respect to the Tāmraparṇīya monks’ self-representation, the echoes existing between inscriptions composed under their influence and the phraseology and terminology of Pāli *Vinaya* and historical writings. Finally, the examination of the opening stanza of the Godavari plates, set II (EIAD 186), has led me to trace a version of the Māravijaya cycle that differs substantially from all early biographies of the Buddha. This constitutes evidence of the domestication of narratives about this crucial event among Tāmraparṇīya communities established in maritime Āndhradeśa. Since the re-elaboration of the story of Māra’s defeat had a considerable legacy in later textual and visual discourses, one is tempted to suppose that the little-known lineage studied here played a significant role in its elaboration and diffusion across the Bay of Bengal.

The Tāmraparṇīyas therefore appear, in many respects, as germane to the Theriya lineage of the Mahāvihāravāsins. At the same time, this lineage is characterised by doctrinal singularities. Some of these were picked up by the authors of doxographic treatises, others transpire from the epigraphic record. Thus, the Bodhisattva ideology at work in the Patagandigudem plates of Vikramendravarman displays a close affinity with conceptions promoted by Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*, while the motif of the “tide of merit” chasing away Māra’s army anticipates later developments in the Pāli *imaginaire*. Although we should keep in mind the plurality of agencies and the fluidity of Buddhist identities, I cannot refrain from tying the evidence of the Āndhra Tāmraparṇīyas to the epigraphic record of Bodhgaya, showing a spike in Buddhist patronage from Laṅkā in the late 6th and early 7th century, by monks that Xuanzang was to call Mahāyāna-Sthāviras. This group, besides being dominant during the period of Xuanzang’s writing at Bodhgaya and Laṅkā, was also established *inter alia* in Kaliṅga, in the immediate vicinity of Āndhradeśa.¹⁷³ Far from being a literary

172. The characterisation of the as *triyāṇayāyin* may be found in EIAD 174, l. 19. The addition of *°aṣṭādaśanikāya* in composition with the expression *cāturdiśasaṅgha* may be found in EIAD 189, ll. 15–16. Interestingly, a similar formulation may be found in coeval records of the Maitraka king Guhasena (r. 555–570). Cf. Bühler 1875: 175, l. 8; 1876: 207, l. 7; 1878: 67, l. 21. I am grateful to Annette Schmiedchen for having attracted my attention to two of these occurrences and for sharing with me her forthcoming edition of these grants.

173. T. 2087, LI, 928a2–5, cited in Deeg 2012: 151–152, whose interpretation of the evidence was

creation of the Chinese pilgrim, these eclectic Sthāvira monks were thus well rooted in the religious landscape. Any history of the Theravāda *avant la lettre* should thus pay to these lineages lacking modern spokespersons the attention they deserve.

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Inscriptions of the EIAD corpus referred to in this article

NB: Only the printed editions considered to be the best available so far of given inscriptions feature in the following list. For new editions including complete bibliographical data, please refer to the EIAD database: <http://epigraphia.efeo.fr/andhra>.

- 4 *āyaka* pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 1.
See Vogel 1929–1930: 15–17 (no. C3).
- 5 *āyaka* pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 1.
See Vogel 1929–1930: 19–20 (no. C2).
- 6 *āyaka* pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 1.
Raghunath, K. 2001. *The Ikṣvākus of Vijayapuri (A Study of the Nagarjunakonda Inscriptions)*. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, p. 76.
- 10 *āyaka* pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 1.
See Vogel 1929–1930: 19 (no. B5).
- 20 Floor-slab inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 43.
See Vogel 1929–1930: 22–23 (no. F).
- 21 Pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 1.

already discussed in Tournier 2014: 44, n. 166.

- Vogel, J.Ph. 1931–1932. ‘Additional Prakrit Inscriptions from Nagarjunikonda.’ *Epigraphia Indica* 21: 61–71, p. 66 (no. M3).
- 44 *āyaka* pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 1.
See Vogel 1929–1930: 23–24 (no. G).
- 48 *maṇḍapa* pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 9.
Sircar, D.C. 1963–1964. ‘More Inscriptions from Nagarjunikonda.’ *Epigraphia Indica* 35.1: 1–36, p. 9 (no. 2B).
- 55 Patagandigudem copper-plates (set I) of Ehavala Cāntamūla.
Falk, Harry. 1999–2000. ‘The Pātagaṇḍigūḍem Copper-Plate Grant of the Ikṣvāku King Ehavala Cāntamūla.’ *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6: 275–283.
- 61 *Buddhapāda* inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 38.
See Sircar & Lahiri 1959–1960: 250.
- 69 Pillar inscription, Nagarjunakonda, site no. 43.
See Sircar 1961–1962: 211–212 (no. IV).
- 104 Bilingual pillar inscription, Phanigiri.
See Baums et al. 2016: 69–77.
- 109 *Buddhapāda* inscription, Phanigiri. See von Hinüber 2013b: 11, n. 16.
- 173 Caityanyapuri boulder inscription.
Parabrahma Sastry, P.V. 1984. ‘Hyderabad Prakrit Inscription of Govindaraja Vihara.’ *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* 11: 95–100.
- 174 Tummalagudem copper-plates (set I) of Govindavarman I.
See Sankaranarayanan 1977: 153–156 (no. I); Mirashi 1982: 138–141.
- 175 Tummalagudem copper-plates (set II) of Vikramendravarman II.
See Sankaranarayanan 1977: 172–174 (no. VIII); Mirashi 1982: 135–138.
- 177 Ippur copper-plates (set I) of Mādhavarman II.
See Sankaranarayanan 1977: 159–160 (no. III).
- 180 Patagandigudem copper-plates (set II) of Vikramendravarman I.
See the equally imperfect editions in Hanumantha Rao et al. 1998: 207–210 and Padmanabha Sastri 2004: 176–178.
- 181 Ramatirtham copper-plates of Indrabhaṭṭāarakavarman.
See Sankaranarayanan 1977: 166–168 (no. VI).

- 182 Chikkula copper-plates of Vikramendravarman II.
See Sankaranarayanan 1977: 169–171 (no. VII) .
- 184 Polamuru copper-plates (set I) of Mādhavarman IV.
See Sankaranarayanan 1977: 178–181 (no. X).
- 185 Godavari copper-plates (set I) of Pṛthivīśrīmūla
See Sankaranarayanan 1977: 182–184 (no. XI).
- 186 Godavari copper-plates (set II) of Pṛthivīśrīmūla
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- 187 Kondavidu copper-plates (set I) of Pṛthivīśrīmūla
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- 188 Kondavidu copper-plates (set II) of Pṛthivīśrīmūla.
See Krishna Sastry 1990: 78–80.
- 189 Kondavidu copper-plates (set III) of Pṛthivīśrīmūla.
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- 407 *dharmacakra* pillar inscription, Dharanikota.
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- 537 Drum frieze inscription, Amaravati.
Sarkar, H. 1970–1971. ‘Some Early Inscriptions in the Amaravati Museum.’ *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 4 (1–2): 1–13, p. 9 (no. 63).

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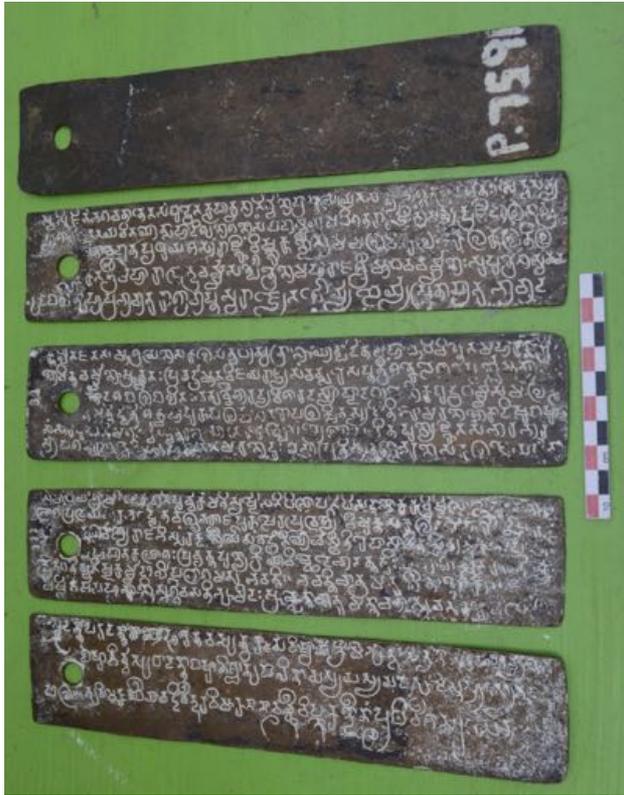


Fig. 1 Tummalagudem copper-plates (set I) of Govindavarman I (EIAD 174). Verso of the five plates.



Fig. 2 Tummalagudem copper-plates (set II) of Vikramendravarman II (EIAD 175). Verso of the four plates.

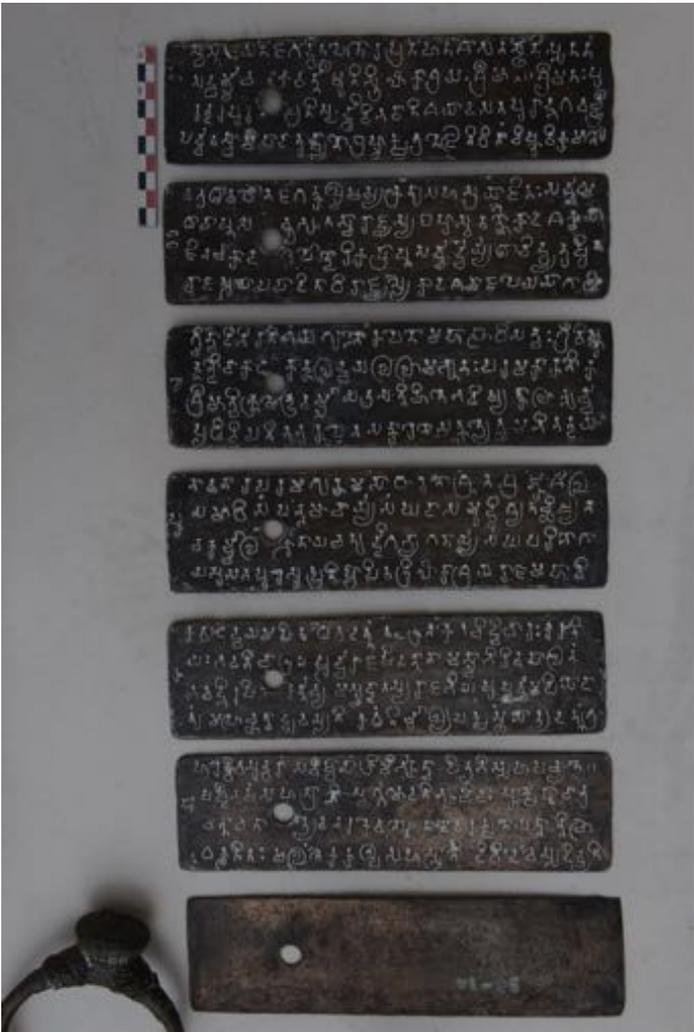


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Fig. 5 General view of an inscribed *buddhapāda* from Nagarjunakonda (EIAD 61).



Fig. 6 Inscribed part of the *buddhapāda*.

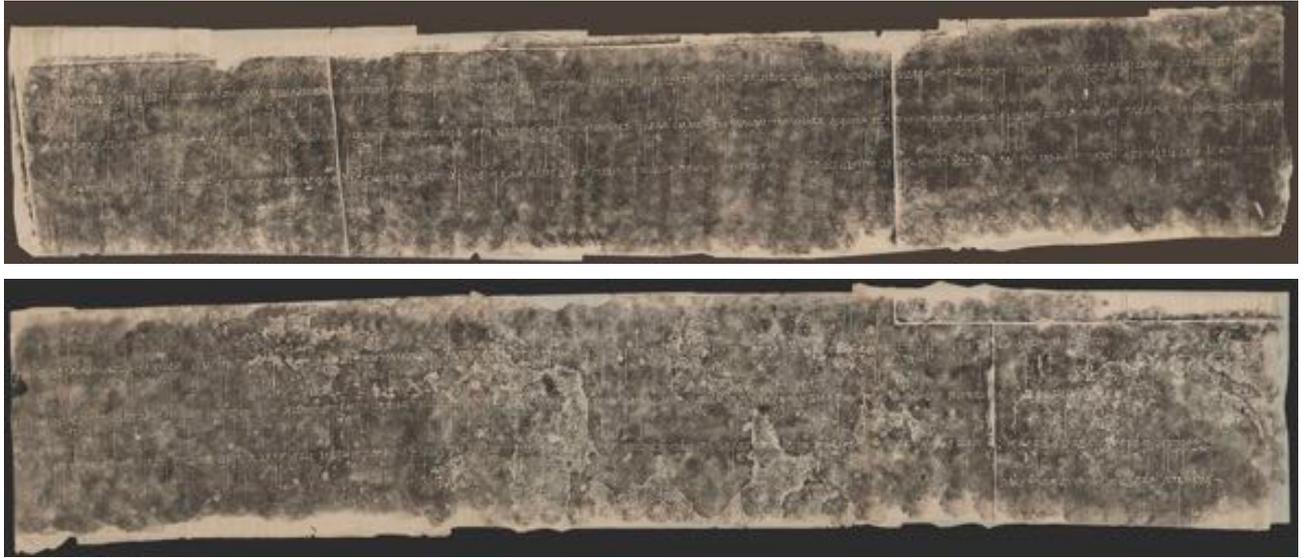


Fig. 7ab Estampage sheets (left and right) of the floor-slab inscription EIAD 20.



Fig. 8 Detail of the right estampage sheet of EIAD 20.



Fig. 9 Vase-bearing earth deity, Māraviyaya, Ajanta cave 26.