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Ph.D.

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(Ancient Indian History)



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ASOKA AND THE DECLINE OF THE MAURYAS

ROMILA THAPAR

## ABSTRACT

The thesis considers in detail the reign and activities of Aśoka Maurya (268-231 B.C.) of the Mauryan dynasty, in the context of the third century B.C. in India. The Introductory chapter deals with the various source materials and the secondary sources (i.e. published works on the period or relating to the period), and concludes with a brief summary of the reigns of the first two kings of this dynasty, Candragupta and Bindusāra, the predecessors of Aśoka.

The second chapter is largely a reconstruction of the chronology of Aśoka's reign. The next chapter is a detailed discussion on Aśoka's policy of Dhamma, using the edicts and inscriptions of the king as expressions of this policy. A further chapter is concerned with relations between the Mauryan court and other neighbouring rulers, particularly the Greek kings to the west of India and the kingdoms of the south, and Ceylon. This chapter also contains the geographical identification of various places of importance during the Mauryan period, and includes a consideration of the importance of various trade routes.

The following chapter deals with the organisation of Mauryan society and the economic and commercial life of the

time. The sixth chapter is an examination of the administrative system of the period with special emphasis on the role of the king in the state machinery. The final chapter is concerned with the later Mauryas, the post-Aśokan kings of the dynasty, under whom the Mauryan empire began to disintegrate. This chapter also contains an analysis of the causes of the decline of the dynasty.

Appendices are included at the end of the work and are mainly detailed considerations of certain aspects of the study, demanding greater attention than was possible in the main body of the thesis.

## PREFACE

In selecting the subject of the reign of Aśoka for my thesis, I was aware that a considerable amount of research has already been carried out on this subject. Nevertheless, for reasons which I have discussed in detail in the introductory chapter, I believe that there is scope for a re-interpretation of existing material, which I have attempted to do in this thesis. The existence of previous work on the subject accounts in part for the length of the thesis, since in explaining my interpretation of the facts, I have had on many occasions to state the previously held views. Nor was it possible in attempting this reinterpretation, to limit the study to only one or two aspects of the reign of Aśoka.

Financial assistance in the form of Scholarships and Studentships from various institutions was primarily responsible for my being able to complete this study. I should like to express my appreciation for this assistance to the International Federation of University Women, (for the Crosby Hall Scholarship), the University of London (for the William Lincoln Shelley Studentship in History) and University College, London (for the Sir William Meyer Studentship).

I have been assisted during the course of my research

by various scholars and friends, both in discussions and in the translation of certain source materials. I should like in particular to thank Dr. Allchin, Prof. Dave, Dr. Goodakumbara, and Mr. Marr. My thanks are also due to the Librarian and Staff of the following libraries, - The School of Oriental and African Studies, The Commonwealth Relations Office, and the British Museum. Finally, I wish to acknowledge my deep gratitude to Prof. A.L.Basham for his guidance and sympathetic help throughout the period of my work on the thesis.

R. THAPAR

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[Acknowledgement Due, R. Mookerjee, "Asoka"]

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Through the cross currents of activity and change in Indian history which characterise the five centuries before Christ, there emerges the strong sharp image of one figure - Aśoka. He appears to many people in many guises, a conqueror who forsook conquest when he realised that it was against his principals, a saint, a combination of a monk and a monarch, a political genius, a king with a rare understanding of human beings, and so the images can be multiplied. Our picture of him is encrusted with legends, accumulating layer after layer through the centuries. Considerable care and sifting reveal the true contour.

It has sometimes been said that Aśoka was amongst those who stood in contra-distinction to his age. This we believe to be a false view. He was, as we shall see, in many ways the mouthpiece of his time. If he did not entirely succeed, it was not due to a lack of understanding on his part but possibly due to his tremendous idealism and over-conscientiousness which swept him a little beyond the frontiers of his age. His ultimate aims covered both the religious and secular aspects of life. He was a political figure and an humanitarian.

In a study of the period of the Mauryas a sudden flood of source material becomes available. Whereas with earlier dynasties and periods of Indian history there is a frantic search to glean evidence from sources often far removed and scattered, with the Mauryan period there is a comparative abundance of information, from sources either contemporary or actually concerned with the period.

This is particularly so with regard to evidence for the reign of Aśoka Maurya, since, apart from the unintentional evidence of sources like religious literature, coins, etc; the edicts of the king himself, inscribed on rocks and pillars throughout the country, are available. These consist of fourteen major rock edicts located at Kālsi, Mānsehrā, Shahbāzgarhi, Girnār, Sopārā, Yerragudi, Dhauli and Jaugada; and a number of minor rock edicts and inscriptions at Bairat, Rūpnāth, Sahasrām, Brahmagiri, Gāvimath, Jatiṅga-Rameśhwar, Māski, Pālkigunḍu, Rajūla Maṇḍagiri, Siddāpura, Yerragudi and Gujra. Seven pillar edicts exist at Allahabad, Delhi-Toprā, Delhi-Meerut, Lauriyā-Ararāj, Lauriyā-Nandangarh and Rāmpūrvā. Various miscellaneous inscriptions have been found at the Barābar Caves ( 3 inscriptions ), Rummidei, Nigli-sāgar, Allahabad, Sanchi, Sārnāth, and Bairat.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of these inscriptions could not be appreciated till it was ascertained whom the title "piyadassi" referred to, since there is no mention of the name of any king except in the Māski edict, which was discovered very much later.

1. Recently a bi-lingual inscription in Greek and Aramaic was found at Kandahar. See Appendix F.

The reference in the Dīpavaṃsa to Aśoka as Piyadassi suggested that they may have been the edicts of that king. (1) In 1915 when the Māski edict was discovered, the title "Piyadassi Asoka" (2) contained in the edict confirmed the connection.

These inscriptions were engraved in noticeable places either near towns, or on important trade and travel routes, or in the proximity of religious centres and places of religious importance. Their purpose was naturally to publish the edicts to as large a group of people as possible. The rock inscriptions of the major edicts usually cover a large rock face in a prominent position. The pillars probably commemorated events of some significance. Unfortunately some have been removed from their place of origin. The Toprā and Meerut pillars were brought to Delhi in the reign of Fīroz Shāh Tughlak. (3) The Allahabad Pillar, it is believed, was originally at Kanśāmbī. (4) The Bairat inscription was removed to Calcutta by Cunningham. (5) This prevents the study of the objects in situ and is to be regretted from the archaeological point of view. The original locations of the inscriptions mentioned cannot now be determined, nor can full justice be done to them in a detailed study. The Queen's edict at Allahabad appears to have been issued by Aśoka on behalf of the Queen.

Hsüan Tsang refers to pillars at Rājagṛha, Śrāvastī,

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- (1) Dip. VI. 1. and see pp. 15, 16 of this chapter.
  - (2) Hultzsch p. 174. CII. I.
  - (3) Elliot-Dowson. History of India III p. 350 ff.
  - (4) CII. I p. xix.
  - (5) Hultzsch p. xxv.

etc ., of which some were of architectural importance and others carried the king's edicts. <sup>(1)</sup> Possibly there were other pillars too which have not yet been discovered. Fa-hsien describes a pillar at Sankisā with a lion capital, and another inscribed pillar in the environs of Pāṭaliputra. Neither of these has yet been discovered <sup>(2)</sup> Judging by the advisory purpose of the edicts it seems more than likely that these edicts were inscribed on stone and on other more perishable materials and were sent to all parts of the Mauryan Empire. Certainly many more copies of the edicts must have existed then than are now to be found. Large centres of population are as fertile for sowing the seeds of ideas as are trade routes and religious centres. Continued excavations on Mauryan sites may in the future reveal many more such inscriptions.

The two northern major rock edicts at Mānsehra and Shāhbāzgarhi are inscribed in Kharoṣṭhī, the others, even those in the southern Deccan, are in Brāhmī. The language used in each case is Aśokan prākṛit with regional variations, broadly speaking distinguishing between eastern and western prākṛit.

Amongst the other inscriptions which are directly concerned with the Mauryan period and which are not necessarily those of Aśoka, may be mentioned the Priyadarśi inscription at Taxila. <sup>(3)</sup> This is an Aramaic inscription embedded in the wall of a house at Sirkap. It was inscribed in honour of a

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(1) Life of Hsuan Tsang by Hwui Li. Bk. III (trans. Beal p. 93)

(2) Giles TF pp. 25, 48.

(3) Marshall. ~~Time~~. I. p. 15.

high official Romēdōte who owed his advancement to Priy.....  
the viceroy or governor. There is no certainty of this being  
a reference to Aśoka although the title given to the viceroy,  
as read by Andreus and Herzfeld, suggests the word Priyadarśi  
the title used by Aśoka.<sup>(1)</sup> In one of the stories of the  
Aśokāvadāna, we are told that Aśoka was viceroy in Taxila during  
his father Bindusāra's reign. This inscription may date from  
that period. Unfortunately its discovery at the Sirkap  
level creates complications as that level is post-Mauryan in  
date. There is however nothing to prevent this plaque having  
been removed from Bhir Mound (the Mauryan level) and embedded  
in the wall at Sirkap by way of a souvenir. Or it may have  
been used accidentally or deliberately for purposes of  
building. There is also a legend connecting Aśoka's son  
Kunāla with the viceroyalty at Taxila, so the inscription may  
possibly have been issued during his period.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Sohaurā copper-plate<sup>(3)</sup> inscription in Gorakhpur  
district and the Mahāsthān inscription<sup>(4)</sup> of Bogra district are  
both composed in Aśokan Prākṛit and inscribed in the Brāhmī  
script of the third century B.C. They are generally regarded  
as Mauryan inscriptions, but of the later Mauryan period.  
The contents of these inscriptions deal with measures to be  
adopted during a famine, making use of the state granary.  
We believe these inscriptions to be early Mauryan, issued in all

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(1) Ep. Ind. XIX, p. 251 ff.

(2) Przyluski. LEA. p. 283.

(3) Sircar. SI. p. 85 and Ep. Ind. XXX, p. 85 ff.

(4) Sircar. SI. p. 82.

likelihood during the reign of Candragupta Maurya. The reference to a famine is corroborated by a Jaina theological history, which mentions the occurrence of a large-scale famine during the reign of Candragupta.<sup>(1)</sup> Further, the symbols on the copper-plate at Sohaurā are the following, two three-storied structures, a tree-in-railing symbol, a lotus bud, and a crescent-on-arches symbol. These tally exactly with the symbols on the punch-marked coins attributed to the Mauryas. It has been suggested that the symbol of the crescent on arches is that of Candragupta Maurya.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Nagarjuni Hill Cave inscriptions of Daśaratha composed in Prākṛit and inscribed in Brāhmī, are evidence of this king, who succeeded Kunāla.<sup>(3)</sup> He refers to himself in the inscriptions as Devānampiya which further confirms his connection with the Mauryas. The inscriptions are records of dedications to the Ājīvika sect.

The Junagarh Rock inscription of Rudradāman I dated circa A.D. 150 refers to the construction of a dam on the Sudarśana lake at Girnar by Puṣyagupta, the governor of Candragupta, and to the upkeep and restoration of the dam by Tuṣaspa, the viceroy of Aśoka.<sup>(4)</sup>

The next body of evidence to be used is religious and of this, Buddhist literature is of chief importance. From among Indian Buddhist sources the Jātakas are useful not because

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(1) *Parīśiṣṭaparvan*. VIII p. 444. (Jacobi. 2nd. Ed.)

(2) See App. C

(3) *Sircar*. SI. p. 79.

(4) " " " p. 169.

they pertain directly to the Mauryan period, but because they reveal a general picture of the social and economic conditions of the Buddhist period, conditions which continued as broad trends into the Mauryan period. Buddhist scriptures such as the Dīgha Nikāya are of interest in determining the influence of Buddhist ideas on the rulers during the period under consideration. This is a more complicated process than it appears to be, for it has constantly to be kept in mind that the dating of such sources is still uncertain. There are some writers such as Kosambi who are of the opinion that the general picture revealed by the Jātakas is post-Mauryan. (1) Some were no doubt edited and revised through the years, with the result that early and late ideas became interchanged. For example on the question of the concept of the cakravartin as a political idea, it is a debatable point whether the account of it in the Cakkavattisimhanādasutta is pre-Aśokan, and therefore can it be said to have inspired him to imperial power, or whether conversely his political strength inspired the Buddhist thinkers to the idea of the cakravartin. (2)

The Ceylon Chronicles form an important source of material for this period, allowing for the possibility of errors for the same reason as the above. They describe at great length in their early chapters the role of Aśoka in the spread of Buddhism to Ceylon. Here an added caution is necessary since these chronicles were written by Ceylonese Buddhist monks who depicted Aśoka from the orthodox Buddhist

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(1) I.S.I.H. p. 110.

(2) Dīgha Nikāya. III p. 58 ff. P.T.S.

standpoint. The Dīpavaṃsa compiled between the third century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. has been described as an early attempt at epic poetry. <sup>(1)</sup> The Mahāvaṃsa written in the fifth century A.D. is a more polished work; its authorship is ascribed to a monk called Mahānāma who is <sup>(2)</sup> believed to have lived during the reign of king Dhātusena. A much later work, the Vamsatthapakāsaṇī, composed in about the tenth century A.D., contains many legends regarding the Mauryas which have been neglected by or have disappeared from other literature. Here again we must use the work guardedly since it is much later than the period under study and the legends and traditions have consequently undergone considerable change. Its justification in being regarded as source material is that, being a work dealing with a foreign tradition, it may have preserved some of the early stories without the political or social need to tamper too much with them.

The Aśokāvadāna and similar texts are a collection of legends built around the figure of Aśoka, compiled and preserved outside India in Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist sources. Because they were collected by Buddhist monks and were used among other things to illustrate the impact of Buddhism on Aśoka, it is necessary to treat them with extreme caution. A sifting of historical evidence from legend is essential.

A further source in this particular class of literature

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(1) Geiger. The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa p. 26 ff.

(2) " Mah. Introduction. p. xi.

is the History of Tibet written by the Lama Tārānātha, in about the late sixteenth century. It contains a garbled version of some historical traditions associated with Mauryas.

As regards secular literature the most important single source is the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭalya. It has been argued that the Arthaśāstra is a work of the third century A.D. and as such cannot be described as source material for the Mauryan period.<sup>(1)</sup> But we believe that originally it was a Mauryan document. The author was the prime minister or advisor to Candragupta Maurya. The central core of the treatise and certainly many of the earlier books were written during or about the time of Candragupta, though the book was edited and re-written during the ensuing centuries. We have discussed<sup>(2)</sup> our views on this subject at greater length in an Appendix.

It is<sup>now</sup>/not so easy to sift the original from later material but the similarities between terms used in the Arthaśāstra and in the Aśokan edicts would certainly suggest that the Mauryan rulers were acquainted with the book. Its importance lies in the fact that it gives a clear, methodical analysis of economic and political thought current at that time, and more than that its application to existing conditions. In the administrative measures of Aśoka we can see a close similarity between the two.

Lists of the Mauryan rulers are given in the Purāṇas, but there is some discrepancy regarding the sequence of rulers.

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(1) Jolly, Kauṭīliyam Arthaśāstram. Panjab SK Series. IV. Introduction.

(2) See App. B.

The Mātsya, Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas have fairly closely agreeing versions of these lists. The Bhaviṣya Purāṇa however is said to be the original, but the present version of the Bhaviṣya does not contain these lists or else it has been much tampered with. <sup>(1)</sup> Though most of the text is in a prophetic form there are portions where some dynasties are described as ancient. Obviously the texts have been worked over considerably.

Of the remaining literary sources there are the accounts gathered from classical writings in Greek and Latin of the impressions of travellers who visited India round about this period. Foremost amongst these is the account of Megasthenes, the friend of Seleucus Nikator who visited the court of Candragupta and remained at the capital Pāṭaliputra for some time. Unfortunately the original document has not survived and we have only quotations from it in various classical texts. Megasthenes has been quoted by later Greek writers such as Arrian, Strabo and Diodorus, and Pliny used Megasthenes' account in his Latin work. This naturally detracts from the reliability of the account as found in the quotations, since some elements of the personal prejudices of the writers quoting from the original must no doubt have crept in. These accounts have been collected and translated by McCrindle, whose version is generally looked on as standard by Indian historians.

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(1) Pargiter. DKA. pp. vii-x.

While considering literary sources some comment must be made on the way in which they are to be handled. It must be kept in mind that many contemporary sources have either been destroyed in the course of time or have yet to be found. There are large gaps which can only be filled either by careful scholarship or new discoveries. The literary style of some sources can create problems. For example the Arthaśāstra is composed in an aphoristic style. The minimum number of words are used, which naturally complicates the interpretation of the sentences.

Another problem common to all historians dealing with documents of an age well into the past, is that of translating technical terminology. The meaning of words varies according to the context, and the connotation of words changes from age to age and from society to society. By way of an example there is no precise translation in English for the word Dharma, and furthermore the actual connotation of the word has changed considerably since the third century B.C.

The problem of the authenticity of a document is equally important. The philologist may in this case come to the historian's aid. Apart from this the only means that can be employed to obtain absolute certainty is cross-evidence from other sources. We may here cite the example of Megasthenes' description of the city of Pāṭaliputra in which he states that it is surrounded by a wooden palisade. Archaeological excavations at Patna have revealed the existence of this

palisade. Where cross-evidence is not available, it is left to the historian to attempt by a critical study to sift the data which seems probably true from that which appears false.

More specifically the purpose of the document must be kept in mind. If it was written to propagate a particular view it must be treated with caution. Buddhist sources in order to show Aśoka's adherence to Buddhism tend to depict him as completely in the hands of the Samgha. His own edicts suggest otherwise.

With regard to the Greek sources it must be remembered that the authors were foreign to India, and therefore looked on the country and its customs with alien eyes. The undercurrent of awe and bewilderment that occasionally creeps into their writings cannot be taken too seriously. Owing to the foreignness of the material they were handling it is possible that they may at times have confused the practical and theoretical aspects of a question. A case in point is Megasthenes' description of the seven castes in India, which we shall discuss at greater length further on.

To turn from literary evidence to the material remains of the Mauryan period, we must review at first the numismatic evidence. This consists of silver and copper punch-marked coins and silver bar coins, which appear to have been in circulation throughout the Mauryan period until the coming of the Bactrian Greeks. The area of circulation was largely north-west India, the Ganges basin and the northern fringes

of the Deccan plateau. <sup>(1)</sup> That these coins are the earliest surviving coinage in India and that the symbols were official marks can now be stated with a fair degree of certainty. <sup>(2)</sup>

Over the last fifteen years there have been many excavations in north-west India and the Ganges basin, in addition to earlier ones at Taxila. In most cases excavations were carried to a pre-Mauryan level. Pottery types which can be used, among other things to determine cultural levels have revealed the interesting phenomenon of the northern black polished ware, which is widespread throughout the Mauryan empire with the exception of the southernmost areas. <sup>(2)</sup>

Connected with archaeological evidence is related material termed by some historians as "art remains". These are the pillar heads and animal capitals of the pillars on which the edicts were inscribed. These consist of single lion capitals at Rāmpūrva, Laurya-Nandangarh and the uninscribed pillar at Basarh; the single bull on another pillar at Rāmpūrva also uninscribed; the four lions at Sarnath and Sanchi; and the single elephant which is thought to have been the capital of the pillar at Sankisā. The two elephant figures, one carved on a rock at Dhauli and the other engraved on the rock surface at Kālsi, are believed to be Aśokan.

Owing to this abundance of source material the Mauryan period, and more particularly the reign of Aśoka, has been

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(1) P.L.Gupta. A Bibliog. of the hoards of punch-marked coins in Ancient India.

(2) See App. C.

written on at great length by historians. A number of studies on this subject appeared in the earlier part of this century. V. Smith was first in the field in 1901 with a monograph on Aśoka.<sup>(1)</sup> Repeated editions of the work brought popularity to the subject and in 1925 D.R.Bhandarkar published his Carmichael Lectures on the history of the reign of Aśoka.<sup>(2)</sup> A small study by J.M.Mcphail followed in 1926<sup>(3)</sup> stating the point of view of a Christian missionary. 1928 saw a further study by R.K.Mookerji.<sup>(4)</sup> Louis de la Vallée Poussin published a book on the Mauryas in 1930.<sup>(5)</sup> From then until the 1950's there was no single monograph on Aśoka except that of B.M.Barua in 1946.<sup>(6)</sup> This is not to suggest that there was no interest among historians in this particular period of Indian history. On the contrary a considerable amount of research was being done, but it was largely confined to particular aspects of the Aśokan age, as for instance, Mauryan polity, numismatics, Philological studies of the edicts, etc; Barua's book was a compilation of all this research, bringing the study up to date.

Nilakantha Sastri and his collaborators brought out an able study of the Nandas and Mauryas in 1952.<sup>(7)</sup> In 1955 a book by B.G.Gokhale contained a detailed analysis of Buddhism at that time and restricted the study of Aśoka to

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- (1) Aśoka. The 3rd ed. was published in 1920.
  - (2) Aśoka
  - (3) Aśoka
  - (4) Aśoka
  - (5) L'Inde aux Temps de Mauryas.
  - (6) Aśoka and his inscriptions.
  - (7) The Age of the Nandas and Mauryas.

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that context. <sup>(1)</sup> 1956 saw an onrush of books on the subject, the most useful being by P. Eggermont. <sup>(2)</sup> This work is concerned solely with reconstructing the chronology of the reign, using as source material the Ceylon chronicles, the edicts, the Purāṇas and the Canton Dotted Record, in addition to astronomical calculations to support the arguments he puts forward. A further book by F. Kern came out in the same year. <sup>(3)</sup> A small introductory study by A.C. Sen was published to celebrate the Buddha Jayanti and Aśoka's connections with Buddhism. <sup>(4)</sup>

In a study of secondary sources it is important to consider works other than monographs or political histories which cover various aspects of the same subject. Among the more important are the detailed epigraphical studies of the Aśokan edicts. The earliest publication on the subject was naturally by Prinsep, who was responsible for deciphering the edicts. His work is recorded in a series of papers. On first deciphering the inscriptions, Prinsep identified Devānampiya Piyadassi with a king of Ceylon, due largely to the fact that the edicts were issued by an enthusiastic Buddhist. There were of course certain weaknesses in this identification, as for instance the question of how a king of Ceylon could order the digging of wells and the construction of roads in India. Later in the same year, 1837,

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(1) Buddhism and Aśoka.

(2) The Chronology of the Reign of Asoka Moriya.

(3) Aśoka

(4) Aśoka's Edicts.

the Dīpavaṃsa and the Mahāvāṃsa were studied in Ceylon and Prinsep was informed of the title of Piyadassi given to Aśoka in those works. This provided the link for the new and now correct identification of Aśoka as the author of the edicts. Prinsep was further convinced when the inscriptions of Daśaratha were found referring to the king with the title of Devanampiya, since Daśaratha was known from Purānic sources as being the grand-son of Aśoka.

The edicts were collected into one volume and edited by Cunningham in 1879.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1881 E. Senart published a two-volume work on the edicts.<sup>(2)</sup> Further research of this character was done by Bühler in 1890.<sup>(3)</sup> A.C.Woolner followed in 1924 with a publication on the edicts.<sup>(4)</sup> In the next year 1925 the Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum was revised and re-edited by E. Hultzsch.<sup>(5)</sup> Nothing further appeared until S. Bhattacharya edited a book on the subject in 1942.<sup>(6)</sup> In 1951 S. Murti and K. Aiyangar published a volume on the edicts.<sup>(7)</sup> What was now demanded was a competent work bringing up-to-date the research carried on in the subject during the intervening years. Bloch's publication in 1950,<sup>(8)</sup> the most recent of the kind, met this need.

Of the books dealing with Buddhist literature as historical source material the most important for our purpose

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- (1) Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum. Vol. I.
- (2) Les Inscriptions de Piyadassi.
- (3) I.A. 1890.
- (4) Asoka. Text and Glossary.
- (5) C.I.I. vol. I.
- (6) Select Asokan epigraphs with Annotations
- (7) The Edicts of Asoka Piyadassi.
- (8) Les Inscriptions d'Asoka.

are the publications of Oldenberg and Geiger on the Ceylon chronicles. Oldenberg translated the Dīpavaṃsa in 1879. In 1908 Geiger published a comparative study of the two texts. (1) Geiger's German translation of the Mahāvāṃsa was translated into English and published in 1912. J. Przyluski's work on the Aśokāvadāna and similar stories which appeared in 1923 remains the pre-eminent book on those texts as source material for this period. (2) Schieffner's editing and translating of Tārānātha's History of Tibet covers the Tibetan source material. (3)

A fair amount of work has already been done on the Kautalya Arthaśāstra. Shamasastri first published the text in 1909 followed by an English translation in 1915. During the years 1921-25 Ganapati Sastri published his edition of the text. Meyer's German translation appeared in 1925. It may be suggested that an entirely new translation of the Arthaśāstra would be a most rewarding project. Of the studies based on this text the earliest was that of Otto Stein in 1922 (4) followed by Breloer in 1927. (5) Krishna Rao's study which appeared in 1953 uses in large part the somewhat hackneyed and inept analogy between Machiavelli and Kautalya. (6)

For Purāṇic source material Pargiter's work is the most appropriate to the subject. (7) Dynastic lists are compiled

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- (1) The Dīpavaṃsa and the Mahāvāṃsa.
  - (2) La Légende de l'Empereur Açoka
  - (3) Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien.
  - (4) Kautalya und Megasthenes.
  - (5) Kautaliya Studien.
  - (6) Studies in Kautalya.
  - (7) The Dynasties of the Kali Age.

from the various Purānic sources in which they occur after thorough textual criticism. Philological variations are also considered.

Evidence from classical sources both Greek and Latin has been collected and translated by McCrindle.<sup>(1)</sup> A useful study by B.C.J. Timmer appeared in 1930, and is based on the fragments of Megasthenes.<sup>(2)</sup>

Numismatical evidence of the period was first studied and published by Cunningham in 1891.<sup>(3)</sup> This was followed in 1936 with a more detailed study by Allan.<sup>(4)</sup> Walsh continued the work with a paper on punch-marked coins in 1939.<sup>(5)</sup> Among recent researches on the subject the papers of D.D. Kosambi in various numismatic and oriental journals may be mentioned.

With the exception of Sir John Marshall's three-volume work on Taxila published in 1951,<sup>(6)</sup> there have been no monographs of significance on the archaeological excavations and art remains of the period. Most of the information is still in the form of articles in the journal Ancient India.

In view of all that has been written on this period it may appear unnecessary for there to be further research at the moment. We believe however that a re-interpretation of existing facts can still be made with every validity, owing to variations of historical approach. These variations are not only possible but are indeed necessary, because

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- (1) Ancient India as described in Classical Literature. Ancient India. Megasthenes and Arrian.
  - (2) Megasthenes en de Indische maatscappij.
  - (3) Coins of Ancient India.
  - (4) British Museum Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India.
  - (5) A.S.R. No. 59.
  - (6) Taxila.

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history is a living discipline and each new analysis is a furthering of knowledge on the subject, provided the analysis is borne out by evidence. Even within the confines of an historical system there can be a valid analysis with a difference in emphasis.

In reviewing the books on Aśoka it may be said that on the one aspect, namely his relationship to Buddhism, the general view has been to depict him as having been suddenly converted to Buddhism as a result of his remorse at the cruelty inflicted during the Kalinga war. Conforming to Buddhist ethics then appears to become the sole concern of the king's life. Smith has described him as a monk and a monarch. Kern tries to analyse the inner springs of his actions against the theological background of existence both in this world and the after-life, as well as what he believes to be a desire on the part of Indians at this period to become ascetics and to escape from life by other means. He depicts at great length the supposed conflict in the mind of the king who wishes to free himself of earthly ties yet is conscious of his responsibility as a king, to society and to his subjects.

In our analysis of the subject we find that Aśoka was attracted to Buddhism, but this was not the case of a somewhat eccentric or unusual over-night conversion. We believe that in the context of society as it was then, Buddhism was not just another religion. It was the result of a more

Act 3

wide-spread movement towards a change which passed through many aspects of life from personal beliefs to social ideas. It was a social-intellectual movement influencing a large range of expression and making itself apparent both in contemporary thought and life. A king with a policy only slightly more imaginative than usual, would have had to come to terms with such an important new development. As it was, it was an ideal tool for an ambitious ruler of Aśoka's calibre. Whatever his personal convictions may have been regarding the religion, it was eminently suitable for such a ruler, who wished to use it to consolidate political and economic power.

The economic change that was taking place in India at this time was greatly assisted by Aśoka's political and administrative measures. For instance the development of trade was enhanced by the tendency towards a uniform administration of the country. This same tendency also assisted in speeding up the transition from a pastoral to an agrarian economy. We feel that historians of the Mauryan period have not given this aspect of the subject its due importance. The consolidation of a number of small states into a large centralised empire controlled by a highly developed bureaucratic system, was a new development from the smaller states and loose organisation that had existed previously. This had important effects on the post-Mauryan period as well.

With regard to contacts with foreign countries and influences from "abroad", we feel that the study of cultures as made by modern archaeologists, has made it necessary that present day historians should consider the matter with a new and more correct perspective. The boundaries and nationalities of today cannot be projected on to the scene of the third century B.C. With regard to the question of Achaemenid influence for instance, we do not accept either of the two schools of thought, one believing that everything Aśokan in art was derived from Achaemenid Persia and further west, and the other maintaining equally firmly that it was indigenous. We believe that Achaemenid Persia and north-western India were very close cultural groups. Thus similarities were bound to exist. That this type of culture was extended and developed in other parts of India, even if in a limited way, is equally logical. The then known world was a small but active one, with a considerable amount of intercommunication and trade. This enlarged the scope of cultural developments to more than local needs and the influence of religious movements to more than theological dogma.

We intend in this thesis to consider the history of the period with these perspectives in mind. The first chapter will deal with the early life and accession of Aśoka, and will include a reconstruction of the chronology of his reign. The following chapter will cover Aśokan policy with particular reference to his relationship to Buddhism. The third chapter

will consider his foreign policy and the extent of his empire. A further chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the society and the economy of the Aśokan period. The administration of the empire will be dealt with in the next chapter, and the final chapter will consider the later Mauryas and the reasons for the decline of the dynasty. A few concluding remarks will complete the study. Appendices on topics such as the date of the Arthaśāstra, the pottery and coins of the Mauryan period, etc., will be included at the end.

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A reconstruction of the events prior to the coming of Aśoka would be a useful introduction and would give continuity to the narrative.

The Mauryas come on the scene after what the Purānas describe as the uprooting of the Nandas by the brahman Kauṭalya.<sup>(1)</sup> The Nandas were of Śūdra origin and that may in part account for KAuṭalya's determination to have them replaced. The emergence of Candragupta Maurya is also linked with the invasion of Alexander. In classical sources a meeting between the two is mentioned.<sup>(2)</sup> The disruption in north-west India which followed the withdrawal of Alexander enabled Candragupta to consolidate his position in that area

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(1) Pargiter DKA. p. 26.

(2) Plutarch, Life of Alexander. ch. lxii, p. 403. W.W.Tarn (Alexander the Great, II p. 275) believes that the Classical tradition of Alexander's meeting with Candragupta is untrue. We believe that the meeting may have occurred, though not with any immediate significance.

both quickly and effectively.

The Purāṇas state that the Maurya dynasty will last altogether 137 years. "Kauṭalya will annoint Candragupta as king in the realm. Candragupta will be king 24 years. Vindusāra will be king 25 years. Aśoka will be king 36 years."<sup>(1)</sup> We must in addition to this consider the evidence from the Ceylon chronicle and the Classical sources.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Mahāvamśa gives us the following king list.<sup>(3)</sup> Candragupta 24 years, Bindusāra 28 years, an interregnum of four years, and then Aśoka 37 years. The Dīpavamśa repeats the same order and the same number of years.<sup>(4)</sup> The date of these kings hinges round the date of the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa. The Ceylon chronicles state that Aśoka came to the throne 218 years after the death of the Buddha.<sup>(5)</sup> There are three dates most widely supported for the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa, 483, 486, or 544 B.C. The last mentioned date is a later fabrication and does not tally with any other evidence. It was adopted by the Ceylon chroniclers in the eleventh century A.D.<sup>(6)</sup> Previous to this century the chroniclers used one of the other two dates.<sup>(7)</sup> 483 B.C. is the generally more accepted one though

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(1) Pargiter DKA. pp. 26, 27.

(2) The Kashmir chronicle, the Rājataranginī, speaks of a Śakuni as the great-grandfather of Aśoka (I. 102). There is no corroboration of this in any other source. Further, the chronicle has such a confused account of the early kings, that it is difficult to accept the statement without further proof.

(3) V. 16.

(4) V. 97.

(5) Mah. V. 21; Dīp. Vi, 1.

(6) Fleet J.R.A.S. 1909, p. 323 ff.

(7) Geiger. Mah. p. xxiv ff.; Filliozat et Renou. L'I C.I. 375.

(1)

486 B.C. agrees with the Dotted Record of Canton.

From our point of view 544 B.C. may well be disregarded. Calculating on the above evidence we would arrive at 382 B.C. for the date of Candragupta. This would make it impossible for him to have met Alexander, nor could there have been any relationship with Seleucus Nikator. Moreover the mentioning of the Greek kings in the 13th Rock Edict would not tally. (2) We are left therefore with the other two possible dates.

We are told that the first king of Ceylon, Vijaya, was crowned in the year of the Parinirvāṇa. (3) It might be thought possible on this basis to arrive at the precise chronology of the early Ceylonese kings, but the traditional account of Vijaya does not sound very convincing. In fact the historical character of Vijaya and this early tradition is open to question. (4) The monks may have known the number of years he reigned but could not state exactly when he started his reign, and it may have been a few years before or after the Parinirvāṇa. Discrepancies are certainly possible in the early years. We are given the following list of kings in

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(1) It is said that a record was kept of the year of the Buddha's nirvāṇa by putting a dot every year following that of the nirvāṇa. The record was continued in Canton up to the year A.D. 489, when the number of dots added up to 975, thus giving 486 B.C. as the date of the nirvāṇa.

(2) Hultzsch p. 43 and see Ch. II. pp. 83-88

(3) Mah. VI, 7.

(4) Basham, C.H.Q. 1952 Jan. No. 3, Vol. I, p. 163 ff.

the early period in Ceylon.

Vijaya	483-445 B.C.
Interregnum	
Paṇḍuvāsudeva	444-414 B.C.
Abhaya	414-394 B.C.
Interregnum	
Paṇḍukābhaya	377-307 B.C.
Muṭaśiva	307-247 B.C.
Devānampiyatissa	247-207 B.C.

Bareau has suggested 480 B.C. as another possible date<sup>(1)</sup> for the Parinirvāṇa on the basis of the Ceylon chronicles. But this date again would not tally with other evidence as well as the other two dates we have considered, 483 and 486 B.C. Fleet is of the opinion that the reckoning 483 B.C. is of Indian origin and became known in Ceylon through the arrival<sup>(2)</sup> of Mahinda.

If we calculate from the two possible dates for the Parinirvāṇa we arrive at the following conclusion. We are told that after 58 years of Paṇḍukābhaya had passed and two of Candragupta, Moggaliputta received the upasampada from<sup>(3)</sup> Siggava. This would give us either 321 B.C. or 324 B.C. for the date of Candragupta. 321 B.C. would bring us to 297 B.C. as the date for Bindusāra. We are told further that

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(1) J.A. 1953, p. 27 ff.  
(2) J.R.A.S. 1909, p. 324 ff.  
(3) Dīp. V. 80.

after 6 years of Aśoka has passed and 48<sup>(1)</sup> of Muṭaśiva, Mahinda received the upasampada from Moggaliputta. This gives us 259 B.C. and places the commencement of Aśoka's reign in 265 B.C. The gap of 32 years between the death of Candragupta and the coronation of Aśoka consists of Bindusāra's reign of 28 years and a four year interregnum at his death.

Let us now examine the Classical sources. Plutarch<sup>(2)</sup> writes that as a young man Candragupta had an interview with Alexander. This would suggest his being on the scene in circa 326-25 B.C. He is described as being antagonistic to the Nanda king ruling at Pāṭaliputra, who is said to have been highly unpopular.<sup>(3)</sup> After Alexander's death in 323 B.C. the Greek prefects of the principalities along the Indus were put to death, and Sandracottos, as he is referred to in the Classical accounts, gained control of the area.<sup>(4)</sup> The next significant event recorded is that Seleucus Nikator, having regained Babylon in 312 B.C., started the Seleucid era, taking the title of "king" six years later, and planned an attack on Antigonus his rival. In an effort to win back the lost territory along the Indus, which was now in the hands of Indian rulers who had broken away from the Greeks, he came up against Candragupta and a war was fought. This was probably took place in circa 305 B.C. We know that Seleucus defeated and killed Antigonus in 301 B.C. at the battle of Ipsus.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) Dip. V. 82

(2) Life of Alexander, ch. lxii.

(3) Justin XV, 4.

(4) Justin XV, 4.

(5) Beloch. Griechische Geschichte. III, part 1, p. 171.

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As Beloch suggests it must have taken him two summers to march from the Indus area to Cappadocia where the battle of Ipsus was fought.<sup>(1)</sup> This gives us 303 B.C. as the date for the treaty with Candragupta and 305 B.C. as the date for the start of the campaign against Candragupta.

(2)

The treaty of 303 B.C. had three known clauses. Firstly an ἐνιγαμία, which may have brought a Seleucid princess into the Mauryan household. There is some controversy regarding the exact nature of this agreement. Some writers distinguish between a κῆδος, where a particular princess was married to Candragupta or to his son, and an ἐνιγαμία in which a general convention of a jus connubii between the two houses was established.<sup>(3)</sup> Possibly the latter agreement may have been in the nature of authorising mixed marriages between Indians and Greeks.<sup>(4)</sup> The caste restriction on the part of the Indians could have been surmounted, as Foucher suggests, by recognising the Greeks as degenerate ksatriyas, as is actually done in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra.<sup>(5)</sup> It is unlikely that Candragupta or Bindusāra married a Seleucid princess, for such a fact would certainly have been mentioned in the Greek accounts. However the possibility cannot be ruled out, for Candragupta was an ambitious man and such a marriage would have been politically advantageous.

By the same treaty Candragupta acquired territory along

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(1) Ibid, p. 146, n. 3.

(2) Strabo. Geography XV, 2, 9, p. 143.

(3) Macdonald. C.H.I. Vol. I, p. 431.

(4) Bouché-Leclercq. Histories des Seleucides, pp. 29,30.

(5) Gandhara, II, p. 450;  
Manu X, 43-4.

the Indus. The exact area is not clearly specified. Smith believes it to have comprised the region of Gedrosia, Arachosia, Aria and Paraopamisadae. Certainly this area was included in Aśoka's empire.<sup>(1)</sup> The final clause of the treaty was that Seleucus was to receive five hundred elephants. It is quite possible as de la Vallée Poussin suggests that there were also some agreements on the matter of trade relations and routes between the two kingdoms.<sup>(2)</sup>

Candragupta is mentioned in various Indian literary sources. He is a character in the play Mudrarākṣasa, probably written in the 6th century A.D. He is mentioned in the Mahābhāṣya,<sup>(3)</sup> in Hemacandra's Parisiṣṭaparvan,<sup>(4)</sup> and in Burmese legends.<sup>(5)</sup> There is also a doubtful reference to him in a Tamil source.<sup>(6)</sup> The evidence for dating the reign of Candragupta from Jaina sources is as follows. Hemacandra states that Candragupta was crowned 155 years after the death of Mahāvīra.<sup>(7)</sup> Bhadreśvara confirms this in the Kahāvali.<sup>(8)</sup> Merutuṅga adds a further 60 years.<sup>(9)</sup> But since the date of Mahāvīra's death is uncertain this reckoning is not of much assistance. On the basis of the above dating 313 B.C. can be suggested. The Jaina sources have also attempted to connect Candragupta with the Vikrama Era. According to Merutuṅga,

(1) E.H.I., p. 159.

(2) ITM, p. 58.

(3) I. 1. 9.

(4) VIII, p. 339.

(5) Bigandet. The Life or Legend of Gaudama. II, p. 12 ff.

(6) Aham, 251. lines 10-14: and See Ch. IV p. 236 .

(7) Parisiṣṭaparvan VIII p. 339.

(8) Jacobi'éd. pxx.

(9) Ibid.

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Candragupta came to the throne in 255 before the V.E., that is in 312-13 B.C. If we assume that Mahāvīra died in 467-68 B.C., this date would work out to 155 years after the death of Mahāvīra. But this seems a most unlikely date for Candragupta's accession, unless, as Nilakantha Sastri has said, it may be a reference to his conquest of Avanti and not of the Panjab and Magadha. The Jaina sources, being medieval works are liable to err owing to the great lapse of time between the event and its recording.

Trogus, a Greek historian gives the date of Candragupta as 312 B.C. This date has been accepted by Jacobi and Charpentier. Shantilal Shah has calculated the date to 317 B.C. on the evidence of an unpublished document, the Titthagolipaisunya. We do not accept either of these two dates since they do not agree with the evidence of the 13th Rock Edict where five Greek kings are mentioned by name. The identification of these five kings has provided cross-evidence for the date of Aśoka. The edict was issued not later than 255 B.C. in the twelfth or thirteenth year of Aśoka's reign.

Smith, in working out the chronology of the Mauryas, has suggested that Candragupta conquered Magadha in 322 B.C. and then went on to conquer the region of the North-West. The war with Seleucus took place in 305 B.C. and the treaty was signed in 303 B.C. Candragupta abdicated or died in

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(1) Parisistaparvan VIII p. 341.

(2) ANM, p. 135.

(3) Tarn. GBI, p. 146.

(4) Bussagli. East and West. Year VII, No. 3 Oct. 1956.

(5) See Chapter II p. 88.

298 B.C. Bindusāra reigned until 273 B.C.; his reign was followed by an interregnum of four years and Aśoka began his reign in 269 B.C.<sup>(1)</sup> Thomas has placed the death of Candragupta in 297 B.C. and the reign of Aśoka in 270 B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> Hultzsch's dating runs as follows: Candragupta was crowned in 320 B.C. and was followed by Bindusāra in 296 B.C. He ruled for twenty-eight years and was succeeded by Aśoka in 264 B.C. after the interregnum.<sup>(3)</sup> Nilakantha Sastri dates the coronation of Candragupta to 325-24 B.C. and his death to 301-300 B.C. He takes an average of 27 years for the reign of Bindusāra (the sources giving 25, 27 and 28 years), which places the death of Bindusāra in 274 B.C. Allowing for an interregnum of four years he arrives at 270 B.C. for the date of Aśoka.<sup>(4)</sup> This would assign the 13th Rock Edict to the year 259/58 B.C. Although this allows the 13th Rock Edict to be inscribed prior to 255 B.C., it nevertheless conflicts with the chronology of other events in the reign of Aśoka, as we shall see further on.

318/17 B.C. has been suggested as the date for the coronation of Candragupta by R. Smith.<sup>(5)</sup> He bases his theory on a new interpretation of the Purāṇic evidence. According to him the text reads that Candragupta will be king at the age of twenty-five. From the Greek accounts it would seem that he was about sixteen or seventeen when he met Alexander in 326 B.C.

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(1) E.H.I. p. 124.

(2) C.H.I. Vol. I, p. 472.

(3) C.I.I. Vol. I, p. xxv.

(4) ANM p. 137.

(5) J.A.O.S. vol. 77. No. 4, Oct-Dec. 1957, p. 276 ff.

Therefore he was twenty-five in 318 B.C. On Jaina evidence he calculates the coronation of Candragupta to 318-17 B.C. presumably by putting the death of Mahāvīra forward by four to five years. Thus Bindusāra was born in 321 B.C. and was just about old enough to marry a Seleucid princess after the treaty of 301 B.C. Aśoka was born some time after 300 B.C. and was not the eldest child. 294 B.C. is suggested as a convenient date for the birth of Aśoka as that makes him exactly twenty-five years old at his coronation in 269 B.C. We are of the opinion that this theory tends to force the facts to fit the idea. The formula used in the Purāṇa for giving the regnal years of Candragupta is no different to that used for many other kings. If we apply the same interpretation in all these cases it would result in a chaotic situation as regards the reconstruction of the chronology. Confirmation from Jaina sources cannot provide positive evidence because, as we have said before, the date of Mahāvīra's death is uncertain.

We are thus left with two possible dates for the accession of Candragupta, based on the two possible dates for the Parinirvāṇa, 324 B.C. or 321 B.C. This in turn gives us two alternative dates for Bindusāra, 300 B.C. or 297 B.C. If the reign of Bindusāra lasted 28 years, he died either in 272 B.C. or 269 B.C. If he ruled 27 years, he died a year earlier in each case. If again his rule lasted 25 years, his death took place in 272 or 275 B.C. Following from this

and allowing for a four year interregnum we obtain as possible dates for Aśoka 271, 269, 268, 266 and 265 B.C. The date 271 is invalidated by the evidence of the 13th Rock Edict, and it does not synchronise with other events in the reign of Aśoka.

While considering the other dates we have to keep in mind a new piece of evidence published by Eggermont in his recent book.<sup>(1)</sup> We are told in the Dīvyāvadāna that just prior to Aśoka's pilgrimage there was an eclipse of the sun.<sup>(2)</sup> From the Rummindei pillar inscription we know that the pilgrimage took place in his nineteenth regnal year.<sup>(3)</sup> The date of the eclipse has been calculated to 249 B.C. which date gives us 268 B.C. as the year of Aśoka's accession.<sup>(4)</sup> This eliminates 269, 266, and 265 B.C. as possible alternatives.

We are now left with the following chronological sequences.

1. Assuming 486 to be the date of the Parinirvāṇa.

Candragupta	324 B.C.	
Bindusāra	300 B.C.	died 272 B.C. (28 regnal years)
Interregnum	4 years	
Aśoka	268 B.C.	
Rock edict XIII	256 B.C.	
The eclipse	249 B.C.	

(1) CRAM p. 165.

(2) XXVI, p. 380.

(3) Hultzsch p. 164.

(4) We have discussed this fact at greater length in Ch. II p. 109 .

2. Assuming 483 B.C. to be the date of the Parinirvāṇa.

Candragupta	321 B.C.
Bindusāra	297 B.C. died 272 B.C. (25 regnal years)
Interregnum	297 B.C. died 272 B.C. (25 regnal years)
	4 years
Aśoka	268 B.C.

In the first case if we accept the Purāṇa chronology of 25 years for Bindusāra we arrive at 321 B.C. as the date for Candragupta.

We may note that the Purāṇic evidence makes no mention of the interregnum.<sup>(1)</sup> This is due to the fact that it gives the total number of years of the dynasty and the regnal years of individual rulers. Inter-regnal years are not listed.

On a more detailed examination of the two dating sequences that we have suggested, the second conflicts with the evidence from the Ceylon chronicles that Aśoka was crowned 218 years after the nirvāṇa.<sup>(2)</sup> On the basis of 483 B.C. we would arrive at 265 B.C. as the date for Aśoka. 486 B.C. on the other hand would still give us 268 B.C. as the date for Aśoka and on the basis of Purāṇa chronology the other events of the period would synchronise. As we have mentioned in preceding pages, error in the calculation of the early chronology of Ceylon is certainly possible. We may assume that Vijaya commencing his reign on the exact day of the Mahāparinirvāṇa is a pious legend.

In accepting 486 B.C. as the year of the Buddha's death

(1) Pargiter. *DKA*, p. 27.

(2) *Dīp.* VI, 1.

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and working on Purānic evidence, which allows Bindusāra only 25 years, we arrive at 321 B.C. as the first year of Candragupta's reign, which certainly seems more logical from the point of view of his career. He is supposed to have met Alexander in 326-25 B.C. and to have been a rebel against the Nanda king. It seems hardly possible that within a year he could have gathered enough forces to conquer Magadha and establish himself. Four to five years seems a far more probable period.

On the withdrawal of Alexander and certainly on his death in 323 B.C. the Greek control on the areas along the Indus weakened considerably. This kept the interest of the northern kings confined to local politics, while Candragupta consolidated his position further east. The continuing disintegration of the northern kingdoms gave him the opportunity to conquer them. From there it is likely that he moved southwards into central India and by 313 B.C. occupied the area around Avanti. 305 B.C. saw him moving north again and fighting Seleucus with the treaty of 303 B.C. ending this war. 297 B.C. was the year of his death or his abdication. Bindusāra ruled for twenty-five years and died in 272 B.C. A four year interregnum, while Aśoka was fighting for the throne and securing his position is quite possible, as the evidence from the chronicles would suggest; this we shall discuss at greater length in the following chapter. 268 B.C. was therefore the year of the coronation of Aśoka.

The rise of the Mauryas from what appears to have been

a comparatively humble position has been the cause of a variety of traditions concerning their origin. One such theory states that the name Maurya was derived from Murā, the wife of a Nanda king and the grandmother or mother of the first Maurya.<sup>(1)</sup> The Purāṇas however do not link the two dynasties, possibly because the Nandas were of Śūdra origin, though the Mauryas are described in these texts as śūdra-prayāsty-adhārmikāh.<sup>(2)</sup> But this, as Nilakantha Sastri points out,<sup>(3)</sup> may only be a reference to their Jaina and Buddhist leanings.<sup>(3)</sup> Although the Classical writers describe Candragupta as being a man of humble origin, they do not connect him with Agrammes (the last of the Nandas) of whom they know.<sup>(4)</sup>

Buddhist writers state that Maurya was the name of a clan of ksatriyas.<sup>(5)</sup> The Mahāpr̥inibbānasutta describes them as ruling Pipphalivana.<sup>(6)</sup> In the Vamsatthapakāsini the dynasty is linked with the tribe of Śākyas who were defeated by the people of Jambudvīpa and who fled to the hills where they built a city.<sup>(7)</sup> This presumably refers to the defeat of the Śākyas by Vidūḍabha.<sup>(8)</sup> The neighbourhood was full of peacocks (mayūra, Pāli mora), and even the stones resembled the necks of the peacocks. Hence the people came to be known as the Mauryas and the dynasty originated here.

(1) Dhundirāja. *commentary on Mudrārākṣasa.*

(2) Pargiter. DKA. p. 25.

(3) ANM, p. 141.

(4) Justin, XV, 4.

(5) Malalasekara. D.P.P.N. II, p. 673.

(6) Dīgha Nikāya II, p. 72 ff - The area is identified with the Gotakhpur district.

(7) I. ch. V. pp. 179, 180.

(8) Majj. Nik. II, p. 110.

This tradition may be merely a Buddhist attempt at elevating the social class of Aśoka and his predecessors and in addition connecting them with the Śākya, the tribe of the Buddha. Mahinda would thereby have a closer relationship with the Buddha than if the Mauryas did not belong to the Śākya tribe.

Barua has suggested that Candragupta was from the Uttarapatha region, perhaps from Gandhāra, if not from Taxila.<sup>(1)</sup> His early education, his military training and his alliances were largely connected with that region. The employment of kharoṣṭhi-knowing scribes by the Mauryas and artists working in the Persian tradition are further indications of this connection. We are of the opinion that even if he was from the north country, he must have had some close connection among the people of Magadha to have been able to overthrow the Nandas so easily.

The Junāgadh rock inscription of Rudradāman dated A.D. 150 mentions the vaiśya Puṣyagupta as the provincial governor of the Maurya king Candragupta.<sup>(2)</sup> Mauryasya rājñah Candraguptasya rāṣṭriyena vaiśyena Puṣyagupt<sup>ena</sup> kārītam.

This shows that Puṣyagupta was a vaiśya by caste. The word rāṣṭriyena is taken by Kielhorn to mean "while governing" but in later texts it was also used to mean a king's brother-in-law.<sup>(3)</sup> It could apply in this case, as Candragupta may well have appointed his brother-in-law as governor of the newly won territory in western India. This would imply that the Mauryas were of vaiśya origin. Certainly the

(1) I.C. Vol. X. p. 34.

(2) Ep. Ind. VIII, p. 42 ff.

(3) Ep. Ind. VII p. 46, n. 7.

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suffix - gupta is known to have been used largely by the vaiśya caste though brāhman and kṣatriya names ending in gupta also occur. This would agree with the tradition of the Mauryas being of comparatively humble origin.

The Purāṇas state that Kauṭalya, also known as Cāṇakya, will anoint Candragupta as king of the realm. We know from various sources that Kauṭalya or Cāṇakya who later became Candragupta's chief minister, was the motivating power behind Candragupta's early attempts at the throne of Magadha. Many legends and traditions have accumulated over the centuries on the role of Kauṭalya in this matter. The Vamsatthapakāsinī describes him as a brāhman from Taxila, who, having been insulted by the Nanda king, swore revenge. Since he could not assume the kingship himself he found a protégé, Candragupta, in the city of the Śākya. The story relates that the Maurya Queen was pregnant when the King was killed by a neighbouring ruler. Anxious to save the child's life, she fled in disguise to her brother at Pāṭaliputra. The child, a boy, was abandoned at the instigation of the gods. He was placed in a mortar by the entrance of a cattle-pen. Here a bull called Canda protected him and hence his name, Candagutto. One day he was asleep in a thicket when Cāṇakya passed by in the company of the Nanda prince Parvata. In order to test Parvata, Cāṇakya asked him to fetch from

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(1) Manu II, 32.

(2) Pargiter, DKA, p. 25.

(3) Vol. I. ch. V. p. 181 ff.

Candragupta the thread encircling his neck without waking him. Parvata said he could not do it as it would have meant killing Candragupta. At a later stage when Parvata was asleep Cāṇakya asked Candragupta to do the same. He, without any qualms cut off Parvata's head and brought the thread. This convinced Cāṇakya that Candragupta had possibilities of becoming the leader of a movement against the Nandas. With the death of Parvata, Pāṭaliputra was without an heir, so Cāṇakya was able to make Candragupta king and give him all the hoarded wealth of the Nandas.

The actual process of acquiring Magadha began with a small-scale attack on the villages. Here we are told the well-known story of the woman who scolded her child for eating a cake from the centre first, instead of from the edges, which is said to have given Candragupta the idea that he should conquer the outlying parts of the Nanda kingdom first and then converge on the centre.

The empire of Candragupta has been described at some length by Megasthenes but we shall examine this document at a later stage. Since the empire was built largely by military power and strategy, Candragupta laid considerable emphasis on the army. Classical accounts mention 600,000 foot-soldiers, 30,000 cavalry, and 8,000 or 9,000 elephants as the total force of the Mauryan king.<sup>(1)</sup> These may be exaggerated figures, but all the same the army must have been a vast and efficient one, since its main purpose was to

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(1) Pliny. Natural History. VI, 22.  
Solin. 52, 6-7. This source mentions 8,000 elephants.

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consolidate and conserve the empire. To state as some historians have done, that Candragupta set out to accomplish the unity of India is largely a nationalistic prejudice.<sup>(1)</sup> There was no national consciousness then, involving the entire sub-continent. It is amply clear that Candragupta was an intelligent and fortunate adventurer, assisted by an advisor who was both of an exceptional intellectual ability and a shrewd strategist. That he managed to weld this large land mass into an empire larger than the previously existing one of the Nandas was due to the intelligent application of policy.

There appears to have been considerable contact with the west at the court of Candragupta. Apart from the presence of Megasthenes at Pāṭaliputra and possibly an exchange of envoys, there is reference to the frequent interchange of presents,<sup>(2)</sup> including the sending of powerful aphrodisiacs. The presence of a considerable number of foreigners is apparent from the special board among the city administrators set up in Pāṭaliputra to look after their welfare.<sup>(3)</sup> The question of whether the term foreigners included non-Indians or referred only to Indian visitors from outside Magadha has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>(4)</sup>

According to the tradition in the Pariśiṣṭaparvan Candragupta was converted to the Tīrthankara sect of the Jainas

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(1) ANM, p. 156.

(2) Atheneus I. 32, 18 D.

La Vallée Poussin believes that this is an incorrect translation. The term should be read not as "an aphrodisiac", but as "a strange drug". (ITM p. 63).

(3) Fragment I. Diod. II, 42.

(4) See Ch. IV. p. 217.

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in the latter part of his reign. The same source mentions a  
famine in Magadha lasting for twelve years. This event  
appears to be corroborated by the Sohgaūrā<sup>(2)</sup> and Mahāsthān<sup>(3)</sup>  
plates dealing with famine precautions. The same Jaina  
tradition states that Candragupta abdicated in favour of his  
son Simhasena (probably an alternative name of Bindusāra),  
and went with Bhadrabāhu, the Jaina saint, to Śrāvāṇa-Belgoḷā  
in Mysore, where he retired from life and died in the orthodox  
Jaina way by slow starvation.

The name Bindusāra has given ample scope to the  
imagination of the Buddhist chroniclers and we have a curious  
story about the birth of Bindusāra, naturally with a play on  
the words making up his name. It is related in the  
Vamsatthapakāsinī that Kauṭalya made Candragupta immune from  
poison by putting minute quantities of it into his food each  
day.<sup>(4)</sup> One day the Chief Queen, who was then pregnant, took  
a morsel of food from Candragupta. Kauṭalya was too late in  
stopping her and realised that the only way in which the life  
of the child could be saved was to sever the head of the Queen,  
which he did. The embryo was then placed in the womb of a  
goat. When the child was born he was covered with spots and  
was therefore called Bindusāra.

In Classical sources Bindusāra is known as Amitrochates,

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(1) VIII p. 415 ff. and p. lxxi.

(2) Ep. Ind. xxi, p. 85 ff.

(3) Ep. Ind. XXII p. 2 ff.

(4) I. ch. V, p. 187.

which appears to be a Greek version of the Sanskrit term amitrakhāda (eater of foes) or amitraghāta (slayer of foes).<sup>(1)</sup> Strabo refers to Deimachus being sent by Antiochus I as his ambassador to Amitrochates the son of Sandrocottus. The name suggests that Bindusāra was kept well-occupied by campaigns.

Pliny speaks of another envoy Dionysius who was sent by the king of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus.<sup>(2)</sup> Ptolemy's dates are 285-247 B.C. so the envoy was either at the court of Bindusāra or Aśoka. Since no account of Aśoka's reign mentions him he is presumed to have been at the court of Bindusāra. However since we know that Aśoka sent a Dhamma mission to the court of Ptolemy it is possible that Dionysius was sent, as it were, in return.

Atheneus of the third century A.D. writes that according to Hegesander, Amitrachates wrote to Antiochus I of Syria and asked for some sweet wine, dried figs, and a sophist to be sent to the Indian court.<sup>(3)</sup>

Early Buddhist sources do not have much to report on Bindusāra. This, as Dutt suggests, was probably due to the king's lack of enthusiasm about Buddhism.<sup>(4)</sup> It would appear that Bindusāra was more interested in the Ājīvikas, since there was an Ājīvika fortune-teller at his court, who when Aśoka was born prophesied that he would become king. The Divyāvadāna

(1) Strabo ii Fragment 29 p. 70.

(2) Book IV. c. 17. (21)

(3) Athenaeus. III, 444 and xiv 652-3.

(4) Early Monastic Buddhism II, p. 241.  
Divya, XXVI, p. 370.

mentions the name of two of his ministers, Khattaka and Rādhāgupta.<sup>(1)</sup> Kauṭalya and Subandhu are mentioned as his ministers in the Pariśiṣṭaparvan.<sup>(2)</sup> It would seem that Kauṭalya was still advisor to the Mauryas when Bindusāra came to the throne.

There are references to a revolt at Taxila during the reign of Bindusāra.<sup>(3)</sup> The citizens were oppressed by the high-handedness of local officials and rose against them. This revolt, it seems, was put down successfully by Aśoka, who is said to have been welcomed by the people of Taxila since their grievance was only against the officials and not against the king.

That Bindusāra was called the slayer of foes suggests a period of many campaigns. Since his reign is not documented we have to arrive at the extent of his conquests by a process of elimination. The date of the conquest of southern India by the Mauryas is uncertain. There is no reference in any source to Candragupta having fought in the South. Tamil literature refers to the conquest of the Mauryas but not to any particular king of that dynasty. There is a single quoted reference in an early Christian text, to the effect that Megasthenes saw some ascetics on the other side of the river Tagabena, which river McCrindle identifies as the Tungabhadra.<sup>(4)</sup> Even if this identification is correct

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(1) XXVI, p. 372.

(2) VIII, p. 443 ff.

(3) Przyluski, LEA, p. 232.

(4) Fragment LIV. Pseudo-Origen. Philosoph 24.  
Quoted McCrindle p. 120.

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it is not necessary to infer that Candragupta's empire extended that far. Megasthenes as a visitor probably travelled in areas outside the empire, as indeed did later travellers like Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang. Furthermore in the case of Megasthenes the added attraction was the strangeness of the ascetics whom no doubt he was curious to see. It seems unlikely that with Candragupta's activities in the north he had time for southern conquests.

Aśoka has only mentioned one war in his edicts, the Kalinga War.<sup>(1)</sup> If there had been a campaign in the South he would have mentioned it. Yet his edicts extend as far South as modern Mysore. Tārānātha writes of Bindusāra conquering sixteen states and extending the empire from sea to sea.<sup>(2)</sup> This suggests that the upper part of the peninsula is meant. If the tradition of Candragupta abdicating and becoming a Jaina ascetic is true, it would be more than likely that he would travel outside his erstwhile dominions. His presence as a wandering ascetic within the empire might have been embarrassing to Bindusāra.

272 B.C. saw the death of Bindusāra and the struggle for succession began amongst his sons. It lasted four years and in 268 B.C. Aśoka was crowned Bindusāra's successor.

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(1) CII, I. p. 47  
(2) GBI, XVII, pp. 88-89.

## CHAPTER II

Early Life, Accession and Chronology  
of the Reign of Aśoka

Among the more romantic hypotheses regarding the birth of Aśoka surely the most exciting is that which suggests that either his grandmother or his mother was a Greek princess. This is possible only if the clause regarding matrimony in the treaty between Seleucus and Candragupta was a *κῆδος* and not an *ἐγγαμία* <sup>(1)</sup>. Sylvain Levi writes " (Seleucus).... conclut avec lui (Candragupta) une alliance matrimonialemente qui sans doute introduisit une princess grecque dans le harem des Maurya." <sup>(2)</sup> Greek sources speak of Sandrocottus and Amitrochades but do not mention Aśoka. Even if such a marriage alliance did take place there is still nothing to prove that Bindusāra was the son of the Greek princess and consequently that Aśoka was her grandson. Nevertheless it is an interesting hypothesis, particularly if we trace the facts further back and postulate that this princess might have been the child of Seleucus' own marriage to a Persian noblewoman.

In considering the possibility of such an alliance it is generally suggested that Seleucus provided a princess for

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(1) See. Ch. I, p.27 .

(2) L'Inde Civilisatrice, p. 48.

the Maurya dynasty. That the Mauryas may have provided a princess for the Seleucid house is equally possible. However if either of these alliances took place then we can trace a relationship between the Seleucid kings and Aśoka. Antiochus I would have been grand-uncle to Aśoka. Antiochus I died in 261 B.C. If Aśoka's grandmother was roughly of the same age as her brother she may have been alive when Aśoka was still a boy, and may have inspired him with stories of the exploits of Darius and Alexander. Antiochus II and Aśoka would have been second cousins. But Aśoka nowhere mentions these relationships, and had they existed he would probably have done so at least in the edicts where he mentions the sending of a mission to Antiochus II.<sup>(1)</sup> The possibility of this relationship has been discussed by most historians. We feel however that the possibility remains and that it may account in small part for the eclecticism of Aśoka and for the struggle for succession.

More definite indications as to the identity of Aśoka's mother are given in the other sources, the Aśoka-āvadāna, the Divyāvadāna and the Vaṃsatthapakāsinī. The first of these sources mentions her as Subhadrāṅgī and describes her as the daughter of a brāhman of Champā.<sup>(2)</sup> It is said that she was kept away from the king by palace intrigue and that when at last she gained access to him and bore him a son,

(1) R.E. XIII, CII, I, p. 43.

(2) Przyluski /p. 320.

she said of the child, "my sorrow is over", i.e., Aśoka. When she bore the king a second son she called him Vītaśoka, "sorrow terminated".

In the *Vaṃsatthapakāsinī* the queen is called Dharmā. (1) The perceptor of her family was the Ājīvika saint Janāsāna. She is said to have belonged to the ksatriya clan of the Moriyas. The Divyāvādāna story agrees largely with the (2) Aśokāvādāna version. She is called Janapadakalyānī or in other versions Subhadrāṅgī, and is again described as the daughter of a brahman of Campā. She was kept away from the king but eventually bore him two sons, Aśoka and Vigatāśoka.

Legend has it that as a young man Aśoka was ungainly to look at and disliked by his father. But obviously his father was impressed by his other qualities, since as a prince he was appointed viceroy both at Taxila and at Ujjain. Since most accounts speak of him going directly from Ujjain to Pāṭaliputra it would appear that his viceroyalty at Taxila was prior to his appointment at Ujjain. This double viceroyalty and the similarity of events as described in (3) various sources has sometimes been doubted. It has been suggested that the same events were given different locations by local traditions. The *Māhāvamsa* describes him as the viceroy at Ujjain while the *Aśokasūtra* and the *Kunālasūtra* give him the same position in Gandhāra. In the Ceylon

(1) IV, p. 125.

(2) XXVI, p. 369.

(3) Przyluski, pp. 110, 111.

chronicles the son of Aśoka responsible for bringing Buddhism to Ceylon was Mahinda; in the Kunālasūtra he is referred to as Dharmavivardhana. However in the case of the viceroyalty of Aśoka the two variants are equally convincing, and the events leading to the one appointment, we feel, are sufficiently different from the other for us to accept them as authentic.

The Aśokāvadāna informs us that a revolt took place in Taxila during the reign of Bindusāra, when the citizens objected to the oppression of the higher officials.<sup>(1)</sup> This is perfectly feasible in view of the fact that Taxila had been comparatively independent until the coming of the Mauryas and therefore the control of Pāṭaliputra may have been irksome.<sup>(2)</sup> Culturally there was a greater link with the west and citizens of Iranian descent probably still looked to Persia for deliverance. Furthermore in the process of centralisation the Mauryas may well have been harsh in their treatment of outlying cities. The story continues that Aśoka was sent to put an end to the revolt, which he did successfully and without arousing too great a resentment on the part of the citizens.

The only contributory evidence we have so far to the authenticity of this tradition is the Aramaic inscription found embedded in a house at Sirkap at Taxila.<sup>(3)</sup> Andreus and Herzfeld have read it as being in honour of a high official Rōmēdōtē, who owed his advancement to Priyadarśi the viceroy

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(1) Ibid, p. 232.  
 (2) Marshall, Taxila, I, p. 21.  
 (3) Ep. Ind. XIX, p. 251 ff.

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or governor. The reading of Priyadarśi is uncertain, since there is a lacuna after the letters prydr.... Herzfeld is of the opinion that it is an Aśokan inscription. Sircar believes the Aramaic to be of the first half of the third century.<sup>(1)</sup> This inscription incidentally shows the continued use of Aramaic long after the Persians had left Taxila.<sup>(2)</sup>

The problem arises as to whether Priyadarśi here refers to Aśoka or to one of the other Mauryas. The title, if it is a title, may have been assumed by one of the other kings of the dynasty.<sup>(3)</sup> Aśoka was referred to as Devānampiya Piyadassi. We are of the opinion that Devānampiya was a royal title, whereas Piyadassi was his personal title or his second name together with Aśoka. In one of his edicts Aśoka refers to the many Devānampiyas of earlier times.<sup>(4)</sup> Daśaratha the grandson of Aśoka uses Devānampiya as a title in his inscriptions.<sup>(5)</sup> It was also used by various Ceylonese kings, Tissa,<sup>(6)</sup> Gajabāhuka-Gāmaṇi, and Mahallaka-Nāga.<sup>(7)</sup> Piyadassi is used only with reference to Aśoka. In the Dīpavaṃsa, as we have seen earlier,<sup>(8)</sup> it is often used instead of the name Aśoka. It would appear therefore that the name Priyadarśi in the Aramaic inscription refers almost certainly to Aśoka.

(1) S.I. p. 81.

(2) Marshall. Taxila, I, p. 15.

(3) R.E.I. Gir. C.I.I. (I) p. 1.

(4) R.E.VIII Kālsi. CII. I. p. 36, cf. Gir. p. 15 which uses rājāno instead.

(5) S.I. p. 79.

(6) Dīp. XI, 14, 19, 20, 29, 30, 39.

(7) E.Z.I., p. 60 ff.

(8) VI, 1.

There is a variant of the above story in the Aśokāvadāna where a similar revolt occurs at Taxila, but in this case it is at the end of Aśoka's reign and Kunāla is sent to suppress (1) it. This sounds as if it were a deliberate imitation of the other story. Since Kunāla is nowhere referred to as Priyadarśi it is more probable that the revolt actually took place during the reign of Bindusāra. After quelling the revolt Aśoka must have spent a few months in Taxila before his appointment as viceroy at Ujjain.

Taxila at that period must have been a town of tremendous interest to a young man of Aśoka's calibre and tastes. It was not merely a political capital of strategic importance. It was on the main north-west highway, leading directly to the west, and a commercial centre bringing with it a cosmopolitan culture. Furthermore it was one of the major centres of learning.

Tārānātha mentions a tradition of Aśoka quelling a (2) rebellion of the Nepālas and Khāśyas, two Himalayan tribes. Such an event is not mentioned in any other source. It may either have been a small revolt that took place perhaps later during his reign which may have prompted his remarks about the frontier peoples in one of his edicts, (3) or else it may have been just the local variant of the main tradition of his having quelled a rebellion.

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(1) Przyluski, LEA, p. 106.

(2) GBI, VI, p. 27.

(3) S.E.II, Dhauri, CII, I, p. 97.

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On his viceroyalty at Ujjain we have considerable evidence from the Ceylon chronicles. The information largely concerns his personal life. We are told that at Vidiśā he met the beautiful Devī, the daughter of a local merchant, with whom he fell in love. <sup>(1)</sup> There is no reference to a marriage, though two children were born, Mahinda and Saṃghamitta both of whom are connected with the Buddhist mission to Ceylon. The tradition of Devī could well be true, since it does not interfere with the flow of events concerning the story of Aśoka.

In the Mahābodhivaṃsa, Devī is referred to as Vidiśā-mahādevī and a Śākyānī. <sup>(2)</sup> The same source also calls her Śākyakumārī, since she is described here as being the daughter of a member of the clan of Śākyas who had emigrated to Vedisām-nagārāni out of fear of Vidudabha's attack on their own territory. <sup>(3)</sup> Therefore she was related to the Buddha's family. A very similar story is told about the origin of the Mauryas. <sup>(4)</sup> We believe that this connection between Devī and the Śākyas was a fabrication on the part of the Ceylonese chroniclers, who naturally attempted to find some relationship between Mahinda, the first historically known missionary of Buddhism to Ceylon, and the family of the Buddha. It seems much more feasible to accept Devī merely as the daughter of a local merchant of Vidiśā than to attempt to relate her to

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(1) Mah. XIII, 6-9; <sup>D&P.</sup> ~~D&P.~~ VI, 15-16.

(2) p. 116.

(3) p. 98

(4) See Introduction Ch. I, p.35 .

the Śākya

Tradition also has it that Devī preferred to stay at Vidiśā rather than move to Pāṭaliputra when Aśoka became king. (1) It has been suggested that this was because she was a pious Buddhist and by then Vidiśā had become a centre of Buddhism, so she chose to remain there. (2) She is also supposed to have been instrumental in Aśoka's adoption of Buddhism and in Mahinda's becoming a monk. But we are of the opinion that if she did stay behind at Vidiśā it may have been for other reasons. She was the daughter of a merchant and therefore her social position was not the same as that of the rest of the court circle. She was not legally married to Aśoka and this would keep her from taking the queen's share in the official functions of the court. On Aśoka's becoming king it would be expected that he would marry a princess of an appropriately high rank as his Chief Queen, which he may have done when he married Asandhimittā. It is unlikely that the latter could be the official name of Devī, since the Ceylon chronicles would have mentioned it as such, particularly as they relate at some length to Aśoka's relationship with Devī.

For Aśoka to have raised the daughter of a merchant to the rank of Chief Queen would not have been in keeping with royal custom. As a young ruler he was not in a position to flout social custom to that extent.

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(1) The Mah. refers to Asandhimittā as his Chief Queen and not to Devī. V. 85.

(2) A.C.Sen. A, p. 32.

Vidiśā figures as an important Buddhist centre in Buddhist literature. <sup>(1)</sup> It is believed that Devī was responsible for the construction of the vihāra at Vidiśāgiri, possibly the first of the many monuments to be built at Sanchi and Bhilsa. <sup>(2)</sup> It has been suggested that Aśoka took an added interest in Buddhist establishments in this region because his connections with Devī created sentimental associations for him. <sup>(3)</sup>

The authenticity of Samghamittā the daughter of Aśoka and Devī is doubted by some historians. Smith is sceptical as regards her being the daughter of Aśoka. <sup>(4)</sup> The Mahāvamsa <sup>(5)</sup> states that she was eighteen years old when she was ordained. Certainly the story about her going to Ceylon so that the Ceylonese Queen could be ordained appears to be something of an exaggeration. Samghamittā may have been Mahinda's sister and she may have been given this unusual name owing to her mother's piety, but it is not necessary that she should also have become a Buddhist nun when Mahinda was ordained, and that she should have played such an important role in the ordaining of the women of Ceylon. There is also another tradition regarding Samghamittā, that she married Agnibrahma a nephew of Aśoka and that a son Sumana, was born to them. <sup>(6)</sup> This

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- (1) Mahābodhivamsa p. 98.  
 (2) Mookerji, Aśoka, p. 8.  
 (3) A.C. Sen p. 32.  
 (4) A. p. 48.  
 (5) Mah. V, 204.  
 (6) Mah. V, 170.

appears to be a discrepancy which tends to invalidate the story of Samghamitā going to Ceylon, in order that the Queen Anulā might be ordained. We are told that she and her husband and her son were all ordained. A few verses later it is stated that she was eighteen when she was ordained, so that she must have been married at the age of sixteen at least. It is unlikely that with so young a child, she would have been allowed to become a nun.

There has been some controversy over the exact relationship of Mahinda to Aśoka. Whereas the Ceylon chronicles maintain that Mahinda was the illegitimate son of Aśoka the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan Tsang <sup>(1)</sup> states that he was Aśoka's younger brother, variously called Vitāśoka and Vigatāśoka. Smith does not accept the Ceylonese version and believes that Mahinda was the younger brother. <sup>(2)</sup> Aśoka does not mention sending him to Ceylon and Smith believes that this tradition may be another attempt on the part of the Ceylonese monks to give added prestige to Mahinda and thereby to Ceylon. We are of the opinion that this tradition could well be true. Had Mahinda been Aśoka's younger brother the prestige involved in his leading the mission to Ceylon would have been much the same. There would thus have been little value in specially inventing a son. Being the illegitimate son of Aśoka it is quite likely that he preferred to join a religious order than

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(1) Watters, II, p. 93.

(2) A. p. 50.

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be treated dubiously at the court at Pāṭaliputra. Sending him to Ceylon may well have been a gesture on the part of Aśoka towards Devānāmpiya Tissa, whose admiration for the former appears to have been great. In order to maintain, if not to increase the goodwill of Tissa, Aśoka sent his own son instead of sending an ordinary monk.

The story of Mahinda in the Ceylon chronicles gives us some indication of the number of years that Aśoka served as viceroy. The Mahāvamsa states that Mahinda was twenty years old when he was ordained and that this event took place in the sixth year of Aśoka's reign.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus Mahinda was fourteen when Aśoka was crowned and ten when the struggle for succession began. It follows from this that Aśoka must have had a long period as viceroy. Assuming that Mahinda was born at the very earliest when Aśoka was twenty, then the latter must have been thirty-four years old at least when he came to the throne. This appears to agree with the evidence that his father and grandfather had long reigns.

Concerning the actual accession there is general agreement on the one point that Aśoka was not the crown-prince, and that there was a struggle among the princes for the throne. The Divyāvadāna states that Bindusāra when dying wished to appoint his son Susīma as king, but his ministers placed Aśoka on the throne instead.<sup>(2)</sup> The legend suggests that Aśoka had the support of Rādhagupta, the chief minister of Bindusāra.

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(1) V. 204, 209.

(2) XXVI, p. 372, 373.

The latter appears to have been an historical figure as he is mentioned elsewhere. <sup>(2)</sup> Thus Suśīma was ousted. Aśoka, realising that Bindusāra was greatly angered at this, called upon the gods to prove his worth. The same source also mentions that Aśoka came to the throne after killing many enemies. <sup>(2)</sup>

The complete story as related in the Divyāvadāna <sup>(3)</sup> states that Aśoka was viceroy of Sraśas in Uttarāpatha, <sup>(4)</sup> with his head-quarters at Taxila. He had been sent there to supercede Susīma his elder brother and to quell the revolt at Taxila which Suśīma had failed to suppress. <sup>(5)</sup> When the throne fell vacant it was seized by Aśoka with the help of Rādhāgupta. The Mahāvamśa states that he caused his eldest brother to be slain. <sup>(6)</sup> Elsewhere in the same work and in the <sup>(7)</sup> Dīpavamśa <sup>(8)</sup> there is mention of his having killed his ninety-nine brothers, born of various mothers. In the Mahāvamśa he is said to have killed his ninety-eight brothers and Sumana the heir to the throne. <sup>(9)</sup> The latter was actually killed when trying to dethrone Aśoka. In considering the above information, the number of ninety-nine brothers may well be dismissed as imaginary. What emerges as historical fact is that there was a struggle among the princes for the throne either on the death

(1) Przyluski, LEA, p. 234.

(2) XXVII, pp. 387, 400

(3) XXVI

(4) Mookerji, p. 3, suggests that this may be a mistake for Khasas. See Ep. Ind. I. p. 132.

(5) Susīma is the brother referred to as Sumana in the southern legends. Mah. V. 150.

(6) V. 40.

(7) Mah. V. 20.

(8) VI, 21, 22.

(9) Mah. V. 150.

of Bindusāra or a little prior to it, and that this involved Aśoka in having to remove those of his brothers who were opposing him. This accounts for the interregnum of four years in which the issue of succession was being decided. It was not until 268 B.C. when Aśoka felt his position to be secure on the throne that he had himself formally crowned.

(1)  
Tārānātha says that he killed six brothers. His account contains a very confused story of Nemita the King of Campārṇa who had six sons born of lawful wives, and Aśoka, who was apparently the natural son of his connection with the daughter of a merchant. Aśoka defeated the people of Nepal and the kingdom of Khāśya and he received the region around Pāṭaliputra as reward. Nemita died suddenly and the grandees of his kingdom raised Aśoka to the throne. The other brothers opposed this move so Aśoka had them killed and seized their land. Certainly six brothers is closer to the truth than ninety-nine. The Ceylon chronicles allow only the youngest brother Tissa to remain un<sup>(2)</sup>hurt. We shall discuss this legend later.

The Divyāvadāna states that when Bindusāra was alive the Ajīvika saint Piṅgalavatsa pronounced Aśoka as the most able son to follow Bindusāra.<sup>(3)</sup> Aśoka also had the support of the ministers. I Tsing records the story of the earlier king Bimbisāra having a dream in which he saw a piece of cloth and

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(1) GBI, Ch. VI, p. 28.

(2) Mah. V. 150

(3) XXVI, p. 371.

(1)

a stick which was divided into eighteen fragments. The Buddha is said to have explained to him that these were the eighteen schools into which his philosophy would be split, and that over a hundred years after his Parinirvāṇa a king called Aśoka would come to the throne and would rule over the whole of Jambudvīpa and would unite the schools.

Obviously Aśoka realised his potentialities as a ruler through his successful viceroyalty at Uḡgāin and his ability to quell the revolt at Taxila. This probably determined him to make a bid for the throne. That he was not the rightful heir is obvious from the various legends, such as that of the Ajīvika saint foretelling his kingship, and also the story of his mother Subhadraṅgī being kept away from the king. Perhaps his killing of his elder brother or other brothers led to a palace revolution. This accounts for the story of fratricide in Buddhist literature. In the 5th Pillar Edict he mentions officers who have amongst their other functions the superintending of the welfare of the families of his brothers, sisters and other relatives. <sup>(2)</sup> This would suggest that he did have surviving brothers, though it has been argued that it refers only to the families of such brothers. We feel that this is stretching the point unnecessarily.

The Vamsatthapakāsini <sup>(3)</sup> embroiders on the story of Aśoka's accession still further. Bindusāra's wife and the mother of

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(1) Takakusu ed. (1896) pp. 13, 14.  
(2) R.E.V. Shah. CII, I, p. 55.  
(3) I. p. 189.

Aśoka was the queen Dhammā. When she was pregnant she wanted to trample the moon and the sun. Her further wishes were to play with the stars and eat up the forests. The city elders were asked to try and interpret these signs. Dhammā was a devotee of the Ājīvika sect.<sup>(1)</sup> The particular Ājīvika ascetic who interpreted these signs had been a python in his last birth and had died listening to a bhikkhu reciting the Abhidhamma. He declared that Dhammā's desire to trample the moon and the sun was to be taken as a sign of her son conquering all the peoples of India, and ruling over the entire territory. The other's desires signified that Aśoka would kill the brothers who displeased him. The text states that Aśoka had a hundred brothers. He killed all but one. The ascetic also predicted that he would destroy the ninety-six heretical sects and would associate himself actively with Buddhism.

The name of his mother Dhammā is interesting. It could well be that his name Dhammāsoka arose simply as a means of identifying him as the son of Dhammā, like such names as Sāriputta. It may not originally have had anything to do with his piety.

After putting his ninety-nine brothers to death the Mahāvamsa adds that he spared the life of the youngest,<sup>(2)</sup> Tissa. This was his uterine brother who was later made vice-regent. He was further made to realise the power of suffering as it impressed the mind of a bhikkhu through personal experience.

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(1) Hence it may be suggested that Aśoka was later favourably disposed towards them and donated caves to them. CII, I. p. 181.

(2) Mah. V. 450.

In Pāli sources this brother is called Tissa,<sup>(1)</sup> in the Divyāvadāna, Vītāśoka or Vigatāśoka,<sup>(2)</sup> and in Chinese sources Sudatta and Sugatra.<sup>(3)</sup> He is said to have lived at first in great luxury, unconcerned with the world around him. In order to teach him a lesson Aśoka put him on the throne for a few days and then accused him of trying to usurp the crown, and sentenced him to die in seven days. It is related that during these seven days Tissa realised why Buddhist monks, being conscious of eventual death, forsake pleasure. He gave up his erstwhile habits left the palace and became an arhat. In the Mahāvamsa Aśoka appoints his brother Tissa as an uparāja or vice-regent, but the latter retires to a life of religious devotion having come under the influence of the preacher Mahādhammarakkhita.<sup>(4)</sup> He was then known by the name of Ekavihārika. It is possible that this tradition is based on fact, although the reality may not have been quite so simple as this story suggests. Younger brothers can often stand in the way of a king, particularly a king as individualistic as Aśoka. The expedient of forcing them into becoming monks is not unknown in other parts of the world.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Theragātha commentary has a variant on this story.<sup>(5)</sup> Vītāśoka, after leading a full and normal life, saw a grey hair in his head. Contemplating the coming of old age he retired to become a monk and eventually gained arhathood.

(1) Ibid.

(2) XXVIII p. 419 and XXVIII p. 370.

(3) A-yü -wang-chuan refers to him as Sudatta. Przyluski p. 270 ff. So-ta-to. The Fên-pie-kung-tê-hun refers to him as Sugatra. ch. III. Siu-ka-tu-lu.

(4) V.33.

(5) Colombo ed. 1918, p. 295 ff. There is a very similar story in a Buddhist text. (Majjh. Nik. 11, 74 ff.)

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Hsüan Tsang has a different version. He refers to the younger brother as Mahendra and describes him as a dissolute young man. Having been scolded by Aśoka for his behaviour he asked forgiveness. His life changed completely when, having meditated for a while in a darkened chamber, he became an arhat, and by way of residence he was given cave dwellings at Pāṭaliputra. Fa-hsien says that the younger brother retired to a solitary hill. Aśoka invited him to live with the family, but he preferred to live away. Therefore the king had a hill constructed for him at Pāṭaliputra so that even when living in isolation he would still be close.

(2)

In the Avadāna of the younger brother of king Aśoka the story is carried further. Aśoka orders that all the nirgranthas in the monasteries be killed because he considers them heretics. His younger brother is mistaken for one and is killed. This makes Aśoka aware of the folly of his order and it is recalled. This incident is of interest even apart from the narrative. It shows that Aśoka, although a Buddhist and a believer in toleration as his edicts suggest, was suspicious of deviationists. Probably this legend is a later Buddhist effort to portray the extent and the zeal of the emperor for Buddhism.

The desire to place his brother on the right path would appear to be a later development in Aśoka's character. As a

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- (1) Watters II, p. 94.  
(2) Giles. TF.H. p. 45.  
(3) Przyluski, LEA, p. 278.

young man the Buddhist sources describe him as an intensely wicked person. In one story, when the women of his harem tell him that he is unpleasnat to look at, he has all five hundred of them burnt, thus earning the name of Caṇḍāsoka.

Rādhāgupta his minister advises him to employ other people to perform such deeds, since it was unseemly in a king to act in

such a way. <sup>(1)</sup> This was the origin of the idea of building a "Hell". Here innocent people were trapped and made to undergo the most terrible tortures. Fa-hsien mentions this

story and states that Aśoka visited the infernal regions and studied their tortures. <sup>(2)</sup>

Hsüan Tsang states that he actually saw the pillar marking the spot of Aśoka's Hell. <sup>(3)</sup>

Tārānātha relates that Aśoka spent many years in pleasurable pursuits and was then called Kāmāśoka. <sup>(4)</sup> Then he had a period of wickedness when he was known as Caṇḍāsoka. Finally his conversion to Buddhism and his subsequent piety earned him the name of Dhammāśoka.

The conversion to Buddhism was initiated by the act of a bhikkhu who, when tortured in the Hell, remained unperturbed, <sup>(5)</sup> thereby arousing the interest of Aśoka. The monk then preached to the king who was eventually converted.

The account in the Rājataranḡiṇī does not relate any of these stories. Aśoka is described simply as a follower

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(1) Ibid, p. 235.

(2) Giles TF.H. p. 56.

(3) Watters II p. 89.

(4) ~~EBI~~, VI, p. 28.

(5) Przyluski, LEA, p. 237 ff.

of the doctrine of the Jina and active in the building of  
stupas and magnificent caityas.<sup>(1)</sup>

This portrayal of Aśoka as an extremely wicked man suddenly converted, we may safely regard as a fabrication of the Buddhist authors. It naturally emphasised the value of his piety as a Buddhist if he could be described as a thoroughly unworthy man prior to his conversion. The stories of his actual conversion do not tally from source to source. Furthermore if wickedness was so deeply ingrained in him as the monks would have us believe, there would surely have been some hint of it in the account of his life before he ascended the throne. His wickedness appears all at once with the story of his killing his ninety-nine brothers, making himself king and setting up a place in which to torture the innocent. Equally suddenly he is converted, and all trace of wickedness disappears.

Some members of his immediate family are mentioned and named in the sources. The Chief Queen for the most part of his reign was Asandhimittā who is well spoken of in the Māhāvamsa.<sup>(2)</sup> She died four years prior to the death of Aśoka. Thomas has suggested that Asandhimittā was the Devi of Ujjain, but we believe, as we have explained earlier, that Devi remained behind.<sup>(3)</sup> A second queen, Kāruvākī, is mentioned in the Queen's edict at Allahabad, in which her religious and charitable donations are referred to.<sup>(4)</sup> She

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- (1) I. 102-104.  
(2) V. 85 and XX, 2.  
(3) CHI. I, p. 500.  
(4) CII, I, p. 158.

is described as the mother of the prince Tivara, the only one to be mentioned by name in the inscriptions. Another queen referred to in the Divyāvadāna as the third wife was Padmāvati<sup>(1)</sup>. She was the mother of Dharmavivardhana, who was also called Kunāla owing to the beauty of his eyes, and whose tragic death we shall discuss later.

The queen who succeeded Asandhimittā on the latter's death in the thirty-fourth year of Aśoka's reign was Tiṣyarakṣitā, the last Chief Queen. References to her in the Buddhist sources, are not complementary since she was responsible for injuring the Bodhi-tree to such an extent that it began to wither<sup>(2)</sup>. Furthermore she was supposed to have had Aśoka completely in her power during his last years. Aśoka's marriage to Tiṣyarakṣitā may well have been a late marriage, as he seems to have been considerably under her influence, judging by the Avadāna stories<sup>(3)</sup>. Despite his enthusiasm for Buddhism Aśoka did not forego the royal privilege of having many wives. The name Tiṣyarakṣitā is curious. Sen suggests that it may be a name which she adopted after becoming Chief Queen, Tiṣya being taken by him as Aśoka's star<sup>(4)</sup>. One of his own names may have been Tiṣyarakṣita and she may have adopted the same name in its feminine form, Tiṣyarakṣitā.

The Rājatarāṅgiṇī mentions Jalauka as another son of

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- (1) XXVII, p. 405.  
 (2) Mah. XX, 3-6.  
 (3) Przyluski, LEA, p. 285.  
 (4) A.C.Sen, p. 17.  
 (5) ~~L, 118-120.~~

Aśoka, but his mother's name is not mentioned. (1) Fa-hsien speaks of Dharmavivardhana as the son of Aśoka who had been appointed viceroy of Gandhāra. (2)

Of Aśoka's daughters we know of two. One was the Saṅghamittā of the Ceylon Chronicles. The other was Cārumatī, who is said to have married Devapāla the ksatriya. (3) Two of Aśoka's grandsons occur often in various sources. One of these was Samprati, the son of Kunāla, (4) and the other was Daśaratha. At this point we have merely listed the members of his family known to us. Their identification and significance will be discussed at greater length, where it is more appropriate to the narrative.

It is indeed unfortunate that Aśokan chronology still remains uncertain. Here, as in some other periods of ancient history, the historian is justified in wishing that the emperor had been more explicit on matters of chronology. A fundamental question is that of the method of dating the inscriptions, and determining whether the years mentioned were current years or expired years.

The formula of dating in the inscriptions is usually Vāsābhisitena "anoointed....years." For example we have the phrase, (5) "Dbādasa-vāsābhisitena mayā idaṃ āñāpitam" "(When I had been) anoointed twelve years the following was ordered by me."

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(1) I, 118-120  
 (2) Giles TF.H, p. 12 and Divyāvadāna p. 405-406.  
 (3) S. Levi. Le Nepal. I, pp. 263, 331; II, pp. 1-3, 344.  
 (4) Przyluski, LEA, p. 297.  
 (5) R.E.III, Gir. CII, 1, p. 4.

This may be taken to mean twelve full years or the twelfth year current, eleven anniversaries of the original consecration having passed. The first alternative would seem the most logical interpretation but doubt is raised by the fact that in the 5th Pillar Edict there is a statement which runs thus,<sup>(1)</sup>

"yāva saḍuvīsativassabhisitena me etāye antalikāye paṇnavīsati baṃdhanamokkhāni kaṭāni."

"Until I had been anointed twenty-six years in this period the release of prisoners was ordered by me twenty-five times."

This makes it amply clear that the dating must have been in current years and not in expired years. The term vasābhisitena refers to "the.....year after the year of my consecration." He states clearly that the twenty-five releases did not take place all in one year but over the period of twenty-five years running into the twenty-sixth year when the edict was issued. This view of the dating having been in current years is held both by Mookerji<sup>(2)</sup> and Eggermont<sup>(3)</sup>.

Prisoners were released generally to commemorate some important event in the royal year, such as the anniversary of the king's coronation or his birthday.<sup>(4)</sup> Thus it would be reasonable to assume that by the twentysixth year of Aśoka's reign there would have been twenty-five occasions when

(1) P.E.¶. Delhi-Topra. CII, I, p. 125.

(2) A. p. 184 n. 6.

(3) CRAM. p. 64.

(4) Cf. Artha. II, 36.

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when prisoners were released. It can of course be argued that these twenty-five occasions may have been arbitrary and may not have been annual events, but in that case it seems more than likely that Aśoka would have made some reference to the occasions which prompted them and would not have specifically mentioned their number. The specific reference to there having been twenty-five such occasions during a period of twenty-five years does suggest strongly that they were annual occurrences.

In a detailed analysis of Aśokan chronology the first problem is that of the year of his coronation. This is linked naturally with the question of the reputed interregnum of four years between the death of Bindusāra and the accession of Aśoka. There is a conflict in the sources on this matter. The Ceylon chronicles<sup>(1)</sup> state that there was such an interregnum whereas the Purāṇas<sup>(2)</sup> are silent about it.

If we accept the tradition that Aśoka was not the direct heir and that there was a struggle for the throne amongst him and his brothers on the death of Bindusāra, it seems quite logical for there to have been an interregnum and certainly four years would not be an unusually lengthy time in which Aśoka might establish his position. We have stated earlier in this chapter our reasons for accepting the Ceylon tradition of a struggle for succession among Bindusāra's sons.

<sup>(3)</sup> Smith does not accept this tradition and in fact

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- (1) Dīp. VI, 21, 22; Mah. V. 22.  
(2) Pargiter, DKA, pp. 27, 28.  
(3) A p. 19.

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disregards altogether the story of Aśoka having killed his ninety-nine brothers. He believes that there was no bloodshed and that Aśoka's accession was a peaceful one. Nevertheless he allows for a lapse of four years between the accession and the coronation of Aśoka placing the former in 273 B.C. and the latter in 269 B.C.<sup>(1)</sup>

Filliozat dates the coronation to circa 261 or 264 B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> This date is based on the information regarding the Greek kings and the revolt of Diodotus the Bactrian against Antiochus II.

Thomas dates the accession 274 B.C. and the coronation 270 B.C.<sup>(3)</sup> He suspects that the interregnum was an invention made in the interests of a chronological system. He rejects the Ceylon tradition of a mass fratricide, though he believes that the elder brother Sumana was vanquished by Aśoka.

Dikshitar has suggested that this gap of four years took place because Aśoka had to wait until he was twenty-four before he could be officially crowned,<sup>(4)</sup> twenty-four being the earliest age at which a king could be rightfully crowned.<sup>(5)</sup> Since he was only twenty when he succeeded Bindusāra, he had to wait four years for his coronation. But there is no sound evidence for this calculation. In fact the evidence as it exists gives us a different picture. The Ceylon

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(1) A, p. 20.

(2) L'IC, p. 219.

(3) CHI, I, pp. 502, 503.

(4) MP, p. 87.

(5) Jayaswal HP, II, pp. 52, 53. See also JBORS, III, p. 461  
Khārevela Insc.

chronicles state that Mahinda was ordained at the age of twenty in the sixth year of Aśoka's reign.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus Mahinda was ten years old at the death of Bindusāra. This in turn makes it impossible for Aśoka to have been only twenty years old at the death of his father. We can safely suggest that he was at least thirty at the time of his accession.

The Mahāvamsa states that "Four years after the famous (Aśoka) had won for himself the sovereignty he consecrated himself as king of the city of Pāṭaliputrā."<sup>(2)</sup> This four-year delay has recently been contested by Eggermont.<sup>(3)</sup> His main argument is that in the Ceylon tradition the year 218 after the death of the Buddha had to be maintained at any cost as the coronation year of Aśoka. "Owing to a number of manipulations such as the insertion of new names of kings and the increase and decrease of years of reign it became necessary to assign to Aśoka a four-year period of unanointed kingship, if the number 218 post Buddham mortuum was to be maintained."<sup>(4)</sup>

If the Ceylon chronicles are to be accused of having had their dates tampered with to fit a pattern, the Purāṇas have not escaped from similar treatment either. If it was a matter merely of filling a gap of four years, this period of time could easily have been apportioned among other reigns

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(1) Mah. V. 204.

(2) V. 22

(3) CRAM, p. 86 and p. 144 ff.

(4) Ibid, p. 161.

in such a way as not to attract attention. We are of the opinion that the four-year interim period was inserted not simply to make the dates fit but rather as a regularly transmitted tradition, and its accuracy seems quite feasible in view of the circumstances of Aśoka's accession. Thus it may well be founded on historical fact. We choose to accept the four years as a period when Aśoka was consolidating his position and when at the end of these four years he felt himself secure the official coronation took place.

In the Introduction we have traced the chronology of the reigns of Candragupta Maurya and Bindusāra until the death of the latter, which took place in 272 B.C.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus allowing for the four-year interregnum we arrive at the date 268 B.C. as the coronation year of Aśoka.

Much stress has been laid by historians on the question of the conversion of Aśoka to Buddhism. Some, like Nilkantha Sastri, believe that this dramatic event took place as a result of the Kaliṅga War when the monarch was appalled by the suffering he had caused.<sup>(2)</sup> Eggermont has tried to show that the conversion took place before the Kaliṅga War.<sup>(3)</sup> The obvious doubt as regards the latter theory is whether as a recent convert to non-violent Buddhism he could have engaged in such a large-scale war. The view of Eggermont would

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(1) See Ch. I, pp. 32-43.

(2) ANM, p. 200.  
 We have merely quoted Sastri as an example. Many historians before him and since have been of the same opinion.

(3) CRAM, p. 69 ff.

suggest either that Aśoka had his own somewhat eccentric interpretation of the "middle way", or that his conversion to Buddhism was in fact not a conversion in the sense of a sudden change of heart involving a violent emotional upheaval.

We believe that to refer to a precise point during his reign as the moment of his conversion to Buddhism is to overstate what actually took place. Apart from the very prejudiced Buddhist accounts, which may well have been coloured by later conditions, we have no real evidence from this period of violent antagonisms between the various religious sects so strong that they would necessitate the disavowal of former beliefs on conversion to a new religion. Some antagonism between the Hindus and the Buddhists there must surely have been, but all evidence shows that at no time in the history of Hindu India was religious enmity so severe as for instance that between Hindus and Muslims. The very fact that for the ordinary believer not wishing to enter the religious order there was no elaborate ritual pertaining to conversion in Buddhism as there is in Islam or Christianity would suggest that no great emphasis was laid on the actual act of conversion. For the layman Buddhism chiefly involved the general acceptance of the Buddhist attitude to life, and the support of Buddhist monks, which did not particularly restrict him in his religious activities.

An interesting point which emerges from the edicts is that Aśoka's fervour for Buddhism increased during his later

(1) years. In the earlier edicts he does not give the impression of being a recent convert to a new religion. None of the fanaticism and bigotry usually associated with new converts is anywhere apparent. The earlier edicts have an individuality and an all pervading humanitarianism which are peculiar to the monarch himself and are not merely the tenets of Buddhism, even though they were issued after his "conversion".

Buddhist sources give two stories regarding the conversion. The Ceylon chronicles relate the legend about Nigrodha. (2) Nigrodha was the posthumous son of Sumana the eldest brother of Aśoka, whom Aśoka killed during the conflict for the throne. He was born in the year of Aśoka's accession. At the age of seven he became a monk and preached to the monarch, who was so impressed by the teaching of his nephew that he accepted Buddhism. As it appears, the story is obviously exaggerated. Eggermont has ingeniously suggested that the age of Nigrodha, seven years, is of significance; that it was meant to record the fact that Aśoka was converted seven years after his coronation. (3) We think however that an attempt to date the "conversion" precisely is not necessary. If it was merely a question of recording the fact of Aśoka being converted in his seventh year,

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(1) Cf. the Kalinga edict and the Schism edict, CII, I, p. 43 ff. and p. 159. For a detailed discussion see Ch. III.

(2) Mah. V, 37-72, and Dīp, VI, 25-99.

(3) CRAM. p. 86 ff.

the chroniclers could have done that with even greater embroidery around the figure of Nigrodha. It seems more plausible that this story records a reconciliation between Aśoka and his nephew. By his seventh year Aśoka was confident that there was no danger to his position on the throne from any male relatives. Restrictions may have been relaxed and Nigrodha made welcome in the royal household. Not being a direct heir the boy may in later years have become a Buddhist monk.

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 The Divyāvadāna gives another version of the conversion of Aśoka and this story is repeated by Hsüan Tsang.<sup>(2)</sup> A prison was established by Aśoka at Pāṭaliputra under the direction of Girika, and the inmates were put to severe tortures. On one occasion Samudra an ex-merchant from Śravastī who had become a monk, was put into the prison, but by his miraculous powers he managed to save himself. Aśoka hearing of this visited the monk and was so impressed by the series of miracles which he performed that he was soon converted to Buddhism. This story has all the ingredients of the usual conversion stories, previous wickedness, revelation through a series of miracles and final conversion. Very little in the way of historical evidence can be gathered from it.

The legend regarding Nigrodha is related at some

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①) XXVI, pp. 374-382.

(2) Watters II, pp. 88,89.

length in the Mahāvamsa. <sup>(1)</sup> Bindusāra had heard of the prophecy that Aśoka would kill his brothers and take the throne. In trying to prevent such an event he posted Aśoka to Ujjain to keep him away from Pāṭaliputra. <sup>(2)</sup> On Bindusāra's death his ministers wrote to Aśoka informing him of what had happened. Aśoka hastened to Pāṭaliputra and there put his brothers to death and seized the throne. Sumana the eldest brother was also killed. His pregnant wife fled to a Caṇḍāla village where she lived in hiding. Here a tree god, Nigrodha, looked after her and she gave birth to a son whom she called Nigrodha. Her son at the age of seven was tonsured and became an arhat. Soon after he left home and travelled to the court of Aśoka. On seeing him the king took an immediate liking to him. This is explained in a story connecting both of them and Tissa from a previous birth. Aśoka recognised this relationship from a previous life when he saw Nigrodha and therefore the latter's teaching was all the more acceptable to him. The Vamsatthapakāsinī <sup>(3)</sup> contains much the same story in its commentary on the verses from the Mahāvamsa.

Further stories of the conversion occur in the Aśokāvadāna. In one section we are told that a twelve year

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(1) V. 37-72.

(2) In fact, it may well have been that Ujjain, being further away from the centre, needed a strong viceroy and Bindusāra recognised Aśoka's abilities in this direction.

(3) V. p. 197.

old merchant's son was responsible for the conversion, and his name is given as Samudra.<sup>(1)</sup> This may be a confused version of two stories. Samudra was the bhikkhu who was unhurt by the tortures in Aśoka's Hell.<sup>(2)</sup> His youth suggests the influence of the Nigrodha story. Tradition of the conversion as recorded in the A-yü-wang-chuan states that a śramaṇa seven years old converted Aśoka. In one of the stories it is related that the young śramaṇa devoured all the five hundred brahmins who were troubling Aśoka because of his interest in Buddhism. After this gargantuan meal, Aśoka was invited to visit the Kukuṭārāma, and there found all the five hundred brahmins now miraculously turned into bhikkhus.<sup>(3)</sup>

The first major event of the reign of Aśoka which can be definitely dated was the Kalinga War and the conquest of Kalinga. The 13th Rock Edict states clearly that this event took place in the eighth year of Aśoka's reign i.e. 260 B.C.<sup>(4)</sup> The tone of this edict, in which he mentions his regret and remorse at the suffering in Kalinga, is not the regret of a sudden convert, but the meaningful contrition of a man who was consciously aware of the sorrow he had caused.

The date of the Kalinga war is connected with the period when Aśoka became a Buddhist. Some historians place the latter event before the war and others after. Thomas

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(1) Przyluski. LEA, p. 237, ff.  
 (2) Przyluski. LEA, p. 154.  
 (3) Ibid, p. 413-418.  
 (4) CII, I, p. 43.

is of the opinion that his conversion to Buddhism took place in his ninth regnal year after the Kalinga War,<sup>(1)</sup> and, furthermore, that he became active at the end of the eleventh year when he became a member of the saṃgha and travelled from place to place. We feel that if this conversion had taken place in a spectacular way after the war, the Ceylonese monks would certainly have made much of it. However there is no reference to the Kalinga War in the Ceylon chronicles. The other view, that the conversion took place before the Kalinga War, is equally unacceptable, for reasons that we have stated earlier.<sup>(2)</sup> Eggermont, who upholds the latter view,<sup>(3)</sup> has also used what he believes to be evidence from Tārānātha. The Tibetan writer refers to nāgas from the sea robbing jewels and thus irritating Aśoka. After he has gained enough merit the king conquers them. This Eggermont interprets as a reference to the people of Kalinga and the Kalinga War. This appears to be a far-fetched explanation. The evidence from Tārānātha is in fact not very relevant since he refers to Aśika conquering the whole of Jambudvīpa during this war, whereas actually only the conquest of Kalinga took place. The reference to the nāgas from the sea is in any case much too vague for them to be identified with the Kalingans.

The question of the conversion can be clarified by

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- (1) CHI, I, pp. 495, 496.  
 (2) CRAM, p. 88.  
 (3) VI, p. 31-33.

referring to the edicts of Aśoka. The Minor Rock Edict is often regarded as his confession to belonging to the Buddhist faith. The relevant portion of this edict reads,<sup>(1)</sup>

"adhikāni adhātiyāni vasāni ya hakam.....sake no tu  
kho bādham prakamte husam ekam savachharam sātireke tu  
kho samvachharem yam mayā sanghe upayīte bādham cha me  
 pakamte!....."

"More than two and a half years (have passed) since I (am) a lay-worshipper (upāsaka). But indeed I had not been very zealous for one year. But indeed a year and somewhat (has passed) since I have visited the Samgha and have been very zealous."

This edict confesses to a lack of fervour for the faith to begin with, which is quite contrary to the evidence of Tārānātha used by Eggermont. It confirms the idea which we have expressed earlier that Aśoka's conversion to Buddhism was a gradual process. If this conversion had taken place at a precise moment within three years after the Kalinga War he would surely have mentioned it in the 13th Rock Edict. Even during the period referred to in the Minor Rock Edict his interest in Buddhism may not have been that of an adherent but an admirer. Visiting the Samgha may have implied the simple fact of the king taking instruction from Buddhist priests on the principles of Buddhism. We must keep in mind the idea that Aśoka appears to have been sincerely

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(1) CII, I, p. 175.

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interested in the mutual understanding between various religious sects, and therefore the enthusiasm he displayed in his earlier edicts may be regarded as perhaps a little exaggerated for a personal belief.

A far more direct avowal of Buddhism is made in the Bhabra edict.<sup>(1)</sup> Here he states his acceptance of the Buddhist creed, the faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha. This edict, as Bloch points out, was written specifically for the local Buddhist clergy and not for the population at large, nor was it an order to the officials of the empire.<sup>(2)</sup> He refers to himself as the "King of Magadha" a title which he uses only on this occasion. In a study of his edicts it is of the greatest importance to distinguish between those which were meant for his subjects and those which were, as it were, a correspondence between him and the Samgha. The former saw him in the rôle of the king addressing his subjects and the latter were his personal religious manifestoes.

It is possible that the Buddhist clergy acknowledged him as their temporal head, referring to him as the king of Magadha in the same way as the Catholic clergy in Europe acknowledged the Holy Roman Emperor. In this case the emperor declares his faith in the creed and quotes specific parts of the scriptures which he expects the clergy to be acquainted with. We may therefore assume that his interest was more personal.

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(1) CII, I, p. 172.

(2) LIA, p. 154.

We are told that ten years after the coronation he went "to the sambodhi".<sup>(1)</sup> Thus this event occurs in 258 B.C. The term sambodhi has previously been interpreted as Aśoka receiving enlightenment.<sup>(2)</sup> Bhandarkar<sup>(3)</sup> and de la Vallee Poussin<sup>(4)</sup> interpreted it as meaning a visit to the Bodhi-tree. But there were still doubts in the minds of some historians. Eggermont<sup>(5)</sup> has brought further evidence to prove the latter theory correct, by pointing out that the term sambodhi is used in the Dīpavamsa to mean the Bodhi-tree.<sup>(6)</sup> It is possible that Aśoka's visit to the Bodhi-tree was a part of a larger country-wide tour which he made, and which he refers to in the same edict as the Dhamma-yāta.

Closely connected with the interpretation of ayāya sambodhim is a discussion on the significance of the mention of a 256 day journey through the kingdom. Though in most of the versions of the Minor Rock Edict the figure 256 is given in an obscure manner, the Sahasram edict makes it quite clear that the figure can have no other significance.

The relevant portion of the edict reads,<sup>(7)</sup>  
"iyam (cha savane) vivuthena duve sampaññā lāṭisatā  
 vivuthā ti 200 50 6 ....."

"And this proclamation (was issued by me) on tour. Two hundred and fifty-six nights (had then been) spent on tour."

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(1) R.E.VIII, CII, I, p. 14.  
 (2) See de la Vallée Poussin ITM, p. 104 ff.  
 (3) A. p. 294.  
 (4) ITM. p. 108.  
 (5) CRAM, p. 80.  
 (6) XVI.  
 (7) CII, I, p. 169.

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Bloch translates "après tournée" for Hultzsch's "on tour" (above), thereby suggesting that the proclamation was issued at the end of the journey when Aśoka had returned to the capital. (1)

If such was the case there was not much point in indicating the number of days spent on tour. He could as well have said, "When I returned from the tour." The edict seems certainly to have been issued while he was actually on tour.

(2)  
The figure 256 has caused much comment. Filliozat has explained the meaning of 256 nights by suggesting that Aśoka divided the year into three periods of four months like the brāhmins. The four month yassa was spent at home, since it was the season of the rains. The rest of the eight months were spent in travelling. On the basis of the Jyotiṣa-vedāṅga a month is calculated as 27 days, 6 hours, 3 minutes and 4 seconds. Four months would therefore work out to 109 days, 12 minutes and 16 seconds. This figure subtracted from the 360 days of the Indian calendar, does not give us 256 days. Two-thirds of the year works out to 240 days and this leaves another 15 days for completing the period. If this number represents the days that a bhikkhu was supposed to travel and beg alms it seems strange that Aśoka did not wait for another 15 days to complete the period as prescribed before issuing the edict. If we calculate on the basis of a thirteen month calendar we still do not arrive at 256 days forming two thirds of the year, since eight

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(1) LIA, p. 149.

(2) JA. 1949 p. 143 ff. L'enigme des 256 nuits d'Aśoka.

months on the basis of the length given in the Jyotiṣa-Vedāṅga consist of 218 days, 24 minutes and 32 seconds. This is roughly thirty-six days short of the journey of Aśoka. Thus the journey of 256 days would work out to a little above nine months. Calculating on the calendar of 354 days in the year which was regarded as a working year leaving out the intercalary months<sup>(1)</sup>, we still do not arrive at 256 days representing two-thirds of the year. Finally since the number of days in a year are known to have varied from year to year we feel that to relate this figure to a prescribed period in Buddhist ritual is misleading.

We are left therefore with two possibilities. One was suggested by Fleet when he claimed that this was Aśoka's final edict and that it was issued in the 256th year after the death of the Buddha.<sup>(2)</sup> Each day of Aśoka's wandering represented a day of the post-nirvāṇa period. According to Fleet, Aśoka abdicated and became a monk some months before issuing this edict. Apart from the fact that such an idea is contradicted by the evidence of the 7th Pillar Edict,<sup>(3)</sup> it is most unlikely that the king now turned monk would travel to the southern region of what was once his kingdom and there issue an edict in precisely the same tone as when he was king. As a monk he would hardly be in a position to address the mahāmāttas of the region with any authority. As regards the number of days being connected with the number of years

(1) Artha, II, 7.

(2) JRAS, 1909, p. 981 ff.

(3) CII, I, p. 130.

after the death of the Buddha, this does not seem a feasible idea. Had it been so Aśoka would not have hesitated for a moment from referring to the connection, particularly as we know from some of his other edicts that he was not exactly modest when it came to praising his own virtues.

We believe that Aśoka's journey was not the wandering or pilgrimage of a royal bhikkhu. The relevant phrase is simply a record of the fact that he had been on tour for 256 days and the number has no other significance.

The geographical locations of this edict are of interest. With the exception of Sahasram, Rupanath and Bairāt, it occurs at sites in the extreme south of the empire, Gāvimath, Brahmagiri, Siddhāpura, Yerrāgudi and Māsiki. The opening phrases refer to Suvarṇagiri, which we accept as the Kanakagiri near Māsiki, and Isilā which we identify with Siddhāpura.<sup>(1)</sup> "The opening passage reads thus,<sup>(2)</sup>

Suvarṇagirīte ayyaputtassa mahāmāttānam ca vacanena

Isilasi mahāmātta ārogiyam vattaviyā."

"From Suvarṇagiri at the word of the prince and of the mahāmātta the mahāmāttas at Isilā are to be wished good health."

Had this edict been issued from Pāṭaliputra why should there have been this opening sentence? The mention of the āryaputra who appears to be the local governor and the good wishes to the officials of Isilā would point to the edict having been issued locally. It is more than likely that it was issued

(1) Ch. III

(2) CII, I, p. 175.

when Aśoka was actually on tour and in the southern regions of his domains. The existence of the same edict at Sahasram and Rūpnath is explained by the fact that this was probably the area through which he was travelling before he travelled south, and the direct overland route from Pāṭaliputra to the south was through the Sahasram-Rūpnath area. Thus the 256 days was apparently the total number of days he had already been on tour when the edict was issued. If this journey had had a purely religious purpose then surely Aśoka would have concentrated on places of Buddhist pilgrimage alone and this edict would have been inscribed only in the sites in central and eastern India.

The tour has been mentioned as a part of the Dhamma-yāta<sup>(1)</sup> or tour of piety of which Aśoka speaks in his 8th Rock Edict. The first Dhamma-yāta took place in his tenth year i.e. 258 B.C. This hypothesis holds only if we accept that he was a Buddhist before the Kalinga War. Assuming as we do that his interest in Buddhism increased after the war, which occurred in his eighth year, 260 B.C. this would not allow sufficient time for the two and a half years to elapse before he became a zealous Buddhist.

The Kalinga War took place in 260 B.C. For two and a half years Aśoka was a lay-worshipper and for a year after that he was a more enthusiastic Buddhist. This brings us to the twelfth year of his reign. Allowing for a year in which

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(1) Eggermont, CRAM, p. 81.

with the end of the war he could devote himself in a greater degree to Buddhism we arrive at the year 256 B.C. or thereabouts for the date of the Minor Rock Edict. This was issued when in about the thirteenth year of his reign.

Kern in his recently published work on Aśoka suggests that the 256 nights were spent in prayer for enlightenment<sup>(1)</sup>. He interprets vyutha as meaning passing a night presumably in prayer since he translates it by the German word, "Andacht", meaning attending to one's devotions or praying. Kern adds that this phrase has nothing to do with going on a pilgrimage. He states that 256 is an auspicious number but does not explain why. Perhaps his reason is the same as that given by Filliozat, that the bhikkhus wandered for 256 days in the year.<sup>(2)</sup> We believe that Kern's interpretation of the word Vyutha is too narrow. The word means "to be separated from" or "to turn away from", which in the context of the edict would suggest that he was away from the court and the business of state as conducted at the capital. We are of the opinion that Aśoka's interest in Buddhism was hardly of the sort which would lead him to spend 256 nights praying for enlightenment. Furthermore there was no necessity for him to have travelled all the way to Isilā in order to do so.

Among the more important sources of chronological evidence available on the reign of Aśoka is that from the 13th Rock Edict. Here five contemporary Greek kings are

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(1) A. p. 38.

(2) Filliozat, JA, 1949, p. 143; and Bloch LIA, p. 150.

mentioned and their identification provides evidence for dating. The passage speaks of,<sup>(1)</sup>

"Antiyoge nāma yonalājā palam cā tenā Antiyogenā cattāli  
4 lajāne Tulamaye nāma Antekine nāma Makā nāma  
Alikyasudale nāma....."

".....here the Yona king name Antiyoga (is ruling), and beyond that Antiyoga (where) four 4 kings (are ruling), (viz. the king) named Tulamaya, named Antekina named Maka, named Alikyasudala....."

The identification of the first four kings appears to be fairly certain. They have been identified as, Antiochus II Theos of Syria (261-246 B.C.), the grandson of Seleucus Nikator; Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (285-247 B.C.); Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia (276-239 B.C.); and Magas of Syrene the year of whose death has not been established, suggested dates ranging from c. 250 B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> to 258 B.C.<sup>(3)</sup>; The last mentioned king, Alexander, can be either Alexander of Corinth (252-244 B.C.) or Alexander of Epirus (272-255 B.C.).<sup>(4)</sup>

It is stated in the edict that it was inscribed in the twelfth year of Aśoka's reign. The edict can be dated on the basis of the chronology of these five kings if the date of the death of Magas can be ascertained and if it can be decided which Alexander the edict refers to. It would appear that the edict was inscribed during the life-time of these kings. We can, however, allow a year for the news

(1) CII, I, p. 43, ff.

(2) N. Sastri, ANM, p. 207.

(3) Bloch, LIA, p. 130 n. 23.

(4) CII, I, p. 48 n. 6; and Lassen, Ind. Alt. II, p. 255.

of the death of any of them to reach Aśoka. Although Alexander of Corinth was more important and better known than Alexander of Epirus, we believe that the latter is the one referred to.

The argument upon which we base our preference in this matter has been considered in detail by Eggermont.<sup>(1)</sup> Most opinions on the subject may be divided into two groups; one would date the 13th Rock Edict to 251 B.C. and the other to c. 258 B.C.

Hutzsch,<sup>(2)</sup> Bhandarkar<sup>(3)</sup> and Beloch<sup>(4)</sup> are in agreement, giving c. 300 - c. 250 B.C. as the date for Magas and accepting the identification of Alexander of Corinth, 252 - c. 244 B.C. Thus the edict is given the later date. Smith dates Magas to 285- 258 B.C. and accepts Alexander of Epirus as Alikiyasudale.<sup>(5)</sup> Thus he prefers 258 B.C. as the date of the edict. Thomas agrees with this dating.<sup>(6)</sup> Mookerji accepts this version and suggests 257 B.C. as a more valid date, on the basis of the news of the death of either Magas or Alexander taking a year to reach Aśoka.<sup>(7)</sup> Ray accepts Tarn's dating of Magas and a two year interval for the news to reach Aśoka, thus dating the edict to 256 B.C. Eggermont prefers the date 255 B.C.<sup>(8)</sup> as the last possible date for the edict.<sup>(9)</sup>

Eggermont bases his arguments on the following points.

Berenice the daughter of Magas was married to Demetrius

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- (1) Acta Orientalia 1940, p. 103 ff.  
 (2) JRAS 1914 p. 947; and CII, I, pp. xxxi-xxxvi.  
 (3) A. pp. 45-48.  
 (4) Griechische Geschichte III, 2, p. 105 (1904 ed)  
 (5) A. p. 43.  
 (6) CHI, I, p. 502. (9) Acta Orientalia 1940 p. 103 ff.  
 (7) A. p. 40.  
 (8) IHQ XI. No.2, p. 217 ff. "The date of the first Maurya".

surnamed Pulcher, soon after her father's death. Demetrius was murdered close upon his marriage and Berenice then married Ptolemy III Euergetes, the man her father had selected for her before he died. Evidence based on the text of Eusebius<sup>(1)</sup> gives 259/8 B.C. as the date for the death of Demetrius, which would give us 261/60 B.C. or earlier as the date of Magas' death.<sup>(2)</sup> But the evidence of Catullus based on a reference to Berenice and, more particularly, the Syrian war gives us 246 B.C. as the marriage date of Berenice and Ptolemy, and it appears from the poem that the marriage took place soon after Demetrius' death. This evidence is confirmed by a reference to these events by Justin.<sup>(3)</sup> As Eggermont states it is hardly likely that Berenice would allow ten or twelve years to pass between the death of Demetrius and her marriage to Ptolemy.

According to Pausanias<sup>(4)</sup> Magas subdued Cyrene five years after a rebellion, which took place in 312 B.C. According to Athenaeus,<sup>(5)</sup> Magas ruled at Cyrene for fifty years. Even if this is a round number invented by the historians we may take c. 250 B.C. to be close enough to the date of the death of Magas. This figure would agree with the evidence pointing to Berenice marrying Ptolemy in 247 B.C.<sup>(6)</sup>

Further, on a comparison of evidence from Polybius

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- (1) I. 237  
 (2) Carma 66. 7-14, 25-27.  
 (3) XXVI, 3.  
 (4) I, 6, 8.  
 (5) 550, B.C.  
 (6) 10, 22, 3.

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(1) and Plutarch and an inscription of Ptolemy III Euergetes, (2)  
husband of Berenice, Eggermont comes to the conclusion that  
in 247 B.C. Demetrius was murdered, the constitution of  
Cyrene was altered, and Berenice married Ptolemy III, who  
promulgated the edict contained in the above-mentioned  
inscription, and soon after left for the Syrian war.

A further contention is made by Ray on the basis of coins  
bearing the imprint of Berenice. (3) Most of these coins are  
either of the period of Berenice I, which were in fact struck  
by Magas and have his monogram, or of Berenice III struck  
by Ptolemy. Only one may be ascribed to Berenice II. This  
coin is of silver-brass with a head of Berenice with a diadem,  
but without the marriage veil and bearing the legend ΒΕΡΕΝΙΚΗΣ  
ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ and without the monogram of Magas. Ray  
uses this coin as a proof for saying: "Since Ptolemy III  
conquered Cyrene and married Berenice not earlier than 248/7  
B.C. and since the island was administered by a republican  
league before Ptolemy's conquest, Berenice II must have  
reigned long before 251 B.C." (4) As Berenice's reign followed  
that of Demetrius there is hardly any possibility that he  
lived about 251/50 B.C. The identity of this coin is by  
no means certain. In respect of weight and appearance it  
is very similar to the coins of Berenice I. Thus there is  
no certainty about its belonging to Berenice II.

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(1) Philop. I, 3.

(2) "Alcune Iscrizioni di Cirene" Ferri, Jahgang 1925, No. 5.

(3) I.H.Q. XI, No. 2, p. 217 ff.

(4) Eggermont. Acta Orientalia 1940 p. 115.

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On the basis of all this evidence it become increasingly probable that Magas' death took place in c. 252-250 B.C. and certainly no earlier. We know from Pillar Edict 6 that Aśoka started issuing edicts in the twelfth year of his reign. This would give us 256/55 B.C. which date fits in well with the five kings mentioned. On the question of whether Alikyasudale was Alexander of Corinth or Alexander of Epirus, it is evident that it could only be the latter on the basis of chronology. The former did not begin his reign until 252 B.C. and was therefore not known to Aśoka at the time when the inscription was issued if at all. Alexander of Epirus died in 255 B.C. probably just a few months after the issuing of the inscription. Eggermont suggests that had it been Alexander of Corinth, then Aśoka would have mentioned all the other Greek kings of Asia Minor through whose lands the embassies must have passed. But we are of the opinion that this is not a very conclusive argument. Probably these two particular kings were mentioned because of their closer relationship with Aśoka. Certainly the first two are known to have sent embassies to the Mauryan court.

Though the date of the death of Magas is not absolutely certain we may assume that the first of the five kings to die was Alexander of Epirus in 255 B.C. Thus the edict must have been inscribed in 255 B.C. or just after. This gives us the twelfth or thirteenth year of Aśoka's reign, as the latest date for the edict.

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The Greek kings are mentioned in connection with envoys sent by Aśoka to preach the Dhamma in countries outside his empire. The sending of these envoys or "missionaries" as they are often termed, brings us to a related question, that of the sending of Mahinda to Ceylon on a similar mission and the date of his mission. But a preliminary event that needs investigation is the Third Buddhist Council alleged to have been held at Pāṭaliputra.

Two Buddhist councils are said to have been held previous to the one at Pāṭaliputra. The first at Rājagṛha<sup>(1)</sup> was called in order to systematise and interpret the Piṭakas. It was at this council that the impeachment and confession of Ānanda took place. Not all the Buddhist sources however mention the council.<sup>(2)</sup> The second council was said to have occurred at Vaiśālī.

Mention of the third council is made only in the Pāli sources. According to these Aśoka is said to have played a very important role in the calling of this council and in the adopting of certain resolutions. Yet strangely enough Aśoka makes no mention of it in any of his inscriptions. The nearest we come to a possible reference to it in the edicts,<sup>(3)</sup> is the Schism edict, where he speaks emphatically of the continued unity of the Samgha and the expulsion of dissident monks and nuns.

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(1) N. Dutt. *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 324.

(2) Hofinger, Ch. I, p. 151 ff.

(3) Bloch, *LIA*, p. 152.

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The story as related in the Dīpavaṃsa starts by explaining that the entry of non-orthodox sects into the Buddhist viḥāras led to a laxity of observances and beliefs. (1) This happened 236 years after the Parinirvāṇa. Eventually some of the orthodox Buddhists objected. But one of Aśoka's ministers, who had ordered the pātimokka ceremony to be performed, was so angered at some of the elders not performing it that it resulted in their being killed. This is explained at greater length in the Mahāvāṃsa. (2) The elders were killed because they refused to perform the ceremonies with the heretics. The minister having been sent by Aśoka to settle the matter decided to use force. The killing came to an end when Tissa, the king's brother, who appears to have been an orthodox Buddhist, was pained by this event and reported it to the king through another minister.

There is another version of this story in the northern tradition, but the events described are not the same. (3) Riots break out against the Buddhists first in Punḍravardhana and then they gradually spread to Pāṭaliputra itself. They are said to have been started by Nirgranthas and as a result there is considerable bloodshed. In this version, Aśoka's brother Vitaśoka is killed. Aśoka, stricken with grief, realises that it is his duty to interfere and pacify the opponents.

Another variation on this story is to be found in the

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- (1) VII, 36-38, 49.  
(2) V, 234-242.  
(3) Divya, p. 427.

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(1)  
A-yü-wang-chuan. The events are repeated and Aśoka's brother Siu-ta-to is mistaken for a Nirgrantha and killed. Aśoka then guarantees the lives of all śramaṇas.

As Eggermont has pointed out, the real difference between the two stories is that whereas in the Pāli version the conflict between Buddhists and non-Buddhists leads to the Third Council, and the purge of the latter from the Samgha, in the northern account it merely leads to the king guaranteeing the lives of all śramaṇas.

The Pāli tradition continues the story with the purge of the Samgha.<sup>(3)</sup> Aśoka sends for Moggaliputta Tissa and gathers all the bhikkhus in the Aśokārāma. Only those believing in the Vibhajja doctrine are accepted as true Buddhists. The rest are expelled from the Samgha. After this purge the Third Buddhist council is held at Pāṭaliputra with Moggaliputta Tissa presiding. The Vibhajjavāda is proclaimed as the true faith.

The skeleton of these stories may well be authentic. As Eggermont shows, Aśoka did encourage joint assemblies of various sects both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, so the presence of Ājīvikas and Nirgranthas in the Buddhist ārāmas would not be out of order.<sup>(4)</sup> It would bear out his policy of bringing various sects together.

The possibility of conflicts and even riots under

- 
- (1) Przyluski, LEA, pp. 278, 279.  
(2) CRAM, p. 113.  
(3) Mah, V, 268-271.  
(4) CRAM, p. 113 ff.

these circumstances cannot be ignored. Debates must have been heated enough, not to speak of opposing religious communities living together in the same ārama. It is equally possible that Aśoka sent a minister to investigate and pacify the quarrelling groups. The death of the king's brother is however open to doubt. Aśoka would have realised the necessity of an amicable solution as soon as the rioting became serious. The death of the younger brother seems a fictional addition to the story in order to add to its pathos and to increase the effect of its moral on its hearers.

Dutt has suggested that since the non-Ceylonese sources do not give much prominence to these events, the conflict was in fact a Ceylonese fabrication, based on disputes between the Vibhajjavāda and other sects in Ceylon and (1) intended to provide support for the former.

Of all these events mentioned the only one that appears to be corroborated by the inscriptions of Aśoka is that of the purge of the Samgha. Here there seems to be some connection with the Schism edict. The latter assumes that the purge has already taken place and that the Samgha is once more united. It threatens expulsion (wearing the white robe as against the yellow), to those monks and nuns who are accused of breaking up the Samgha. This edict does not prove the fact of a council having met before the purge. It merely states that the Samgha must be cleansed of

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(1) Early Monastic Buddhism II, p. 265.

dissident elements. This may well have been a local matter carried out individually by each community of monks and nuns under a local council no doubt with the knowledge of the mahāmāttas. If Aśoka had played such an important role in the purge by calling a council at Pāṭaliputra, without doubt he would have mentioned it in one of his edicts. In none of the three versions of the Schism Edict at Kosambi, Sarnath, and Sanchi is there any mention of such a council.

It has been suggested that the Schism Edict was inscribed at the end of Aśoka's reign or in the latter years because "we easily find again the one hundred per cent Buddhist of the Ceylonese tradition."<sup>(1)</sup> This argument assumes from the start that Aśoka was a one hundred per cent Buddhist. There is another perspective on this edict. It can also be interpreted from the point of view of the ruler, who is exasperated by the conflicts within the Samgha and in which he, as a very partial administrator, is being asked constantly to intervene. The first part of the edict in which he hopes that the unity of the Samgha may last as long as the sun and the moon is no doubt the utterance of a Buddhist wishing long-life to the order. But the second part threatening the expulsion of dissident members may well be evidence of the firm hand of the ruler, who refuses to allow religious bickerings at this level to dominate his work and that of his administrators. The

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(1) Eggermont, CRAM, p. 116.

pacification of religious sects has never been a happy task. The level at which Aśoka was taking his religion and that of the Samgha must certainly have been very different.

The date of the edict remains uncertain. The Pāli chronicles state that the council and the purge took place 236 years after the death of the Buddha. <sup>(1)</sup> On the basis of 486 B.C. as the date of the Parinirvāṇa, this would result in c. 250/49 B.C. as the date for the council i.e. in the eighteenth or nineteenth year of Aśoka's reign.

Nilakantha Sastri has suggested a late date for the edict on the basis of its position on the Allahabad pillar. <sup>(2)</sup> He believes that it was issued sometime after the 7th Pillar Edict. The seven pillar edicts are engraved around the pillar, each letter carefully cut and the whole evenly spaced. Below the edicts is the Schism edict and further down the Queens edict. If the Schism edict had been inscribed before the pillar edict it would most certainly have been placed at a higher level and probably would have been above the other edicts. <sup>(3)</sup>

It may in fact have been inscribed towards the end of Aśoka's reign. If the Samgha was in such a state of chaos as the Pāli chronicles would have us believe, with Buddhists and non-Buddhists living in discord in the various ārāmas,

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(1) Dip VII, 36-38.

(2) ANM p. 216

(3) CII, I, 1st. ed. Cunningham p. 38 and Plate XXII.

it must have taken many years before the process of clarifying the situation could have achieved its purpose. The mere throwing out of dissident members was not sufficient. It is quite likely that this process did start in the eighteenth or nineteenth year of Aśoka's reign and that it was not until another ten years or so that the Samgha was completely cleansed. The Schism Edict may have been issued when Aśoka felt that these religious conflicts had at last come to an end and some definite criterion of judging an orthodox Buddhist had been established. The Schism Edict is not contrary to the spirit of "Aśoka's idealistic policy of propaganda for mutual understanding and moderation in criticism."<sup>(1)</sup> It is merely a record of the end of the conflict within the Buddhist church itself.

Smith suggests that the council was held in the thirty-first year of Aśoka's reign, subsequent to the edicts, when Aśoka had become a monk, assuming that he became a monk in 240 B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> This explains why there is no reference to it in the edicts. The Bhabra Edict belongs to the same period and is the expression of the wishes of the emperor monk to his brethren.

As regards the historicity of the council we are of the opinion that a local council at Pāṭaliputra may have been held under the direction of Moggaliputta Tissa, with which

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(1) Eggermont CRAM p. 116.  
 (2) EHI, p. 141.

Aśoka had little or no connection. The decision to purge the Samgha everywhere was probably made by way of a solution to the problems of the conflict. This directive was put into practice in every local Samgha, nevertheless it must have taken at least ten years before the Buddhist order was cleansed throughout the country. The council was not of great importance to Aśoka, who was at that time actively preaching toleration. But it was of tremendous importance to theological dogma, hence it is given prominence in the Raxxi Pāli chronicles. <sup>(1)</sup> It was probably for the same reason that an attempt was made to connect Aśoka with it. Because of its importance to Theravāda Buddhism this local council <sup>(2)</sup> was described in exaggerated terms.

Curiously enough Jaina theological history describes a similar council concerning various Jaina theological sects. Charpentier has collected the material and relates the following events. <sup>(3)</sup> At the end of the twelve year famine, in about c. 300 B.C., misfortune fell upon the Jaina church. It was divided into the two conflicting sects of the Svetāambaras and the Digambaras. The monks who had travelled south during the famine had continued in their orthodox ways and on returning to Magadha after the famine, found that those monks who had stayed behind had become lax. The monks at Magadha therefore called a council at

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(1) Eggermont, CRAM, p. 118

(2) cf. Frauwallner, ZDMG, 27, 1952, p. 240-261.

(3) CHI, I, p. 165.

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Pāṭaliputra to collect and revise the scriptures. The closeness of the two traditions would suggest that one has borrowed from the other.

We cannot overlook the idea that the Ceylon chroniclers would want to prove Mahinda a follower of the Vibhajjavāda or Theravāda sect. Either the tradition of the Jaina council was confused with that of the Buddhist council or the council was held but only at a local level and the facts of the conflict and the decisions arrived at, were manipulated by later chroniclers.

Linked with the Third Council is the story of Mahinda's mission to Ceylon. According to the Pāli chronicles Moggaliputta Tissa was responsible for the conversion of Mahinda. <sup>(1)</sup> This event took place when Mahinda was twenty years old in the sixth year of Aśoka's reign. <sup>(2)</sup>

The Third Council was held 236 years after the Parinirvāṇa, and after this missionaries were sent in all directions. Mahinda was thus sent to Ceylon in the nineteenth year of Aśoka's reign. <sup>(3)</sup> The Dīpavamsa states that Mahinda came to Ceylon in 237 after the Parinirvāṇa. He was thus thirty-two years old when he arrived in Ceylon. <sup>(4)</sup> He is said to have died at the age of sixty. <sup>(5)</sup>

We know that previous to the sending of Mahinda there had been contact between Aśoka and Devānāmpiya Tissa, the

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(1) Dīp. VII, 14-20, 24.

(2) Dīp. VII, 21.

(3) Samantapasādhika I, p. 73.

(4) Mah. p. xxxii; and Dīp. XV, 71.

(5) Dīp. XVII, 95; Mah, XX, 32.

king of Ceylon. The Mahāvamsa states that Tissa wanted to send jewels as a present to Aśoka, whom he refers to as "my friend".<sup>(1)</sup> The narrative continues, "For the two monarch (Aśoka and Tissa) already had been friends a long time, though they had never seen each other." There are two references to Ceylon in the edicts, both of which were definitely issued prior to the Buddhist council.<sup>(2)</sup> We base this fact on the identification of Tamrāparṇi with Ceylon.<sup>(3)</sup>

A direct contact between Aśoka and Tissa is mentioned in the Dīpavamsa. Tissa was first crowned 236 years after the Parinirvāṇa that is in about the eighteenth or early nineteenth year of Aśoka's reign.<sup>(4)</sup> Soon after this Tissa sent an embassy to Aśoka headed by his nephew Ariṭṭha.<sup>(5)</sup> The journey took them from Ceylon to Tāmralipti and from there to Pāṭaliputra. After five weeks at Pāṭaliputra the embassy returned to Ceylon with gifts for Tissa and also a message to the effect that Aśoka had become an upāsaka (lay-worshipper), and suggested Tissa do the same. If in fact Aśoka had sent such a message it is surprising that he did not mention that he had been an upāsaka for nine years as would be the case judging from the evidence of the Minor Rock Edict. Tissa was consecrated a second time soon after the return of his embassy and Mahinda arrived in Ceylon a month later. This

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(1) XI, 18.

(2) R.E. II, Gir, and R.E. XIII, Kālsi, CII, I, pp. 2, 43.

(3) Ch. III.

(4) Dīp XVII, 78.

(5) Mah. XI, 20.

would give us 250/249 B.C. as the date for the second consecration. It might be suggested that the accounts of this embassy and Mahinda's mission reflect one and the same event. The envoy could well have been Mahinda the king's son, an envoy of an appropriately high rank to honour the coronation of a friendly neighbour. In his capacity as a Buddhist monk he no doubt filled the dual purpose of preaching Buddhism to the king and his court as well.

It is indeed strange that the chronicles should have mentioned that Tissa was crowned twice. There is no precise explanation for the second coronation. Since it closely followed Tissa's initiation into Buddhism it may be assumed that from the point of view of the Buddhist monks it was the more important of the two, and no doubt was the one referred to in the king list. Assuming as we do, 486 for the Parinirvāṇa we arrive at the following dates for the  
(1)  
early kings of Ceylon;

Vijaya	486-448 B.C.	38	regnal	years
Pāṇḍuvāsudeva	447-417 B.C.	30	"	"
Abhaya	417-397 B.C.	20	"	"
Interregnum				
Pāṇḍukabhaya	380-310 B.C.	70	"	"
Muṭaśiva	310-250 B.C.	60	"	"
Tissa	250-210 B.C.	40	"	"

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(1) Mahā pp. xxvi, xxxvii.

250 B.C. as the coronation year of Tissa confirms the date suggested above i.e. the nineteenth year of Aśoka.

The reliability of the above king list may be doubted. The extraordinarily long reigns of Pāṇḍukabhaya and Muṭasaīva following in succession and the well-rounded off figures of the other reigns suggest some manipulation of the dates by the monks.

Arittha, the nephew of Tissa appears again in the narrative. <sup>(1)</sup> This time he was sent to Pāṭaliputra to bring Saṃghamitta to Ceylon in order that the Queen Anulā and the ladies of the court could be ordained. It was on this occasion that Aśoka was supposed to have sent a branch of the Bodhi tree to Ceylon. The chronicles do not give any date for this event. The historical certainty of the whole matter is in doubt. Fa hsien in his memoirs mentions that a king of Ceylon had sent an envoy to Central India to get seeds of the Bodhi tree, which were then planted in Ceylon. He claims to <sup>(2)</sup> have seen the tree in Ceylon. <sup>(2)</sup> The story of <sup>(2)</sup> Bodhi tree, which were then planted in Ceylon. of Saṃghamittā have seen the tree in Ceylon. The story of <sup>(2)</sup> ed to the main story, which gave the chronicler a breathing space in which to indulge in imaginative passages, as the descriptions of the journey certainly are. Besides it is unlikely that Tissa would have permitted Anulā to be ordained, since she

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(1) Mah. XI, 18-42, XVIII and XIX.

Dīp XI, 25-40, XII, 1-7, XV, 74-95, XVI, 1-7, 38-41.

(2) Giles. ~~TF~~, p. 68.

was the Chief Queen.

The story of the branch of the Bodhi-tree may contain some truth. It is possible that Tissa in his enthusiasm may have requested such a branch from Aśoka who lost nothing by granting this request, but if anything gained Tissa's further goodwill.<sup>(1)</sup>

We are told in the Dīpavaṃsa<sup>(2)</sup> and the Mahāvāṃsa<sup>(3)</sup> that at the conclusion of the council it was decided to send missionaries to various parts of the country and outside the kingdom of Aśoka. Well-known Buddhist monks were selected and sent to the following places;<sup>(4)</sup>

Majjhantika	was sent to	Kashmir and Gandhāra
Mahādeva	" "	" Mahiśamaṇḍala
Rakkhita	" "	" Vanavāsi
Yona Dhammarakkhita	" "	" Aparantaka
Mahādhammarakkhita	" "	" Mahārattha
Mahārakkhita	" "	" Yona
Majjhima	" "	" the Himalayan area
Sona and Uttara	were "	" Suvannabhūmi
Mahinda	was "	" Lankā

(1) That this story spread beyond India and Ceylon can be seen in a place as distant as Tun-Huang. In cave 045 there is a fresco which has been interpreted as Aśoka sending a large golden image of the Buddha and a branch of the bodhi-tree to Ceylon in a ship with striped sails. This particular fresco has been dated to the seventh century A.D.

(2) VIII, 1-13.

(3) XII, 1, 2.

(4) Mah. XII, 1-8.

The mission to the Himalayas was a large one and included Kassapagotta, Dhūndibhissara, Sahadeva and Mūlakadeva. Some of the relic caskets from Sanchi contain a few of these names. The inscriptions on these caskets are thought by Sastri to be post-Aśokan and this he suggests, is due to a redistribution of relics subsequent to the death of the Theras.<sup>(1)</sup> The word Yona before the name of Dhammarakkhita suggests a non-Indian monk, possibly Greek or Persian. But it seems strange that he should be sent to Aparantaka on the western coast of India, whilst Mahāraakkhita was sent to Yona. Yona appears to refer to the Indo-Greek settlements in the north-west, where a Greek or Persian missionary would have been of greater practical value than an Indian. Though it would seem from the reference to Tuṣkāsapa in the Junāgarh inscription that there may have been a foreign settlement of Persians or Greeks in western India.<sup>(2)</sup> The other possibility is that there was some textual confusion when the chronicle was being transcribed. It may be said that the names of these missionaries are so similar to each other that they are not authentic. However it is possible that these were the names that were adopted by the persons concerned when they entered the order, a custom known to exist in Buddhist ritual as in the ritual of some other religions such as Christianity.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) ANM, p. 217.

(2) S.I. p. 169 and Ch. IV. p. 228 ff

(3) Kern, Manual of Buddhism, p. 117.

The sending of these missionaries by the Buddhist council has been associated with the Dhammavijaya (1) (conquest by piety) policy of Aśoka. The thirteenth rock edict is quoted in support of this view, where Aśoka declares that true conquest is conquest by piety, and he claims that his Dhamma (2) has spread beyond the frontiers of his own kingdom. But this is no basis for a necessary connection between the Buddhist missions and the embassies of Aśoka. The 13th Rock Edict was issued in 256/55 B.C. and the embassies must have been sent before this date. In the 5th Rock Edict he specifically mentions that in his thirteenth year he started the institution of dhamma-mahāmattas. (3) This was a special body of officials whose work was concerned with the practice and spread of the Dhamma.

If we can call this missionary work on the part of Aśoka he had a lead of at least five if not more years on the Buddhist missions. The Buddhist missions were purely religious and were sent out under the direction of the Buddhist council and not under the direction of Aśoka. His own embassies were quite distinct from the Buddhist missions. No doubt he may have aided the latter in many ways but they were not directly sent by him.

It is noticeable that the Buddhist missions concentrate on areas either within the kingdom or on the borders of it. This is only natural since their primary concern was with

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(1) Sastri. ANM, p. 217.  
 (2) CII, I, p. 44.  
 (3) CII, I, pp. 8, 9.

communicating the decisions of the council on purging the Samgha and secondarily with making new converts. Most of the areas mentioned had already received dhamma-mahāmatas or embassies from Aśoka.<sup>(1)</sup> Had the king been responsible for these missions he would have been far more keen on sending them further afield, where/<sup>he</sup> had not already sent his own embassies and officials.

It is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the Ceylon chronicles were composed by a body of Buddhist monks. Although they give an account of some events in the reign of Aśoka they are primarily interested in the development of Buddhism during those years. Historical information is brought in only where it affects this development, and furthermore events of importance to the history of Buddhism are given prominence over all others. Aśoka is of importance to these chroniclers not because of his historical position but because of the role he played in the development of the religion. We must therefore be constantly aware of the distinction between those events which are largely of theological significance, and those which are connected with the policy of the king Aśoka.

Eggermont considers this question of the missions and ambassadors in detail.<sup>(2)</sup> He believes that the year of the arrival of Mahinda in Ceylon was deliberately forged in the Ceylonese tradition. There is a tradition of the

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(1) CII, I, pp. 8, 44.  
 (2) CRAM, pp. 50-59.

Abhayagiri monastery in the Mahāvamsa which Eggermont believes to be an older tradition. <sup>(1)</sup> On the basis of this he has calculated that Mahinda arrived in Ceylon in the twelfth regnal year of Aśoka. That this was not the first mission is evident from the reference to Ceylon in the 13th Rock Edict. Eggermont suggests that Mahinda converted Ceylon to Buddhism in Aśoka's twelfth year. At the time of the founding of Abhayagiri it was known that the Mahāvihāra had been built by Mahinda 218 years previously. There was a break of almost ten years in the history of the Mahāvihāra which according to Eggermont the monks had somehow to manipulate within the framework of the given chronology. <sup>(2)</sup> This was done by a four year interregnum between the reigns of Bindusāra and Aśoka, and by postponing the arrival of Mahinda by six years. Thus by placing the arrival of Mahinda in Aśoka's eighteenth year the chroniclers of the Mahāvamsa arrived at the date 236 after the Parinirvāṇa which fitted into further calculations of chronology.

The forgery took place later when Mahinda's landing was postponed to the eighteenth year of Aśoka.

We are of the opinion that the available evidence is not strong enough to prove this hypothesis. Contacts between India and Ceylon existed well before the time of Aśoka. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that a Buddhist mission came to Ceylon in the twelfth year of

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(1) Mah. XXXIII, 78-87.

(2) Mah. XXXVII, 1-40.

Aśoka but there is no evidence beyond the tradition of the Abhayagiri monastery that this mission was headed by Mahinda. It is likely that the Abhaya<sup>ya</sup>giri tradition suggested Mahinda as the leader of this mission for the same reasons as the Ceylon chronicles, which wanted to add to the prestige of Ceylon thereby. The tradition of Mahinda having built the Mahāvihāra was only a natural corollary to Mahinda having brought Buddhism to Ceylon. Furthermore the association of Mahinda and Tissa strongly favours the nineteenth year of Aśoka, since Tissa was not on the throne in the twelfth regnal year of Aśoka. We prefer to give greater credence to the tradition of Mahinda coming in the nineteenth year of Aśoka.

Eggermont devotes a further few pages to a discussion of the arrival of the Bodhi-tree in Ceylon.<sup>(1)</sup> He rebuilds the chronology of the Mahāvamsa on the basis of the Abhayagiri tradition. He concludes that the Bodhi-tree arrived in Ceylon in the twelfth year of Aśoka's reign and not in the eighteenth year as stated in the Mahāvamsa, and further that Aśoka died in his thirty-fifth regnal year. Whilst accusing the Mahāvamsa chronicler of calculations that do not tally, his own calculations are somewhat confused. The relevant six verses in the Mahāvamsa read thus;<sup>(2)</sup>

"In the eighteenth year of the reign of king Dhammāsoka the great Bodhi-tree was planted in the Mahāmeghavanārāma In the twelfth year afterwards died....Asandhimittā..... In the fourth year after this.....Dhammāsoka raised.....

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(1) GRAM p. 100-103.

(2) Mah. XX, 1-6.

Tissarakkhā to the rank of Queen.

In the third year thereafter (she).....caused the great Bodhi-tree to perish.....

In the fourth year after did Dhammāsoka....fall into the power of mortality.

These make up thirty seven years."

Eggermont states that the first event, the planting of the Bodhi-tree took place not in the eighteenth year but in the twenty-second year, since the chroniclers should have included the four year interim, although earlier in his work he refuses to accept the interim. <sup>(1)</sup> To us it seems obvious that if the dating is in the regnal year of the king it must commence with the year of appointment and not include the interim period. To these 22 years Eggermont adds the next part of the chronology listed above, 12+4+3+4, that is 23 years thus arriving at 45 years for the length of Aśoka's reign. It is amply clear from the text that the years are reckoned in current years, so that the total, in fact reads, 147+11+3+2+3 or 36 expired years, or the 37th current year. Eggermont's calculation of 45 years is followed by the sentence, "This does not agree at all with the number of 37 years of reign which Mahānāma himself states as total." Whereas in reality the miscalculation is entirely on the part of Eggermont. We may thus discard

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(1) CRAM p. 86.

Eggermont's further calculations on this matter.

The only doubtful date in the above quoted verses from the Mahāvamsa is the first, i.e. that in the eighteenth (1) regnal year of Aśoka the Bodhi-tree was planted in Ceylon. According to the Dīpavamsa this event occurred after Mahinda's mission to Ceylon together with the coming of Saṅghamittā. That there was some confusion in the reading of this event is quite possible. Historically it is a minor event and of no consequence. The branch of the Bodhi-tree may well have been brought to Ceylon in the eighteenth year of Aśoka prior to Mahinda's mission, since communication between India and Ceylon was current at that time. Possibly the editor of the Dīpavamsa may have forgotten the precise date of the coming of the Bodhi-tree and may have added the event to the narrative concerning Saṅghamittā.

Thus if we add the years given in the Mahāvamsa we arrive at the total of 36 expired years (17+11+3+2+3). Aśoka died in his <sup>37<sup>th</sup></sup> regnal ~~year~~ year. On the basis of our chronology Aśoka's reign beginning in 268 B.C. ended according to the Mahāvamsa reckoning in 232/31 B.C.

In the twentieth year of his reign Aśoka visited the (2) Lumbinī garden where the Buddha was born. This event would date to 249/48 B.C. An inscription on the pillar recording the visit was ordered by the king. Eggermont has

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(1) XI, 25-40; XV, 74-95; XVI, 1-7.

(2) CII, I, p. 164.

used this event as one of the main supports to his system  
of Aśokan chronology and we accept it as such. <sup>(1)</sup>

There is a story in the Divyāvadāna that Aśoka wished  
to build 84000 stūpas in the same day and at the same hour. <sup>(2)</sup>  
The thera Yaśas, who was informed of this, hid the sun with  
his hand, thus enabling the impossible to take place. The  
story with some variation occurs in Hsüan Tsang. <sup>(3)</sup> Here the  
thera in question was Upagupta who had acted as Aśoka's  
guide on the pilgrimage. <sup>(4)</sup> Fa-hsien refers to the same story,  
as do the Ceylon chroniclers. <sup>(5)</sup> The hiding of the sun occurs  
after the stūpas have been built and the relics of the Buddha  
have to be placed within them.

The hiding of the sun has been correctly interpreted  
by Eggermont as the eclipse of the sun. The meaning is  
obvious. It cannot imply anything else. It is possible  
to calculate whether such an eclipse could have taken place  
in the reign of Aśoka, and we find that three such eclipses  
occurred during his reign. <sup>(6)</sup> On the research of Fazy  
and Sidersky <sup>(7)</sup> these three eclipses have been dated to May 4  
249 B.C., 15 June 242 B.C., and 19 November 232 B.C. Having  
established that an eclipse of the sun did take place, we  
must now consider any cross-evidence which would suggest  
which of the three above eclipses is referred to in the

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(1) CRAM p. 123 ff.

(2) Divya, XXVI, p. 381.

(3) Watters II, p. 91.

(4) Beal BRWW, p. 1, vii.

(5) Dip. VII, 1-8.

(6) JA.1930 CCXVII, pp. 135, 136 Note sur une eclipse du  
temps d'Açoka.

(7) JA. 1932. CCXX, p. 295-297 Une eclipse de soleil au  
temps d'Açoka.

Avadāna.

The Divyāvadāna continues the story by narrating that after the erection of the stūpas and the eclipse of the sun, the thera Upagupta allowed Aśoka a vision of the sacred places, and Aśoka had stūpas and caityas built at some further sites. Among them the birth-place of the Buddha is mentioned. Tārānātha bears out the fact that all these events followed in quick succession. <sup>(1)</sup>

The vision of the sacred places and the further building of stūpas and caityas, seem to refer to a pilgrimage or tour that Aśoka must have undertaken after the eclipse of the sun. How else, in practical terms, could he have seen all these places? Przyluski has suggested that the story of the building of the stūpas and caityas represents the territorial expansion of Aśoka and indicates the spread of the Mauryan empire. <sup>(2)</sup> We prefer to interpret it as a tour through the empire.

The three eclipses listed above occurred in the 19th, 26th, and 36th regnal years of Aśoka respectively. No doubt he may have been on tour or made a pilgrimage in any one of these three years. But more specifically the nineteenth year seems the most appropriate, since the pillar inscription at Rummindei was issued in Aśoka's twentieth year. <sup>(3)</sup> The king states that he visited Lumbinī and

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- (1) Schiefner, <sup>GBI</sup>p. 36.  
 (2) LEA, p. 103.  
 (3) CII, I, p. 164-165.

worshipped there because it was the birth-place of the Buddha. For the same reason a sculptured horse and a pillar were set up to mark the spot.<sup>(1)</sup> The Divyāvadāna, as we have said earlier, particularly mentions the honouring of the birth-place of the Buddha. Furthermore the pilgrimage to Lumbinī is one of the four recommended pilgrimages, which good Buddhists are expected to make. It was in the same year that Aśoka visited the stūpa of Konākamana. It would appear that in his twentieth regnal year he visited sites sacred to Buddhism.

The Ceylon chronicles date these events to the 7th year of Aśoka's reign, i.e. 261/60 B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> On the evidence of the eclipse this is a faulty date, as there was no eclipse that year. The pilgrimage in the 20th year is not directly mentioned. But, as Eggermont points out, Aśoka must have made a journey in the region of the Ganges during that period, since Moggaliputta Tissa travels by ship with the king after the Third council.<sup>(3)</sup> Aśoka assists him personally in disembarking.

Thus we may assume that the hiding of the sun was the eclipse of the 4 May 249 B.C. After the vassa season Aśoka visited the sacred sites in his 20th year, 248 B.C.

The issuing of pillar edicts was the next known event of Aśoka's reign, and these are dated to the 26th and 27th

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(1) It is strange that the animal should have been a horse. Usually the elephant is associated with the birth of the Buddha.

(2) Mah. V, 173-176.

(3) CRAM p. 128.

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year. The first six edicts concerned largely with the Dhamma were engraved in his 26th year. The seventh and last, engraved in his twenty-seventh year, appears to be a survey of his work, particularly the development of the Dhamma. It is indeed strange that for the next ten years until his death in 231 B.C. there were no further major edicts. For a man so prolific in issuing edicts this silence of ten years is difficult to explain.

There are enough stories in the Buddhist religious sources to suggest that Aśoka began to lose the control that he had previously had on the governing of the kingdom in his later years. But we know from previous experience that these sources must be treated with extreme caution.

The Mahāvamsa relates the following events in connection with the last years of Aśoka.<sup>(1)</sup> In the twelfth year after the sending of the Bodhi-tree branch to Ceylon which occurred in the eighteenth year the Chief Queen Asandhimitā died. This would give us 17+11 expired years of the reign, that is 240 B.C., a couple of years after the issuing of the 7th Pillar Edict.

In the fourth year after this in 237 B.C. Aśoka raised Tissarakkhā to the rank of Chief Queen. In 235 B.C., two years later, she, being jealous of the king's devotion to the Bodhi-tree, injured the tree by piercing it with a maṇḍu thorn, thereby causing it to wither away. Aśoka,

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(1) XX, 1-6.

being very upset at this, began to nurture what little part of the tree remained alive, and thus was able to save the tree. In 232/31 B.C. the king died. The story is repeated by Fa-hsien, although he does not mention the name of the Queen<sup>(1)</sup>

The comments of the chroniclers on these events are quite direct. Asandhimittā was a good queen because she was a friend of the Samgha. One has the impression of a thoughtful woman who sympathised with the ideas of her husband. Tissarakkhā is described as proud and foolish. If the account be true she appears to have been a selfish woman who resented the many hours Aśoka spent on ideological matters and possibly also the attention he gave to Buddhist affairs. It is hardly likely that the story of her destroying the Bodhi-tree by having it pierced by a maṇḍu thorn is true, since the story is quite impossible in the light of modern botanical knowledge. However it is not beyond possibility that she tried in some way to injure the tree, which we know was highly respected by Aśoka. She may have shown her resentment in other ways, and she was evidently far less partial to the Buddhists than her predecessor. Possibly the tree began to wither through natural causes and the Ceylon chronicles combined Tissarakkhā's antipathy to Buddhism with the withering of the ~~tree~~ tree.

(1) Giles TF-H. p. 58.

The story certainly does give the impression that Aśoka in his later years was influenced by the charms of his queen, and had possibly lost the mature companionship of his previous wife Aśandhimittā.

This suggestion is corroborated in the stories of the Aśokāvadāna where Tissarakkhā (called Tiśyarakṣitā in Sanskrit sources), demonstrates her power in a devastating way. <sup>(1)</sup> We are told that the prince Kunāla the son of Queen Padmāvati is born with particularly beautiful eyes. But it has been predicted that he will be blinded in later years. The prediction is proved true through the actions of Tissarakkhā. Although already the wife of Aśoka, she is enamoured of Kunāla because of his beautiful eyes. He rejects her advances so she plans to harm him. Meanwhile Aśoka falls ill. Tissarakkhā by means of a stratagem <sup>(2)</sup> diagnoses the sickness and is able to cure him. The king in gratitude grants her whatever she may wish, a promise which she later utilises in connection with Kunāla. There is a revolt in Taxila and Kunāla is sent to suppress it. The queen then sends an order to the officials at Taxila, sealed with Aśoka's seal, that Kunāla is to be blinded and put to death. The officials, much puzzled, carry out the first part of the order, but because of their affection for the young prince they refuse to kill him and they let him go free. Kunāla leaves with his faithful wife

(1) Przyluski. LEA, p. 283 ff.

(2) The diagnosis was conducted by finding a similar condition in another person and then eliminating various possibilities by a variety of treatment, till the right antidote was found. This passage throws light on the type of medical analysis at the time.

Kañcanamālā. Hewanders through the country playing the Vīnā and singing, and one day when he reaches the city of Pāṭalīputra, Aśoka recognises his voice. Hearing the whole story the king recognises Tissarakkhā's part in it and is quite inconsolable. Tissarakkhā is punished by being burnt to death. Aśoka on seeing Kunāla's condition remarks that this is a punishment to him, Aśoka, for some past sin. Obviously some degree of moralising had to be included in the story.

The story as it stands appears to be largely the result of monkish imagination. The account of the revolt at Taxila follows the original story of a similar revolt at the end of Bindusāra's reign, when Aśoka was sent to suppress it, too closely to carry conviction. It is not very likely that a similar event would have occurred in the same circumstances at the end of Aśoka's reign. It is possible that the story of the first revolt was confused by the editor of the avadāna with a story of the sending of Kunāla to another part of the country, either as vice-regent in the natural course or to suppress a revolt somewhere. As we have stated earlier the historicity of the first revolt is more convincing, since there is complementary evidence from the Aramaic inscription.

An alternative interpretation of this story is that towards the end of his reign Aśoka may have had to face minor revolts in various parts of his kingdom. This

would not be entirely the result of his own lack of control, but rather of public opinion working against the more striking aspects of the Dhamma. We have discussed this idea in greater detail in the final chapter.

The story of the sickness and the cure of Aśoka may suggest that there was no small degree of influence from the harem in his later years. But though the legend of Kunāla and the wicked queen may well reflect conditions at the end of Aśoka's reign, it appears to us that the story as it stands is a fabrication. In the context of the whole narrative it was essential that Tissarakkhā should obtain a promise from Aśoka that he would grant her wish. The most obvious way of doing this would be by saving his life. The simplest way of achieving this would be by making him suffer a seemingly incurable illness. The story of Tissarakkhā being able to diagnose the disease correctly through mere ingenuity, whilst all the court physicians who could have used the same method, failed to do so, seems to us to be exaggerated. Whatever historical data can be gathered from this legend would suggest that Aśoka may well have been under the influence of his queen Tissarakkhā in his later years.

Tissarakkhā is not referred to by her name in any of the edicts. Yet an edict referring directly to her would be quite in keeping with her ambitious character. Since both the southern and northern Buddhist sources describe

her as playing a prominent rôle in the later years of Aśoka it would appear that this tradition may well have been an authentic one. There is one edict issued in the later years of Aśoka's reign which could have been prompted by Tissarakkhā. This is the short Queen's edict on the Allahabad pillar. <sup>(1)</sup> It was issued by Aśoka and it ordered all the mahāmattas to record whatever donations were made by the second queen Karūvākī, the mother of Tīvara. The second queen could well be a reference to the second Chief Queen which from the Ceylon sources we know to be Tissarakkhā, coming after Asandhimittā. It is more than likely that the vain-glorious Tissarakkhā would demand that all her donations be recorded. Karūvākī may have been her own name, and, as we have already suggested she may have adopted Tissarakkhā as her royal name when she became Chief Queen. <sup>(2)</sup> That the edict was issued in the later years of Aśoka is apparent from its position on the pillar. <sup>(3)</sup>

This is not the only story contained in the Aśokāvadāna on the king's later years. A further story is connected with his inability to make donations to the bhikkhus towards the end of his reign. <sup>(4)</sup> Aśoka is said to have donated all his treasure to the monastery at Kukkuṭārāma. He declares the son of Kunāla, Samprati, to be the heir-presumptive, and the latter is king in all but name.

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(1) Bloch, LIA, p. 159. I am indebted to Prof. Basham for this idea.  
 (2) See p. 63  
 (3) p. 94 ; and CII, I, Cunningham ed. p. 38 and PI, XXII.  
 (4) Przyluski, LEA. p. 296 ff.

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The source suggests that the prince was in the confidence of the ministers and that they were all conspiring against Aśoka because they disapproved of the latter's donations to the Buddhist order. One day a Bhikkhu comes round asking for alms. The only thing that Aśoka possesses and which he can thus give to the bhikku is half a mango. The story would suggest that the king died a sad and disappointed man divested of all his power. The same story is mentioned by Hsüan Tsang. <sup>(1)</sup>

These stories from Buddhist sources have led some historians to state that Aśoka's power weakened in his later years, the officials became oppressive and the princes who had been taught not to use force were incapable of governing the empire. <sup>(2)</sup> Barua has stated that Aśoka virtually retired from active governing in his old age, delegating his authority to the heir and ministers who appear to have conspired against continuing his policy. <sup>(3)</sup>

We are of the opinion that these views give too much credence to the Buddhist stories. That there was some weakening in the powers of Aśoka towards the end of his reign cannot be denied. The lack of unanimity in the various sources as regards the successor to Aśoka would point to some degree of confusion at the end of his reign. But that there was a ministerial conspiracy against him seems unlikely, nor is it possible to believe that he donated all his

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(1) Watters II, p. 99.

(2) Raychaudhuri. PHAI. p.p 303 and 304

(3) AI, p. 62.

possessions to the Samgha and was left with half a mango. In the avadāna the minister in question is Rādhāgupta. It is a little difficult to believe that Rādhāgupta the minister of Bindusāra who assisted Aśoka in gaining the throne would at the end of the latter's reign of thirty-seven years still be powerful enough to conspire against him.

In considering the historicity of these stories we must keep in mind the purpose for which they were written. Furthermore they were not the work of a single man. As Przulski points out, the traditions were collected from various areas and were being continually revised and contaminated by the ideas current in different centuries and in the particular localities to which the tradition belonged.<sup>(1)</sup>

The stories as they have come down to us today were worked over by Buddhist monks who no doubt changed them where necessary to suit Buddhist morals. The main purpose of each story was to illustrate the truth of Buddhist attitudes, and directly or indirectly the moral of the story was in conformity with Buddhist teachings. Thus Aśoka started life as a wicked and anti-religious man; he was converted to Buddhism and soon became an absolute paragon of Buddhist righteousness. Despite his piety and his charity he ended his life in comparative sorrow, possessing only half a mango. Since suffering on earth is the lot of every man, even the pious Aśoka had to undergo his due share of suffering, which for him was all the greater since it came at the end of his reign, and in the eyes of his contemporaries may have declared him a failure.

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(1) LEA, Introduction, pp. 1-18.

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Having discussed the various chronological problems as they arise we may now reconstruct the chronology of the reign.

- 272 B.C.      Death of Bindusāra.  
4 year interregnum during which a struggle for succession among the princes took place.
- 268            Coronation of Aśoka.
- 261            Meeting with Nigrodha.  
Accession of Antiochus II.  
Interest in Buddhism growing.
- 260            Kalinga War.
- 258            Visit to Bodhi-Gayā (sambodhi).
- 258-55        System of royal tours of the country started.  
More active interest in Buddhism.
- 256.....     Issuing of edicts inaugurated. R.E. II, III, IV.  
Officials ordered to tour the country every five years.  
First two Barābar cave inscriptions issued.  
Two separate Kalinga edicts issued.
- 255            Appointment of dhamma-mahāmāttas.  
Issuing of Minor Rock Edict when on tour.  
Issuing of R.E.XIII.  
Death of Alexander of Epirus.
- 254            Konākamana stūpa visited.
- c.253/2        Death of Magas of Cyrene.
- 250            Buddhist Council at Pāṭaliputra.

- 249 Mahinda sent to Ceylon.  
Third Barābar cave inscription.  
Eclipse of the sun.
- 248 Visit to Lumbīni grove.  
Pillar erected at Konākamana stūpa.
- 247 Death of Ptolemy II.
- 246 Death of Antiochus II.
- 242 Pillar edicts I-VI issued.
- 241 Pillar edict VII issued.
- c. 240 Schism edict.  
Death of Asandhimittā the Chief Queen.  
The precise date of the Bhabra edict is uncertain but we suggest that it was issued about this time or perhaps a little earlier.
- 237 Tissarakkhā made Chief Queen.
- c. 236 Queen's edict.
- 235 Injuring of the Bodhi-tree.
- 232/1 Death of Aśoka.

CHAPTER III

The Policy of Dhamma

"In vain does a sense of righteousness enter its protest (that of the concatenation of deeds and destiny to which ambitious men are drawn), in vain do millions of prayers of the oppressed rise to Nemesis; the great man, frequently unconsciously consummates higher desires and an epoch is expressed in his person, while he believes that he himself is ruling his age and determining its character." This in essence expresses the verdict of Burckhardt on Constantine and his age. (1) Not that he suggests that Constantine or any man of similar ambitions is entirely the product of his age, but that no man is above or too early for his age. The single man who dominates his race, his society, his community, often in opposition to the larger body of his compatriots, is not an isolated prophet or evil genius, or a man of supernatural vision born out of his time. The germinal matter which he may have used in order to found his position and power will on analysis be discovered to lie within the group from which he arose. It is largely the reactions to the particular and peculiar conditions of a given society which are responsible for the attitudes of its

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(1) *The Age of Constantine the Great.*  
~~Constantine and his Age~~, p. 262.

individual members. These attitudes may be the result of a compromise with, or an acceptance or non-acceptance of these conditions. It is sometimes said that personal idiosyncrasies are often responsible for the policy of a man in power and that these are unrelated to the larger society and age to which he belongs. But even this apparent autonomy of personality is only on the surface. Investigation reveals a social influence in the promptings of many personal actions, or at least the influence of a social force outside the isolated man. With the exception of authentic mystics who may have an inner isolated life which is not dependent on the doings of the men and women around them (though even this is a questionable point) the actions of other men are schooled by their experience of the thoughts and deeds of the people amongst whom they live.

Aśoka was thus not a visionary. Nor was he a prophet who had received special enlightenment, Buddhistic or otherwise. Nor do we agree with the view that his ideas were too advanced for their age and that their failure was due to a premature expression. If we consider Aśoka not as an isolated phenomenon but in the context of his historical background it will become apparent why he adopted the policy of Dhamma and what purpose it served. In order to be better acquainted with his age we must consider the immediate background of the Mauryas, the development of Buddhism at this period, and the relationship between Buddhism

and the ideas of Aśoka.

That the Mauryas displayed an unusually lively interest in the ideas and intellectual trends of the age, is apparent from their various connections with the social and intellectual life of the time. Candragupta is said to have accepted Jainism in his later years, and in fact to have abdicated the throne and become a wandering ascetic dying through slow starvation in the orthodox Jaina manner.<sup>(1)</sup>

Considering the difficulties that he faced in making himself king and building an empire it is hardly likely that he would have abdicated at the end of his reign in order to become a wandering ascetic. It is possible though that he accepted the teachings of Mahāvīra and became a Jaina. This interest may be excused as originating in the fact that he was of low origin, a vaiśya, and by accepting Jainism he eluded the contempt of the higher caste nobility. Since the teachings of Mahāvīra were at this period regarded more as an off-shoot of Hinduism, an extremist discipline, and the Jainas themselves as a sub-sect of the earlier religion, we can discountenance the above suggestion. The interest it would seem was largely intellectual. Accepting Jainism did not raise one's social prestige in the eyes of the high caste Hindus whose social ethics were already being determined by caste-rules.

Jainism was not the only influence at the court of

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(1) Pariśiṣṭapargan VIII, p. 415.

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Candragupta. A foreign influence which brought with it an even greater degree of eclectic thinking, was the influence of the few Greeks who were undoubtedly present at the court. Some classical writers have stated that Candragupta actually met Alexander, though this event has been doubted by at least one modern historian of the period. <sup>(1)</sup> We know that Megasthenes came as the ~~ambassador~~<sup>friend</sup> of Seleucus to the court of Candragupta. It would be natural for him to be questioned at great length on the thought and institutions of Greece and also of Asia minor with which he was familiar. That he must have responded with enthusiasm seems obvious since it appears from his accounts of India that he was a man of lively observation and intelligence.

In the north-western part of the kingdom, the nucleus of this foreign influence and of a cosmopolitan Indo-Greek intellectual life, was the city of Taxila. Bordering on the Greek settlements of the trans-Indus region and further west, situated on an important highway, it acted as the crucible of the two important streams of Indian and western ideas. Since it also had the official prestige of a provincial capital and the social prestige of a commercial centre, the result was a happy situation where alien ideas, although they did not modify Indian orthodoxy, were at least allowed to co-exist as they were at all times in Hindu India. A fair amount of mutual understanding and

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(1) See Ch. I, p.22 .

respect must undoubtedly have ensued.

Once again we may speculate on the interesting possibilities of the marriage alliance between Candragupta and Seleucus. Whether it was an ἐπιγαμία or a κῆδος, one or more Greek ladies of noble families must have been introduced into the Mauryan court circles. This would suggest that the rigidity of orthodox Hinduism could on occasion be stretched to include non-orthodox elements. It would appear that the atmosphere at the court was considerably freer than it was during the rule of many succeeding dynasties. Aśoka as a young boy would have met these Greek ladies in the harem.

Bindusāra, Aśoka's father, appears to have been aware of contemporary trends. There is no evidence as to whether he too was a Jaina as his father Candragupta is said to have been. If his father was a partisan of Jainism, Bindusāra may well have been partial to the Jainas too. Thus it would not have been unexpected of Aśoka to have interested himself in a non-orthodox sect such as the Buddhists or the Jainas. He may well have first met with this catholicity of religious taste at the court itself when he was a young man. The members of various sects must have moved freely at the court.

We know that the Ājīvikas were acceptable at the court since it was an Ājīvika ascetic who at the conception and later at the birth of Aśoka predicted the future of the

(1) child. We also know that Bindusāra was sufficiently interested in the debating<sup>of</sup> ideas to request that a sophist be sent to him as a present from Greece. (2) Thus the immediate surroundings in which Aśoka lived and grew up did not exclude the possibility that he might adopt a non-conforming philosophy of life not entirely in keeping with orthodox principles.

By the third century B.C. Brāhmanism had developed into a complicated religious system. The two tendencies apparent in most religions, those of philosophical speculation and ritualism, had both developed greatly in complexity. Vedic ritual still persisted, though the outer forms had been adjusted to contemporary needs. The sacrifice remained an important part of the ritual, though its practice was restricted to the twice-born castes, the priests and aristocrats and on occasion to the wealthier members of the commercial community.

The other tendency, that of philosophical speculation, which had its roots in the Veda itself, led gradually to the rise of a considerable number of sects each seeking an explanation of the universe by a different method or a combination of different methods. The most important among these sects were the Buddhists, the Ājīvikas and the Nirgranthas. (3) The theories of these three sects were concerned not just with philosophical innovations, but

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(1) Divyāvandāna, XXVI, p. 370 ff.

(2) Athenaeus III, 444.

(3) CII, I, P.E., VII, Delhi-Toprā, p. 131.

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with influencing the general mass of the people as well.

Of these three Buddhism was certainly the most important. It began as a schismatic movement from the more orthodox outlook of Brāhmanism. The motivating force was to escape from samsāra, from the supposed fetters of earthly life and the cycle of rebirth. The solution was found in the idea of "the Middle Way" which was based on a high degree of rational thinking. The latter was a doctrine rooted in the earlier Hindu tradition, but which was nevertheless comprehensible even to the uneducated. To this extent it was a protest against the malpractices which had crept into Hindu ritual and thought, owing to the increased power of the brāhmans who regarded themselves as God's elect and began to enjoy the dominant position to which further temporal power brought them. Thus, although Buddhism never reached the stage of being an independent religion in India for any length of time, it was during the early period a strong counter-movement against the control which brāhmanism exerted in religious and social life. To this degree the ferment of the period may be compared to that of Reformation Europe when the Protestant element broke away from the Catholic church. However, the analogy is not exact, since Buddhism, unlike Protestantism in Europe, was not merely a dissident movement from Brāhmanism. Because it included popular cults and practices in its ritual, it gradually began to be distinguished as a separate religion from

Brāhmanism. The fact that in India Buddha had to preach and constitute an entirely new order was largely due to the absence of such an order from earlier Hinduism, Had the latter been founded on the teachings of a distinct historical personage and through the work of a regular religious order, Buddhism might well have begun and ended as merely the schism movement of a dissident element.

Doctrinal differences were largely the cause for the antagonism between the various sects. These were debated in theological circles and among the lay-followers. The situation is again similar to the antagonism of the various Christian opinions during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Europe. With consistent opposition from the Brāhmins and increased understanding and support from other sections of society, Buddhism ceased to be a body of dissident opinion and began to develop as an independent religion.

In the earlier stages Buddhism was supported largely by the commercial classes. This can be explained by its attitude to the caste system. Buddha himself was a kṣatriya and the movement was not averse to reducing the power of the Brāhmins. Little or no emphasis was given to the caste-system in theory. The commercial classes rapidly gaining economic importance were socially still inferior, and this inferiority, stressed by the Brāhmins and kṣatriyas, was no doubt galling. The vaiśyas, though theoretically included among the dvija or twice-born, were in practice

generally treated contemptuously.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus the social equality preached by Buddhism would naturally have made a strong appeal to those that were considered socially inferior.

Buddhism certainly appealed even to the lower orders of society. In its essentials it was easily understood by the unsophisticated mind. It offered a workable solution to the problems of life in the Middle Way which demanded neither a subtle understanding of obscure metaphysics nor an impractical emphasis on abnegation and asceticism. More practically it made no expensive demands of ritual.

During the time of Aśoka the propagation of Buddhism through the order of monks and nuns was fairly widespread. The bhikkus preached the law during the cold and the hot season, returning to their monasteries during the rainy season. Instead of the elaborate sacrifice Buddhist ritual was centred round the cult of the caityas and the worship of the stūpas. The caityas were sacred enclosures associated previously with earth spirits or the fertility cult.<sup>(2)</sup> Thus Buddhism made a particular point of attracting the simple folk and incorporating popular cults, without however over-emphasising their magical and superstitious aspects. The stūpa was a tumulus within which were placed the ashes of the Buddha or a revered elder of the Buddhist order.

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(1) Aitareya Brāhmana VII, 20.

(2) A clear indication of this can be seen in the sculpture on the gateways at Sanchi where the relevance of the tree and woman motif can be explained by the above.

Very often the monastery or vihāra was built in association with the caitya, as at Sanchi. It has also been suggested that the column, possibly the survival of a phallic emblem or megalith, was another feature of the Buddhist cult.<sup>(1)</sup> Although no definite connection has yet been established the idea is certainly feasible.

The non-existence of large temples and shrines in the Aśoken period can be explained by the fact that the use of an image of the Buddha for purposes of worship appears not to have been a common practice. Surviving examples of the Buddha image dating to the first century A.D. have been found at Gandhāra.<sup>(2)</sup> It has been suggested, however, that the first images were made at Mathurā and not at Gandhāra, but whatever their origin all the surviving images are post-Mauryan.

The Mauryan period was the culminating point of a few centuries of rational enquiry and cultural advance. This change from a nomadic pastoral culture as was that of the early Aryans to a more settled culture of an urban nature was due in no small part to improved techniques with the increased use of iron. New lands were cleared and the population began to move towards the east. The fertile land of the Ganges valley was a good area for settlement and colonisation. This change was taking place between

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(1) Basham WI, p. 263.

(2) Lohuizen, SP, p. 145 ff.

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circa 800-600 B.C.<sup>7</sup>/<sub>2</sub> By the sixth century the northern kingdoms had taken shape and Magadha was assuming importance. The Ganges itself was introduced to a new economic life, that of river trade. Champā was prized owing to its position along the Ganges, controlling river trade. It appears to have been the easternmost point of Aryan penetration.

With these tremendous changes in the economic life of the times, changes in the social structure were inevitable. It was natural that the commercial classes would assert themselves and chafe under the indignity of being regarded socially as a lower order. They were denied social prestige and yet it was through their enterprise that many technical improvements were possible. This resentment was given expression in many of the current schools of thought. As opposed to the boast of the brahmins that they possessed revealed knowledge, these schools emphasised empirical knowledge. At the level of the laity a satisfactory working solution was sought, eliminating excessive indulgence in ritual or asceticism.

The implications of these new ideas in the existing system of social ethics were vast, though very often subtle. The change to an urban culture meant a better defined social organisation. Community life having become more complex it was necessary to review previously held

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(1) Warder, BSOAS, 1956, p. 43 ff.

ideas on individual participation in community living. The brahmanical solution to this problem was the increasing rigidity of the caste-system. The Buddhists came nearest to understanding the problem and developing a system of social ethics whereby the responsibility was placed in the hands of each individual member of society. Within the bounds of this responsibility there existed considerable social mobility. The terrifying determinism of the brahman social code did not pursue the man born in the lower castes. The promise of an eternal heaven was held out to those who within the confines of social life could rise above mortal temptations.

The connection between these new ideas and the political organisation of the time also requires some analysis. With the transition from a pastoral to an urban culture the old political ties were bound to change. Whereas previously many of the early settlements in northern India had arbitrarily grouped themselves into confederacies and republics, based broadly on tribal affinities, there was now the need for a properly defined political organisation. The emphasis moved from primitive democracy and tribal ties to that of social responsibility. With the complexities of urban living as against small pastoral settlements, and the emergence of commerce as a major occupation, a more closely-knit organisation was demanded. The primitive democracy of the sabha and the samiti had

to give way to the concentration of power in the hands of a small centralised body which could control and co-ordinate with greater success the workings of the new society. The social transition and the territorial expansion of this time gave it the character of a period of emergency which made a strong controlling force all the more practical and necessary. Thus the confederacies and republics gave way to kingdoms with a tendency towards the consolidation of smaller units into larger units, until the peak was reached in the Mauryan empire. This political change introduced the idea of a wider citizenship concerned with more than just local happenings. Buddhism was suited to this situation in so far as it emphasised a broad social consciousness, unlike Brahmanism in which social responsibility was significant largely within the confines of each caste.

Before we analyse the nature of the Buddhism accepted by Aśoka, it is necessary to enquire into the reasons for his acceptance of this belief. It is impossible for us at a distance of over two thousand years to state precisely what the personal prejudices of the king may have been. At best we can make a guess by using his edicts as our source. These we shall discuss at a later stage. We can, however, attempt to explain why the outside conditions (i.e. outside of the king as a person), necessitated this acceptance.

During the latter years of the Nanda dynasty under Mahāpadma, the first attempt was made at building a centralised empire on a large scale. The fact that it was not entirely a success was due largely to the weakness of individual rulers. Candragupta Maurya on conquering the Nanda domains completed the policy of centralisation with great success. The empire administered by an efficient bureaucracy, extensively covered by good communications, and under the control of a powerful ruler, was probably as centralised as was possible in that period. All these three characteristics, efficient bureaucracy, good communications, and a strong ruler, existed under the Mauryas as the Arthaśāstra, for instance, shows. The central control of the ruler had to be maintained at all costs and this could be achieved by the adoption of either of two policies. One was that of exercising a ruthless control through armed strength, self-deification, and various other means, as for example those adopted by Aśoka's near contemporary Shi Huang Ti, in China. The other was certainly more subtle. The king declared himself in favour of a new belief (or one of the less well-established ones), possibly even an eclectic collection of views from varying groups. Thus the social and political control of religious groups could be undermined and the central authority could increase its power, the population, under the direction of officials, paying at least lip-service to the ideas of the rulers.

This was the policy selected by Aśoka, in essence the same, though different in form, as that adopted by Akbar eighteen centuries later.

We know that Aśoka was not an avowed Buddhist at the time of his accession and that his support of Buddhism grew some years later.<sup>(1)</sup> As we have seen he had considerable trouble fighting his way to the throne. It may well be possible that in the early years of his reign, while he was consolidating his position, he did not have the enthusiastic support of the older and more orthodox elements at the court. By moving away from orthodox Brāhmanism though not opposing it, and by giving open support to Buddhism and some other sects such as the Ājivikas, he was seeking the potential support of non-orthodox elements which may eventually have succeeded in weaning the people away from orthodoxy, and in the end making his own principles more acceptable to the populace. He was aided in this by the fact that these sects were supported by the newly risen commercial castes and the mass of the population was not antagonistic to them. In addition to this the new beliefs were not violently opposed to the old and it was therefore possible to bring about a compromise. Thus Aśoka saw the practical advantage of adopting Buddhism, which was then the religion of the rising bourgeoisie.

Another factor connected with the general scheme of centralisation, is that of unifying small political units, of welding divergent groups into at least a basic cohesion.

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(1) See Chapter II, p. 69 .

This factor is of particular importance where centralisation extends over large areas including a diversity of racial and cultural types. It demands loyalty to a larger cross-frontier group than to its own immediate group. If racial variations were not so great cultural variations were certainly tremendous in the Mauryan empire. We have only to think of the four provincial capitals Taxila, Tosali, Ujjain and Suvarnagiri to realise the full cultural scope of the empire and the range of peoples within it. The adoption of a new faith and its active propagation throughout the empire would act as a cementing force, uniting the smaller units. It could be used as a measure to consolidate conquered territory: provided that it was used with subtlety and understanding and was not forced on to unwilling people. Certainly Aśoka showed a considerable degree of understanding, as we shall see later in this chapter. Examples of this policy can be seen in the histories of many civilisations. Charlemagne conquered the Saxons and then used Christianity as a cementing factor. The Saxons were converted to his own religion and were thus brought more directly into the general pattern of the Carolingian empire.

A new religion can be used as an emblem or a symbol of a new unity. It can make a most effective means of propaganda. Sometimes merely an idea used judiciously in the right circumstances can appear to be a new creed. We

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(1) Winston, Charlemagne, p. 104.

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have had a recent example of this in Nazi Germany. But nearer the Aśokan period, the emperor Constantine used Christianity in a way similar to Aśoka's use of Buddhism. A clear example was his adoption of the Greek monogram  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  (deriving from the word  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  Christos), as his standard-emblem, while yet on his coins he retained the old gods. Thus, though he himself supported Christianity and adopted its symbols, the older belief continued and there was freedom of worship for all religions. Certain pre-Christian practices such as sacrificing at home were forbidden but not for religious reasons. As Burckhardt suggests, the ban was rather due to the fear that these gatherings might develop into politically subversive groups.<sup>(1)</sup> Far from being given over-riding privileges, the Christians were merely restored to an unharmed position by this new situation. They were not persecuted and were allowed to lead a normal human existence.

A similar background no doubt prevailed at the time of Aśoka. The Buddhists, who had previously been frowned upon and may quite possibly have been persecuted as heretics, were now restored to a respectable position and were recognised as a religious sect.

In analysing the political implications of Aśoka's new policy the question of the cakravartin ideal is of some importance. Buddhist literature gives us a description of the cakravartin.<sup>(2)</sup> He is described as a universal emperor whose

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(1) ~~Constantine and his Age.~~ *The Age of Constantine the Great.* p. 294 ff.

(2) *Digha Nikāya III. Cakkavattī Sihanādasutta*, p. 58 ff.

dominions included the whole of Jambudvīpa. His rule was just and his reign prosperous. He was so virtuous a king that he came to be regarded as having the powers of divinity. Since the emphasis on conquering the whole of Jambudvīpa is so great, it would appear that the idea is a late one, possibly post-Mauryan. We know that the Jainas were acquainted with the concept and the epic heroes such as Yudhiṣṭhira, Rāma and others were referred to as digvijayins<sup>(1)</sup>. The latter term may have been used of the heroes figuratively, as is often the case in early literature. But certainly the concept was known before the Mauryan period, though a concrete example could only be quoted after the reign of Aśoka. Kern is of the opinion that this concept was unknown during Aśoka's time or prior to it, and that it was created by the Buddhist monks who based it on the life of Aśoka in order to flatter him.<sup>(2)</sup> We are of the opinion that if the monks had wished to flatter Aśoka they would have associated his name more directly with the concept of the cakravartin. As it stands in the Sutta, there is no direct indication that the original cakravartin was in fact Aśoka.

It seems equally unlikely that the cakravartin idea was a fully developed political concept in the pre-Mauryan period, and that most of Aśoka's ideas were inspired by the ambition to be a cakravartin. Had this been the case he would surely have mentioned it somewhere in his edicts,

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(1) Basham, WI, p. 83.

(2) A. p. 34.

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particularly as he does give expression to many of his ambitions in these sources.

A verse in the Dīpavaṃsa relating to Aśoka concludes with the following words,<sup>(1)</sup>

".....the wheel of his power rolled through the great empire of Jambudvīpa." This may be an early attempt to connect the cakravartin idea with the reign of Aśoka, or it may be a later interpretation after Aśoka had been invested with the mark of a cakravatin in Buddhist tradition. It may equally well be a veiled statement to the effect that Buddhism spread throughout Jambudvīpa with the assistance of Aśoka, the wheel referring not to the power of the cakravartin but to the power of the Buddha. The theorists when describing a cakravartin emphasised political and territorial power. The symbols accompanying the image of the cakravartin were known as the seven jewels and were the wheel, signifying universal power, the goddess of fortune, the Queen, the Crown Prince, the Minister, the imperial elephant and the horse.<sup>(2)</sup> Judging from the edicts, Aśoka's definition of universal power would have had a far greater degree of humility and humanism.

It is indeed no paradox to say that Aśoka's political use of Buddhism did not exclude him from joining the ranks of the sincere believers. He did not ignore the practical usefulness of the religion to himself both as a

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(1) VI, 2.

(2) Basham, WI, p. 84. There are variations in the list of the seven jewels, in the various texts, where the story is related.

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man and a ruler. As in every religion there was a discrepancy between theory and practice, the two being made to tally eventually by each individual believer according to his personal needs and his special environment. These little adjustments when accumulated in a society can often colour the original teachings of a religious leader. An example of this in the political sphere with reference to Aśoka concerns the Buddhist idea of kingship. Early Buddhism preached the theory of Mahāsammatta, the Great Elect, a contractual theory based on an agreement between the population and the person they elect as king. The king was regarded as serving the state, the collection of taxes being his due. <sup>(1)</sup>

A close study of the Aśokan edicts however reveals that Aśoka did not regard himself as the Great Elect in his relations with his subjects, but rather as a father-figure. He constantly stresses the father-child relationship between the king and the populace.

"All men are my children, As on behalf of (my own) children I desire that they may be provided with complete welfare and happiness in this world and in the other world, the same I desire also on behalf of all men." <sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Dīgha Nikāya III. Agannasutta p. 92-93. This is the first reference in Indian political thought to what may be termed the theory of social contract. In order to preserve certain social institutions such as the family, property, justice, etc. the people elected a king to remain in office as long as he satisfied their needs. In return he was given a share of their produce.

(2) CII, I, Sep. R.E.I., p. 95.

This paternal attitude is a new feature in the relationship between the king and the population. Possibly the Mahāsammatta theory was now receding into the background. It appears to us that this is a more valid interpretation than the one which explains this new development as an adjustment made by Aśoka to his acceptance of Buddhism.

The idea of the Mahāsammatta was receding since the opportunity for direct democracy was giving way to a trend towards centralised control as we have explained earlier. A centralised monarchy demands far more dependance on the part of the populace. The monarch is now to be regarded as the paternal benefactor and not as a servant of the state. Such a paternal approach introduces the possibilities of despotism, and it is not a far step from centralised authority to despotism.

Many views have been expressed on the exact nature of Aśoka's interpretation of Buddhism. Some historians are of the opinion that he actually became a Buddhist monk for a short period of his life. Smith believes that he was both monk and monarch at the same time, and accepts the remark of I Tsing as evidence of this. I Tsing, in a passage in which he discusses the robes worn by Buddhist monks, refers to an image of Aśoka which he saw and in which the king was dressed in monk's robes. Smith credits the king, despite his

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(1) EHI, p. 168.

(2) I Tsing. (trans. Takakusu) p. 73.

being a monk, with being at the same time "purely human and severely practical." The evidence of I Tsing is not of much value in this instance, since mere wishful thinking on the part of the Buddhist monks may have led them to depict Aśoka in a monk's habit. His Buddhist sympathies were well known, so a statue such as this would not be surprising, particularly as I Tsing does not state whether it was made in the king's lifetime.

Mookerji is of the opinion that Aśoka was a bhikkhugatika i.e. an intermediate position between an upāsaka and a bhikku.<sup>(1)</sup> Bhandarkar holds the same view.<sup>(2)</sup> The bhikkhugatika was a householder who for certain periods would live with the monks in the monastery. It is known<sup>(3)</sup> that Buddhism permits a man to be a monk for a short period. This according to Bhandarkar would explain the statue that I Tsing saw. Both Mookerji and Bhandarkar agree that the reference to saṃgham upāgate is to this period when Aśoka had publicly declared himself a follower of the Samgha and had entered a monastery for a short period as a bhikkhugatika. Bhandarkar states further that Aśoka was the head of the empire and also the ecclesiastical head, because of his suggestions and ordinances to the Samgha.

If we assume that Aśoka became a Buddhist monk then of course saṃgham upāgate would refer to his entering the

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(1) A. p. 23.  
 (2) A. p. 79-81.  
 (3) A system which prevails to this day in Burma, Thailand and other Buddhist areas of South-east Asia.

order even if only for a short period. If however we accept that he was never more than a lay-follower, then his approaching the saṅgha might be for instruction or aid in religious matters and not necessarily as a temporary monk. Bhandarkar's second suggestion of Aśoka being the ecclesiastical head remains unproven. Aśoka's political position was so strong that the Samgha would have welcomed his active interest particularly as he was personally a believer. But that he did not regard himself as the ecclesiastical head, despite his ordinances to the Samgha, is clear from the fact that he was not responsible for summoning and directing the work of so important an institution to Buddhism as the third Buddhist council held at Pāṭaliputra.

Variations in the interpretation of the evidence for the religious convictions of Aśoka are many. Dikshitar maintains that Aśoka was not a Buddhist but was a brahmanical Hindu.<sup>(1)</sup> In view of the fact that the majority of the sources on his reign being Buddhist and sympathetic to him, and the evidence from his own edicts it is amply clear that he was not a brahmanical Hindu. If anything his work may be said to have been in opposition to brahmanical Hinduism.

In Tārānātha's confused and imaginative account Aśoka is associated with Tantric Buddhism. The Tibetan chronicler declares that the king was a devotee of the mother goddesses.<sup>(2)</sup> The cult of the mother-goddess was prevalent

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(1) Mauryan Polity, p. 276.  
 (2) G.B.I., VI, p. 28.

among the humbler folk of Aśoka's time, but Tantric Buddhism developed many centuries later.

Some writers believe that the Dhamma of Aśoka is in fact original Buddhism, as practised by the Buddha, and what we know today as Buddhism are theological encrustations added through the course of centuries. Senart,<sup>(1)</sup> Mrs. Rhys Davids<sup>(2)</sup> and Bhandarkar<sup>(3)</sup> all support this view. Unfortunately there is not enough cross-evidence to prove its validity. An intensive analysis of the chronological sequence of Buddhist literature has yet to be undertaken, and the results of such an analysis may still leave us uncertain of the sequence. Pande, judging from the work that has been done so far, is of the opinion that Aśoka was familiar with much that is now found in the Nikāyas and this knowledge is apparent in the edicts.<sup>(4)</sup> He believes that the major portion of the Nikāyas certainly existed in the fourth century B.C.

It is of interest to note that the principles of Dhamma were preached in the earlier edicts, mainly in the major rock edicts. The later edicts are more closely linked with theological Buddhism as we know it from a later period. If his Dhamma is in fact pristine Buddhism then the rôle of Aśoka in forging early Buddhism invites much speculation. Aśoka by popularising Buddhism and by making it increasingly available to the mass of the people, brought out more strongly

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(1) IP, II, p. 322.  
(2) Buddhism, p. 226, ff.  
(3) A. p. 72 ff.  
(4) SOB, p. 15.

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the idea of the Middle Way. It then became a convenient religion for all, with a stress on its practicality.

We are of the opinion however that the Dhamma was largely Aśoka's own invention. It may have borrowed from Buddhist thought and Hindu thought, but it was in essence an attempt on the part of the king to suggest a way of life which was both practical and convenient as well as being highly moral. It was intended as a happy compromise for those of his subjects who did not have the leisure to indulge in philosophic speculation, in fact the majority of his subjects. His edicts provide ample evidence of this. If his policy of Dhamma had been merely a recording of Buddhist principles, Aśoka would have stated so quite openly, since he never sought to hide his support for the Buddhists.

In connection with the religious aspect of the edicts the mention in them that the attainment of heaven is the reward of a moral life needs some elucidation. We may well ask whether it was merely the desire for heaven which compelled Aśoka to formulate the Dhamma. If so it is indeed a poor thing as compared with the nobility of the moral ideal of the Dhamma. We are not suggesting by this that Aśoka did not have faith in an after life, but we believe that the reference to heaven was an insertion by Aśoka, in an attempt to relate the degree of reward to a known and valued symbol in the mind of the average person reading the edict. According to the religious and philosophical systems of the time, the

attainment of heaven was a worthwhile reward. Aśoka is suggesting that a life led according to the principles of his Dhamma would bring such a reward.

If the attainment of heaven in itself was what Aśoka was concerned with then surely he would also have mentioned another current belief and one that was regarded as a new and significant idea at the time, namely, the theory of the transmigration of souls.<sup>(1)</sup> The very fact that there is no reference to this idea proves that he was not concerned with the religious aspect of the attainment of heaven.

The nature and quality of Aśoka's religious inclinations are difficult to determine. That he was a religious man there is no doubt. But it would appear that until his later years he was not given to religious formalism. The question of whether he did or did not don the monk's robe for a short period is, in the final analysis, of minor importance. His determination as a young prince to become king against all opposition, shows him to have been extraordinarily ambitious and far reaching. If, as is often believed, he was suddenly converted to Buddhism, we feel that this change would have swung him to the other extreme. He was not a man of half measures. If he had thought of becoming a monk he would have abdicated and retired to a monastery. Kern has made much of the supposed conflict in

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(1) Kern, A, p. 32. The theory of the transmigration of souls was under discussion from the time of Yājñavalkya onwards.

his mind between the desire to be a monk and his responsibility (1) as a ruler, of which there is no clear evidence anywhere.

He did not arrive at this sense of responsibility on a sudden stirring of mind. He must have felt it even as a young prince when he was ambitious enough to fight for the throne. It would be nearer the truth to explain this conflict as a dilemma. He saw on the one side the relationship on a personal level between himself as a man and Buddhism as his religion. Equally distinct was the other side of the picture; as the ruler of the Mauryan state he could use certain aspects of Buddhism to further his own ideas, treating Buddhism not merely as the religious philosophy taught by the Buddha but as a social and intellectual force upon the society of the time. The solution to this dilemma he expressed in his theory of Dhamma.

In his edicts Aśoka had an opportunity to expound his Dhamma. Therefore the best reconstruction of the latter is by an examination of the principles as expressed in the edicts. We propose to consider them in the chronological order in which they were issued, thereby attempting to (2) reconstruct the sequence of ideas as well.

The earlier major rock edicts were issued from 256 B.C. onwards. The 1st Rock Edict contains the prohibition (3) of animal sacrifice and festive gatherings. The text runs thus,

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(1) Ibid. pp. 34-39.

(2) See Chronological Table. Ch. I, p. 120-21.

(3) CII, I, p. 1.

".....idha na kiṃci jīvam ārabhitpā prajūhitavayam na ca samājo katavyo....."

(1)

Hultzsch has translated this as,

".....here no living being must be killed or sacrificed and no festival meeting must be held....."

The interpretation of the first line is not absolutely certain. The idha may refer to Pāṭaliputra or to the local site where the edict was inscribed. We feel that it can hardly refer to Pāṭaliputra alone or to the royal palace as Bloch suggests, for in the same edict he confesses that two peacocks and a deer are still being killed daily in the royal

(2)

kitchen. A possible explanation may be that this order applies only to state reserves of certain animals. We know from the Arthāśāstra that the killing of animals listed as inviolable was a punishable offence. (3) Possibly the Aśokan order was a continuation of the same policy.

(3)

(4)

There is however an alternative translation of the passage,

"here no animal having been killed is to be sacrificed."

This is a more accurate translation, the emphasis being on the sacrificing of animals and not on their killing. The prohibition is of the ritual sacrifice of animals. If there was a general ban on the killing of animals for food, then surely the king would be the first to discontinue the practice himself. The mention of the animals killed for the royal

(1) Ibid, p. 2.

(2) LIA. p. 91, n.5.

(3) I, xxvi.

(4) This translation was suggested to me by Prof. Basham.

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kitchen (even though he adds later in the edict that he wishes to discontinue this practice at a future date), points to this order being more than a desire on his part to make his own belief in non-violence widespread. The hints against useless practices in other edicts, and the prohibition of festive gatherings would suggest that he was against the type of ritual that led finally to the sacrificing of animals. Possibly the idea was even more repugnant to him than the act and he associated it with primitive cults. <sup>(1)</sup> Thus to him an animal sacrifice would be a symbol of backwardness. The prohibition of animal sacrifices could not have been a popular move with the brahmins, since it was a regular source of livelihood for them.

Kosambi when discussing this prohibition writes, "Animal or vedic sacrifices went out of fashion with the pastoral economy when independent petty kingdoms had been wiped out. The agrarian economy had won at last, the pastoral life and ritual were finally defeated." <sup>(2)</sup> This interpretation gives too much significance to a comparatively straightforward action. The change from a pastoral economy to a village economy had by now taken place, else it would have been impossible to maintain such a large centralised empire as the Mauryan empire. Much of the pastoral ritualism would have died a natural death, and the number of sacrifices

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- (1) An interesting comparison can be made with Charlemagne who forbade sacrifices for a similar reason, that they were associated with pagan worship. Winston. Charlemagne, p. 168.
- (2) I.S.I.H. p. 189.

must have been reduced. It can be said that Aśoka's prohibition gave sanction to an already existing trend.

Aśoka's confession that the royal kitchens had not become completely vegetarian is a glimpse of the more human side of the emperor. Rather than hold himself up as a paragon he is willing to admit his frailties before all, as for example a liking for venison and peacock meat. It indicates a man of a reasonable nature who, rather than commit himself to complete abstinence from meat, reduces the quantity by gradual stages, promising abstinence in the future.

The other prohibition, that of festive meetings, is contrary to his otherwise sincere insistence on toleration. He adds that he sees much evil in festive meetings or gatherings. The term samāja which he uses may refer to secular gatherings of a non-religious nature as well. In another edict he speaks of festive meetings (most likely state sponsored), where <sup>(1)</sup> celestial apparitions may be seen. The precise reasons for this measure are uncertain. It may have been a puritanical objection on the part of the king, the "evil" being economic waste and immoral behaviour. He does go on to say that some festive meetings are considered meritorious by the king. These were no doubt the official gatherings referred to above.

The use of the word samāja is interesting. Buddhist literature speaks of samajjā or samājo as an <sup>(2)</sup> assembly.

(1) Gir. V, R.E. CII, I, p. 5.  
 (2) P.T.S. Dict. p. 425.

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Pande believes that the term had a cult significance although it was also used for gatherings of general bonhomie. <sup>(1)</sup> Thus the samāja and the sacrificing of animals may have been part of the same ritual based on primitive cults of which Aśoka disapproved.

The suppression of these popular meetings and assemblies is in conformity with the idea of strict centralisation. Such gatherings may have been feared as occasions for attacks on the king's new ideas. The continuance of all the old traditional festivals would keep alive the older ideas and would periodically raise doubts in the minds of the participants regarding the new preaching. On the other hand organised festivals, if properly handled could produce the required emotional effects and could therefore be used as propaganda machines.

Once again we have a parallel example from the reign of Charlemagne. <sup>(2)</sup> He denied the Saxons freedom of assembly and this included gatherings to celebrate the old festivals. Except for judicial assemblies gatherings were permitted only by order of the royal commissioner or of the courts. Charlemagne feared opposition from the Saxons and this was one way of preventing them from coming together.

The 2nd Rock Edict relates certain measures of social welfare which are included in the working of the Dhamma. <sup>(3)</sup> Medical centres for men and animals, the construction

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(1) SOB, p. 319-320.

(2) Winston. Charlemagne, p. 169.

(3) Gir. R.E. II, CII, I, p. 2.

of roads supplied with wells and lined with shady trees, and the planting of medicinal herbs are amongst these measures. (1)  
We shall discuss these in detail in a further chapter.

It is worth noticing here that Aśoka did realise the importance of good communications. This was not only of assistance to trade and commerce but also enabled his ideas to infiltrate more thoroughly.

The 3rd Rock Edict contains a vague reference to religion, in that it declares that liberality to brahmins and śramanas is a virtue. (2) The statement could have been made by any tolerant and broad-minded man of the time. It was, as we shall see from further edicts one of the principles of the Dhamma.

The 4th Rock Edict was an important document in the development of the Dhamma. (3) The text commences by explaining that for a long while a lack of morality prevailed in the land, which consisted of the killing of animals and living beings, discourtesy to relatives and discourtesy to brahmins and śramanas. There is nothing specifically Buddhist in this description of immorality. It speaks again of his tolerant attitude towards religious sects that, here and elsewhere, he mentions

He continues with the very important statement,

"ta aja devānamapriyasa priyadasino rāño dhamma caranena  
bherī ghoso aho dhamma ghoso vimāna darsanā ca hasti dasanā

- (1) Ch. VI, B.  
(2) Gir. R.E. III, CII, I, p. 4.  
(3) Gir. R.E. IV, CII, I, p. 5.

ca agikhamdhāni ca anāni ca divyāni rupāni dasayitpā janam..."

"But now in consequence of the practice of morality on the part of king Devānāmpriya Priyadarśin the sound of drums has become the sound of morality, showing the people representations of aerial chariots, representations of elephants, masses of fire, and other divine forms."

We see that he begins by assuming with complete conviction that his policy of Dhamma has improved the general condition of the people, since the moral advance has been tremendous. The phrase, "the sound of drums has become the sound of morality" has been interpreted in various ways.

Burnouf has said that the word aho does not mean "has become" but that it is an interjection and the phrase should read, "the drum, yes, the sound of Dhamma."<sup>(1)</sup> We feel that the

purpose of Aśoka's comparison of the past with the present situation would be lost if this was the translation. Senart suggests the following translation, "the king has made the drums resound, indeed, like the voice of religion, showing the people....."<sup>(2)</sup> It would seem that Senart is giving more

meaning to the phrase than was intended. De la Vallée Poussin prefers to treat aho dhamma as an interjection of admiration, in the sense of "how marvellous", particularly in connection with the latter part of the sentence, referring to the spectacles, etc.<sup>(3)</sup> He quotes the phrase as it occurs

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(1) ITM, p. 110

(2) LIP, I, p. 113.

(3) ITM, p. 110.

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in this sense in the Mahāvastu. (1) Raychaudhury has a  
different interpretation. (2) He reads it as, "the rever-  
beration of the war drums (bherighoso) has become the rever-  
berations of the Law (dhammaghoso). Since Aśoka's greatest  
pride was in conquest by piety and not by violence he puts  
everything including the war-drums to pious ends. Raychaudhury  
bases this interpretation on translating bherighosa as  
"war-drums". This is rather forcing the meaning of the word.  
It was a drum which was used either when leading forces into  
battle or for general announcements in towns or villages.  
To interpret it as a war-drum is to narrow its meaning  
arbitrarily.

We are of the opinion that the view of Bhandarkar is  
closest to the idea that Aśoka may have had when he composed  
the phrase. (3) Bhandarkar writes, "The sound of a drum in-  
variably precedes either a battle, a public announcement, or  
the exhibition of a scene to the people. But since Aśoka  
entered on his career of righteousness it has ceased to be a  
summons to fight but invites people to come and witness certain  
spectacles; and as those spectacles are of such a character  
as to generate and develop righteousness, the drum has become  
the proclaimer of righteousness." This explanation carries  
the meaning through to the latter part of the sentence as  
well and explains that the drum announces the pious spectacles

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(1) I. p. 236-237; II, p. 406.  
(2) P.H.A.I., p. 270.  
(3) I.A. 1913 p. 25 ff.

to follow.

(1) The word bherī for drum is commonly used in the Jātakas. It is usually mentioned together with the vīṇā and the Saṅkha as a necessary part of the equipment of actors and musicians. The drummer is generally referred to as bherivādaka.

The representations of aerial chariots, elephants, masses of fire and divine figures have often been wondered at. It would appear that these representations were shown during the few festival meetings of which Aśoka approved. They may have been official spectacles woven around the symbols and mythology of popular belief, but containing Dhamma propaganda at the same time. For instance a story involving chariots, elephants, divine figures and the whole repertoire of popular cults might be enacted at a festival and might also contain an emphatic and obvious moral based on the principles of Dhamma. A situation in effect not very different from the early Christian morality plays performed in England, except that the Aśokan spectacles would have been organised by the state. The Arthaśāstra maintains that the staging of celestial apparitions can be used for propaganda.<sup>(2)</sup> No doubt they were used for this purpose by Aśoka.

Among the more important principles of the practice of morality, the king lists, "abstention from killing animals, abstention from hurting living beings, courtesy to relatives,

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(1) Bherī Jātaka, I, 283-4.

(2) X, 3; XIII, 1.

courtesy to brahmins and śramaṇas,<sup>(1)</sup> obedience to mother and father, obedience to the aged." By now Aśoka was convinced that the practice of Dhamma must be promoted. He envisaged a future in which this practice would be continued by his sons, grandsons and great grandsons "until the aeon of destruction".

In the same year of his reign, the twelfth year, i.e. 256 B.C., Aśoka donated two caves in the Barābar hills to the Ājīvikas.<sup>(2)</sup> One was the Banyan cave and the other was the cave in the Khalatika mountain. We know that Aśoka's life was at various periods linked with the Ājīvikas.

Piṅgalavatsa, an Ājīvika ascetic, prophesied Aśoka's greatness.<sup>(3)</sup> The Divyāvadāna relates the story of Aśoka demanding the killing of all Ājīvikas because a nirgrantha had defiled a statue of the Buddha.<sup>(4)</sup> Evidence from the other edicts issued by Aśoka contradicts the Buddhist tradition. Far from being antagonistic to the Ājīvikas as the Divyāvadāna story suggests, Aśoka appears to have been on the friendliest of terms with them.

If it is true that the household ascetic of the queen was an Ājīvika, then Aśoka must have had a fair amount to do with them as a child. He may even have had a sentimental partiality for them owing to the prophecy of Piṅgalavatsa. Far from demanding their massacre he is concerned about their protection. In the 7th Pillar Edict he orders the dhamma-mahāmāttas to busy themselves with the brahmins and the

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(1) Gir. IV, R.E. CII, I, p. 8.  
 (2) CII, I, p. 181.  
 (3) Divyāvadāna p. 370 ff; Vamsatthapakāsinī, I, p. 190.  
 (4) XXVIII, p. 427.

(1)  
Ājīvikas.

Despite his supreme self-confidence in the Dhamma he was nevertheless concerned with the well-being of the other sects. He was neither bigoted nor fanatic enough to demand the exclusion of all other beliefs. Both the Ājīvikas and the nirgranthas were disapproved of by the Buddhists as is apparent from the legends describing the events prior to the calling of the Third Council.<sup>(2)</sup>

Hultzsch does not state with complete certainty that this donation to the Ājīvikas was made by Aśoka. He considers the possibility of another Mauryan ruler. Since the caves were dedicated to the Ājīvikas when the donor had been anointed twelve years it would suggest that the donor was Aśoka. The latter king began issuing edicts to be inscribed in his twelfth regnal year. Previous to him we have no record of a king issuing edicts. Further the title Priyadarśi would point to Aśoka rather than any other king. As we have seen earlier Aśoka was the only king to use this title.<sup>(3)</sup>

In the thirteenth regnal year a minor Rock Edict was issued, inscribed at places in central India and further south in modern Mysore, at Bairāt, Rupanath, Sahasram, Brahmagiri, Gāvimath, Siddhapur, Yerragudi and Māski.<sup>(4)</sup> This edict, as we have shown in the previous chapter, was issued on tour, when Aśoka was in the southern part of his empire. The phrase

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(1) VII, P.E., CII, I, p. 130.  
 (2) Ch. II, p. 89.  
 (3) See Ch. I, p. 15 . and App. D.  
 (4) Minor R.E. CII, I, p. 166 ff.

samgham upāgate or upagyite which we have discussed earlier in this chapter occurs in this inscription, as also the reference to 256 nights which we have considered in the previous chapter.

A much debated sentence from this edict is the one  
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which reads,

".....yā imāya kālāya jambudipasi amisā devā husu te dāni  
misā kaṭā....."

"(the gods) who during that time had been unmingled (with men) in Jambudvīpa have now been made (by me) mingled (with them)."

This passage can be explained as a naïve belief on the part of Aśoka that the heavenly gods had in fact come down to earth, or more specifically to Jambudvīpa, since his policy of Dhamma took effect. He describes it as the fruit of his zeal. Certainly such an idea was known at the time though belief in it may have been largely metaphorical.  
(2)

De la Vallée Poussin prefers to explain these gods as being the celestial figures who appeared in the spectacles arranged during the festive meetings, referred to in the 4th Rock Edict.  
(3) But it is not likely that Aśoka would have been so carried away by such shows that he would have paid so much attention to them and referred to a mere representation of the gods as an actual visit, or have described them as mingling with the people.

The reading of the word amisā as "not mingled" is

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(1) Rup. Minor R.E. CII, I, p. 166.  
(2) Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, II, 7, 16, 1; Harivaṃsa III, 32, 1.  
(3) IIM, p. 114.

based on the Sanskrit root miśra (mingled). There is another meaning based on the root mr̥ṣa meaning "false". Thus the sentence would read,

"those gods which had been regarded as true in Jambudvīpa during that time, have now been (shown to be) false (by me)."

This has led to much conjecture about the character of the false gods. At one time Hultzsch accepted this version and treated this statement as a declaration on the part of Aśoka that he had determined who were the false gods and who were

(1) not. This naturally led to an attack on Aśoka as an intolerant king. This interpretation suggests that having decreed who were the true gods the worship of the false gods would be frowned upon or prohibited. Hence his other statements elsewhere pleading for toleration would be in contradiction to the above.

De la Vallée Poussin basing himself on Hultzsch's first reading has made an ingenious remark with regard to the true and the false gods. (2) He believes that the gods referred to were the earthly gods, namely the brahmans. This he bases on the statement of the brahmans at the abhiṣeka of a king, "Here, then is your king; our king is of us, he is the god Soma." It would seem that the false gods were the brahmans whose falsehood had now been exposed. However, as de la Vallée Poussin himself points out later in the text, this is not a convincing explanation, since in the later edicts

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(1) Hultzsch, JRAS, 1910, p. 1310. Later Hultzsch accepted the meaning of miśra as "mingled". CII, I, p. 166.

(2) ITM, p. 112.

(as for example the Kalinga edict), Aśoka makes a special point of declaring that the brahmins are to be venerated.<sup>(1)</sup> Throughout his edicts the position of the brahmins and the śramaṇas is recognised.

We prefer the first interpretation of the word miśā meaning "mingled". The sense of the phrase is thus more clear particularly in connection with the word munisā "with the people". However we believe that this statement was not meant literally in the sense that, because of Aśoka's zeal in propagating the Dhamma, the very gods themselves had come down from heaven to mingle with the people in Jambudvīpa though he may well have believed that there had been divine indications of approval of his policy. We believe that it was meant to be taken in a metaphorical sense. Aśoka did think that his policy of Dhamma had achieved so much good in the country that it was just as it had been in the righteous days of the Kṛtayuga when the gods in their pleasure visited the earth and mingled with the people.

Here again he was using a value judgement with which his average reader was familiar. The concept of an ideal state, a period of prosperity and righteousness when men lived as gods and when gods were not afraid to mingle with men, a concept which later became crystallised in the idea of Rāma Rājya, was no doubt constantly in the minds of people at this period. In this statement Aśoka is suggesting that such a golden age has been brought about by the efficacy of

(1) CII, I, p. 43 ff.

the Dhamma.

In the thirteenth regnal year Aśoka issued the  
 (1)  
 5th Rock Edict. By this time the king's intention of what  
 might be termed a welfare policy towards his subjects is  
 evident and there are no religious tones in his reference to  
 it. He is concerned about the relationship between servants  
 and masters and the treatment of prisoners, both of which are  
 subjects of general concern to any ruler, no matter what his  
 religious convictions may be. The master-servant relation-  
 ship is of great importance in any society, and it is to  
 Aśoka's credit that he appointed a special body of officers  
 concerned with this work alone.

The statement concerning officials who attend to  
 the welfare of prisoners brings out a particularly humane aspect  
 of Aśoka's policy. The text runs, "....bamdhana badhasā  
paṭividhānāye apalibodhāye mokhāye ca eyam anubadhā pajāva ti  
katābhikāle ti vā mahālake  
vā/mahalake ti vā viyapāṭa te....."

"They are occupied in supporting prisoners (with money) in  
 causing (their) fetters to be taken off and in setting (them)  
 free, if one has children or is bewitched or aged respectively."  
 (2)

Kern has a strange interpretation of this passage.  
 He believes that it refers to the fetters of the spirit and  
 the freeing of the soul. We believe that this is a forced  
 interpretation. The edict is devoted to matters of social  
 and administrative welfare and quite obviously the prisoners

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(1) V.R.E., CII, I, p. 8.  
 (2) A, p. 64.

referred to are the state prisoners.

It would appear that prison was not a place of torture or a house of doom. The edict hints at something more on the lines of a reformatory. In any case there was always the hope for the prisoner that his release was close. Looking after the prisoner's family is a modern concept in the penal system and certainly speaks well for the foresight of the Mauryan administration.

It is in the 5th Rock Edict that Aśoka first introduces the institution of the dhamma-mahāmāttas, the officers of the Dhamma. This special service of officials was started by him in his thirteenth year. It is clear from the edicts that as a group of officers they were of great importance as they were directly responsible for the practical working of the Dhamma. It appears that they were a privileged group who had the favour of the king and were in direct contact with him.

In the early years their work was concerned with the general welfare of the populace, with particular emphasis on the teaching and practice of the Dhamma. They were permitted entry to the homes of people of all classes of society, even to those of the royal family and their relatives. We shall see from our analysis of the edicts how the power of the dhamma-mahāmāttas to interfere in the lives of the people increased gradually over the years. These officials were active not only in the heart of the empire at

Pāṭaliputra but also in the distant frontier regions, and among neighbouring peoples. (1) Furthermore they worked among religious communities and among secular groups.

The institution of the dhamma-māhāmattas is one of the strongest arguments in support of the view that Aśoka's policy of Dhamma did not conform to the religious policy of any one of the existing religions of his time, and further that it was not a purely religious policy but in fact covered a far more extensive field, including broad areas of economic, social and political life. This will become even more apparent as we acquaint ourselves with the increasing activities of these officials, activities which will be discussed in this chapter as well as in further chapters on administration and economic organisation.

Had the Dhamma conformed to any of the religions, more particularly Buddhism, the institution of the dhamma-mahāmattas would have been superfluous. Each religion had either its groups of devoted believers or its order of monks who could have been organised into active propagandists with greater efficiency as they would already have been believers. Buddhist śramaṇas for example would not have had much difficulty in adjusting themselves to working for the welfare of Aśoka's subjects, by assisting the destitute and the aged and attending to the needs of the unfortunate.

But this was not the case. In fact one of the responsibilities of the dhamma-mahāmattas was to attend to

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(1) V.R.E. CII, I, p. 33.

the welfare of such religious orders and sects. The Dhamma was above and apart from the various religious groups in the eyes of the state. In comparison with China, social ethics tended to lag behind in India after the formalism of the caste system had set in. Even the attempt of the Buddha was in the end unsuccessful. Monkish orders of this period were concerned largely with their personal salvation through retreat and asceticism. (1) Apart from conversions and alms-seeking the secular community was on the whole left to its own devices. The outcaste was always an outcaste, and the brahmans and śramaṇas were too confined by social pressure even to dare to regard him as a human being.

The institution of the dhamma-mahāmāttas was an attempt made by Aśoka to provide some system of social welfare for the lower castes and the less fortunate members of the community. It was a form of social welfare which was eliminated by the rigidity of the caste system in practice and which was neglected by the Buddhist bhikkhus.

Aśoka's inauguration of this system may well have been prompted by charitable and sympathetic feelings. But there was also a practical necessity for it. A centralised administration is always more efficient if social welfare at all levels is attended to. Aśoka's conception of centralisation certainly included the welfare of his subjects. By giving the dhamma-mahāmāttas this title he ensured against the accusation that they were mere officials who had been given

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(1) Kern. Manual of Buddhism, p. 73.

too much power. Now they became a privileged body carrying out a special mission of the king. By giving them extensive control over the high and the low, the religious and the secular, he was assured of a constant proximity with all levels of society. This control also served the purpose of bringing about an intensive infiltration of the Dhamma policy into all sections of society.

The next Rock Edict, the 6th, makes this relationship between the king and his subjects via the mahāmāttas even more clear. <sup>(1)</sup> Here a new departure from past procedure is made. The mahāmāttas are told to make their reports to the king at any time, irrespective of what he may be occupied with at the moment. Whether he be in the palace partaking of the various pleasures it afforded, or engaged in occupations of a private nature, or if he be outside in the park, the officials had access to him at any time. Even when approached on such occasions Aśoka would take a decision on the matter concerned. This is particularly stressed with any matter arising in the ministerial council where the action of the king may be debated. Or if the council took an emergency decision it had to be reported directly to the king by the mahāmāttas.

The class of officers bringing news of the people to the king are referred to by Aśoka as the paṭivedikas, whereas the news from the ministerial council is brought

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(1) VI, R.E., CII, I, p. 34.

specifically by the mahāmāttas<sup>(1)</sup>. It would seem that the two groups were different. But it is more than likely that the first group or "reporters", as Hultzsch translates the word, were a sub-section of the general body of the mahāmāttas.

The constant availability of the king was regarded as an important characteristic of a good monarch and was stressed in all theoretical works. The Arthaśāstra, even though it gives the king a very close schedule for each working day, insists that a king who makes himself inaccessible to his people not only causes public disaffection but endangers his own position as well.<sup>(2)</sup> That this was not regarded as merely a theoretical axiom by Candragupta, is clear from Megasthenes' statement that the king even when being massaged did not pause from attending to matters of state and giving audiences to people who wished to see him.<sup>(3)</sup>

The second half of the edict reaffirms Aśoka's preoccupation with the welfare of his subjects. He regards the exertion and dispatch of business as the root of the success of this welfare. Once again the stress is on the efficient organisation of the system of administration. He describes the reason for such action as the wish to discharge the debt which he owes to living beings.<sup>(4)</sup> This idea emerges not from any of the religious beliefs of the time which

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(1) Ibid.  
 (2) I, 19.  
 (3) Strabo, XV, I, 55.  
 (4) VI, R.E., CII, I, p. 35.

may have influenced Aśoka but from his own sense of responsibility towards his subjects. It comes rather from the personality and character of Aśoka than from any religious convictions.

Emphasis on the welfare of the subjects is again not alien to the theoretical ideas of the time. The Arthaśāstra has a verse which might well have been the inspiration of portions of this edict. Speaking of a king's duties Kauṭalya writes, "In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good."<sup>(1)</sup>

The edict conveys the impression that Aśoka exercised control over the state through a well-organised system of officers and couriers. He is in touch with all parts of the empire. His experience of kingship, his knowledge of it from the theoretical works of the period, and his own personality, have made him aware of the responsibilities of being king of such a vast territory.

The 7th Rock Edict is a short one, pleading for toleration amongst all sects.<sup>(2)</sup> It would seem that differences of opinion were expressed in direct and antagonistic ways amongst the various religious sects. The plea that every sect desires self-control and purity of mind is that of a man who generalises thus for the sake of a broader principle.

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(1) I, 19.

(2) VII, R.E., CII, I, p. 36.

Aśoka must have realised the harm that these sectarian conflicts would produce. The influence of the Dhamma would also have been undermined by these conflicts, since there was always the danger that people would regard his Dhamma as merely that of another sect, which would have been fatal to its future. Communities and sects are also asked to mingle in their places of habitation. This would serve the dual purpose of assisting religious toleration and preventing politico-religious sectarianism. This is not to suggest that Aśoka's sole purpose in asking for toleration was a political one. No doubt his wish would have remained the same in other circumstances as well. But the insistence was made more urgent because of the Dhamma.

While referring to the sects Aśoka uses the word pāsanda in the text. Hultzsch translates this as sect. The same word occurs in the Arthaśāstra and Shamasastri translates it as "heretics".<sup>(1)</sup> In a footnote he adds that the term can also be used for Buddhist mendicants. The use of the term in the sense of heretics came later. In orthodox Hindu works pāsanda means a member of the sects not accepting the Vedas,<sup>(2)</sup> and to that extent Shamasastri is right in his translation of the word. Aśoka no doubt meant much the same thing, without however implying the idea of heresy. In Pāli texts the word occurs with reference to Jainas, Ajīvakas,<sup>(3)</sup> etc. In order to make the meaning clear we prefer to use

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- (1) II, 36, and Shamasastri trans. p. 161.  
 (2) Monier-Williams, S-E Dict. p. 624.  
 (3) Childers. Pali Dict. p. 353.

Hultzsch's translation of the word as "sects".

On the question of Aśoka's toleration of religious sects, Kern is of the opinion that the necessity for toleration extended only to the other sects.<sup>(1)</sup> Within Buddhism he is strict about conforming to the rule. Kern refers to the Schism Edict as being the one edict directed specifically to the Buddhist order. This opinion we feel arises out of a misunderstanding of the relationship between Aśoka and the Samgha. Speaking both as a lay supporter and a monarch, his tone has to be at once that of a warm enthusiast and a strict disciplinarian. Since he is addressing a single sect he naturally calls upon its members to be unified in their principles and in their policy. The attitude he adopts would have been the same had he been addressing a similar edict to any other distinct order. Nowhere does he say that the Buddhists should not tolerate the other sects, or that they should hinder the freedom of action and speech of these sects. In his edicts toleration is treated as being among the more purposeful goals of life. If anything it would be more correct to say that he was concerned far more about the discipline of his own Dhamma than about that of any of the other sects. As we have explained above, peace between the various sects was of the utmost importance to his policy.

In the tenth year of his reign Aśoka went on a visit to the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya. Following this event he started a system of dhamma-yātas which he describes in the

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(1) A, p. 82.

(1)  
 8th Rock Edict. Dhamma-yātas were occasions when he toured the country for the furtherance of Dhamma or to interpret it differently, in a way which we prefer, went on tours prompted by his policy of Dhamma.

Previous to Aśoka journeys consisting largely of hunting expeditions and other enjoyable occupations were the only form of tours undertaken by the kings, other than military expeditions, of course. We are acquainted with the pleasurable side of such tours through the detailed account that Megasthenes has left to us of a hunt during the reign of Candragupta. (2) Such hunting expeditions were stopped by Aśoka, as might have been expected in view of his attack on the wanton killing of animals and the unnecessary expenditure and waste of energy involved in these vihāra-yātras. Now the king goes on tour and instead of hunting takes it upon himself to further the principles of Dhamma. Travelling from place to place and preaching as a method of spreading an idea, has been adopted by teachers throughout the world. Thus Aśoka's adaption of the custom of royal tours to the spreading of the Dhamma was by no means whimsical.

As he himself states, the purpose of these tours was manifold - visiting śramaṇas and brahmins, and making gifts, visiting the aged and supporting them with gold, visiting the people of the country, instructing them in morality and questioning them about morality. (3) It is clear from this list that the purpose was not specifically religious. Visiting

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(1) VIII, R.E., CII, I, p. 36.  
 (2) Strabo, XV, 1, 55.  
 (3) VIII, R.E., CII, I, p. 37.

religious sects was just one small part of the whole, Nor were the dhamma-yātas mere pilgrimages to places sacred to Buddhism, as has been suggested on the basis of his visit to the Bodhi-tree. (1) Aśoka has not described them as such in the text of the edict. The mention of brahmans together with śramaṇas makes it amply certain that in this case at least Aśoka was not favouring one sect more than the other.

It is also certain that neither a journey to a particular place nor a religious tour is meant. We may interpret the dhamma-yāta as a tour of an area where by various means, such as through meeting the religious sects of that community, the peasants and the country people and the old people, Aśoka is trying to further his own contacts with his subjects, and to proclaim to a broader cross-section of his people his policies of Dhamma. Thus he uses the term dhamma-yāta to mean a tour undertaken primarily to further the people's acquaintance with the Dhamma.

The tours must have included the royal inspection of various places. Since Aśoka took a tremendous interest in various happenings in his kingdom it would not have been an unusual procedure for him to make extensive tours of the country. For an intelligent ruler such tours would provide a satisfactory means of gauging public opinion in a broad sense. Aśoka must certainly have used them for this purpose also. Furthermore they acted as a check on local officials, and with an empire as large as the Aśokan it must have become

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(1) Eggermont, CRAM. p. 81.

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almost imperative for the ruler to visit the rural areas and the more outlying parts. The Minor Rock Edict, as found at Brahmagiri and neighbouring areas, is evidence that Aśoka toured as far as the southernmost part of his empire, since this particular edict, as we have seen, was issued on tour.

It was probably during these early tours, some time in the eleventh or twelfth year of his reign, that the idea of having dhamma mahāmāttas came to him. These officials would act as intermediaries between him and his people in a capacity different from that of the usual functionaries of a bureaucracy. Thus the task of the implementation of the Dhamma would be well distributed amongst a body of able and selected men. This would not in any way make him unaware of the results of their work, as he would be continually in contact with the mahāmāttas. In the position of the co-ordinator and controller, he would then have the vast system at his finger tips and, at the same time he would be in a position to devote himself to other matters of policy and state.

It is interesting to notice that Aśoka is probably the first Indian king on record to realise the significance of the country people. This was due primarily to his wish to be acquainted with the views of

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as large a cross-section of the people as possible. The tours were instrumental in making this possible, as were some other measures he took. The contact between towns permitted the spread of news and ideas from one town to another. The easy accessibility of the towns and the good communications connecting them, provided this interflow. But the people living in the rural areas were still isolated. Aśoka naturally wanted contact with this section of his subjects. Further, Dhamma could hardly be claimed to have succeeded if it left the country people untouched. There was no better way of achieving both ends than by making extensive tours and travelling amongst these people.

It may also be suggested that the significance of the peasantry was realised by Aśoka owing to the fact that the economy had changed from a pastoral to a predominantly agrarian one. Thus the village and the peasants, through the organisation of land revenue, became the main source of subsistence of the state. Increasing dependence on land revenue as the biggest single source of income of the state, placed the peasant in a new and important role in the administrative organisation of the country.

(2)

The somewhat puritanical streak in Aśoka appears again in the 9th Rock Edict. The first part of the edict

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(1) Cf. Bloch, LIA, p. 112, n. 8. Bloch takes the word darśanam in its traditional sense i.e. the king shows himself to the people. This may be so. Such ceremonial appearances acted as a focus of loyalty and were necessary particularly in a large and somewhat unwieldy state. In Aśoka's case they both served this purpose and gave a window on public opinion.

(2) For a further discussion see Ch. V, p. 294.

(3) IX, R.E., CII, I, p. 37.

attacks the value of many of the most widely practised ceremonies, but in the second part of the edict Aśoka is a little less severe. Once again he maintains that the practice of morality is infinitely more valuable than the practice of these ceremonies. It can be argued that this edict was an indirect attack on the brahmins and members of other religious groups who lived entirely on the proceeds of performing various ceremonies for the people. Aśoka mentions specifically ceremonies performed during illnesses, at the birth or marriage of a child, or when setting out on a journey. He adds, "heta cu abaka janiyo bahu cā bahuvidham cā khudā cā nilathyā ca magalam kalanti....."

"But in such cases mothers and wives are practising many and various vulgar and useless ceremonies."

No doubt he realised the excessive emphasis on ritual in the religious observances of his time. He was aware that much of it was meaningless and was merely a source of income to the officiating priest. His contention that these ceremonies bear little fruit, and as compared to them the practice of morality is truly valuable, is an attempt at regarding ritual from a rational point of view. He does not condemn the śramanas and the brahmins who encourage rituals, in fact he demands liberality towards them. He is merely asking for a reasonable attitude in these matters. The observances with which he wishes to replace these ceremonies are really quite straightforward and obviously of greater value from

the point of view of developing human relationships in society. He asks for a proper courtesy towards slaves and servants, reverence to elders, and gentleness to animals.<sup>(1)</sup> By way of reward he holds out the attainment of the desired object in this world and endless merit in the next, in short it is a meritorious practice which can result only in the general good, and surely this is a better objective than expensive rituals and ceremonies of a personal nature.

Aśoka's objection to these practices was not entirely on religious grounds. He was also aware of the great expense demanded by each of these ceremonies, an expense which few were able to afford, and which, as far as its evaluation in terms of economics went, was money badly employed, since it thereby tended to accumulate in the hands of a small section of society. It would then be expended largely only for the purchasing of daily requirements. We feel that this condemnation of popular practices is connected with his request in the 3rd Rock Edict for a moderation in expenditure and moderation in possessions.

The latter part of the edict occurs in two recensions. One text is common to Kālsi, Shahbāzgarhi and Mānsehra, the other text is found at Girnār, Jaugada and Dhauli.

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(1) This edict expresses a sentiment very similar to that in the Sigālovāda Sutta (Dīg. Nik. III, 180-93; Apadāna II, 604). The uselessness of certain traditional practices and the benefits of certain practical actions in their place, are pointed out by the Buddha to a young householder

The difference is not very significant as far as the text is concerned. Both are variants on the theme of each man acting according to the principles of Dhamma and teaching the same to his friends and neighbours. Bloch suggests that the difference was geographical.<sup>(1)</sup> The Kālsi, Shahbāzgarhi and Mānsehra group belong to the Himalayan region, whereas Girnār, Jaugada and Dhauri are all maritime areas. If Aśoka did attach any importance to this difference he does not make it apparent in the text of the edict.

In the 10th Rock Edict, Aśoka denounces fame and glory and reasserts that the only glory he desires is that his subjects should follow the principles of the Dhamma.<sup>(2)</sup> He maintains that the reason for his efforts in this direction is twofold; so that men may obtain merit in the other world and the elimination of danger to them in this. The first is mentioned but not discussed. The second he explains as the danger of demerit. He adds that it is more difficult for a highly placed person to adhere to the principles of Dhamma, since it demands a greater sacrifice. Presumably it demands the forfeiture of the goods and services that come to be accepted by the highly placed.

This in itself shows an understanding of human weakness in the light of day-to-day living. Instead of demanding the impossible from every person Aśoka realises

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(1) LIA, p. 113, n. 1.  
 (2) X R.E., CII, I, p. 39.

that the degree of difficulty in acting according to the Dhamma can be extremely varied, and is willing to grant that problems may arise because of this. In this edict he assumes the tone of a preacher and at the same time is full of the confidence of a man who believes in the intrinsic goodness of his ideas.

The next Rock Edict, the 11th, contains a further explanation of the Dhamma.<sup>(1)</sup> Here he refers to the gift of Dhamma, the distribution of Dhamma and kinship through Dhamma. All of these can be achieved by observing proper courtesy to slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives, and to śramāṇas and brahmans, and abstention from killing animals. He adds that it is the responsibility of each person on recognising the merit inherent in these practices to further them, thereby also ensuring happiness in this world and the next.

This edict follows closely the contents of the 9th Rock Edict. Here again no religion is referred to, but an attempt is made at explaining the Dhamma. We can say with even greater assurance that if the Dhamma was an attempt at preaching Buddhism it would have been inevitable for Aśoka to have added that the lay person should also pay special attention to the words of the Buddhist monks and preachers. But Aśoka's explanation of what he means by the Dhamma indicates that it was a secular teaching. Emphasis is given

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(1) XI, R.E., CII, I, p. 40.

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to respecting elders, both the religious elders in the community and the elders in the family. The plea to be liberal and charitable towards friends, acquaintances and followers of religious orders, might be addressed to any community that prides itself on having a developed sense of social ethics. The request to abstain from killing animals is again a humane plea which has been heard through the centuries in many civilisations.

For Aśoka the Dhamma was a way of life, the essence of what he had culled from the moral teachings of the various thinkers known to him, and probably his own experience of life. It was based on a high degree of social ethics and social responsibility. Not being a theorising brahman he saw this in terms of practical everyday life, rather than in the idealised theory of caste structure. Conscious social behaviour based on a simple reasoned understanding of social relationships, was for him essential to any society. Under the influence of brahmanical teaching this tendency was dying out in the society of his time. The twice-born were given privileges and priorities not because of individual merit, but because of the happy accident of their birth. This feature of brahmanical teaching was amongst the many that would thus be disputed by the teaching of Aśoka.

Because he insisted on humane social behaviour he sought to avoid the kind of artificial behaviour that conforms outwardly but in spirit refuses to accept. Thus by holding

out the possibility of heavenly bliss and such rewards, he tried to raise it from mere etiquette to a genuinely felt responsibility, investing it with a certain spiritual significance which would be easily understood by a people already acquainted with the idea of spirituality in religion.

Throughout his edicts he stresses the importance of the family. No doubt he saw that the family would provide an ideal nucleus for the development and spread of the Dhamma. The caste system, with its overwhelming emphasis on kinship ties, accelerated the development of the family as an institution of primary importance in the sophisticated social system of the Mauryan period. Hereditary caste and hereditary professions meant that the relationship between the generations was a very closely knit one, therefore the permeation of ideas would be equally direct. The household of one family, ranging from the patriarchal father or grandfather down to the paid servants and the slaves, was an important social unit. The rise of a money economy which was taking place at this time, and the emergence of new commercial professions, assisted in establishing the family as an even stronger unit, since the accumulation of a large capital became a prime incentive amongst those families in such professions. Thus Aśoka frequently calls upon the father, the son, the brother and the master, in addition to friends and neighbours to act according to the Dhamma.

At Dhauli and Jaugada, the 11th, 12th, and 13th Rock Edicts have been omitted and two separate edicts have been

added to the others. These two are not included at the remaining sites. It is of interest to examine the three edicts and to enquire as to why they were not included in the Kalinga region. The 11th Edict as we have just seen is concerned with the practice of morality, and is similar in content to the 9th Rock Edict.

The 12th Rock Edict is a direct and emphatic plea for toleration amongst the various sects. (1) It would appear that there were still considerable differences of opinion which were not conducive to happy relationships among the sects of the time. These differences were obviously of some significance, otherwise Aśoka would not have given the matter so much publicity as to devote an entire edict and a fairly lengthy one to it. Bloch suggests that in each version it was given a position of special importance on the rock. (2)

We are of the opinion that this edict may also have been the result of criticism of Aśoka's policy by other leaders of the various sects, who imagined or realised from the degree of support for the Dhamma by the populace that this new ideology might cut the ground from under their feet. Possibly groups like the brahmans suggested that the author of the Dhamma was trying to oust every other sect and install his own ideas. Or there may have been complaints about the irreligiousness of the people as a result of following the Dhamma, in so far as traditional practices may have been

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(1) XII, R.E., CII, I, p. 41.  
 (2) LIA, p. 121, n. 1.

reduced, thereby affecting the influence of local priests and authorities.

The king explains that he is still honouring all sects, both acetics and householders. Nevertheless he adds that he considers the "promotion of the essentials of all sects" as the highest honour. <sup>(1)</sup> This promotion lies in toleration, not a passive co-existence but an active frame of mind in which opinions are expressed, but in such a way as not to give offence. He asks for restraint when speaking of the various sects lest one's own be over-praised and the others insulted. In the honouring of other sects lies the welfare and honouring of one's own. Once again the idea of social behaviour arises. The superior man, though unruffled in his own belief, is supremely tolerant in both word and action of the views of his fellow men. And through such toleration he enhances his own position and that of the group to which he owes his loyalty. An almost Confucian concept of "virtue" creeps into the edict.

The author adds that concord is meritorious and that all sects should obey and hear each other's moral teaching:

".....s̄amavāye vu s̄ādhu kiti annamanaṣā dhammaṃ suneyu cā  
suṣuṣeyuccā ti"

It has been suggested that this passage refers to a council held by the king where members of the various sects gathered

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(1) XII, R.E., CII, I, p. 43.

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 together and tried to even out their differences. We do not accept the fact of such a council nor do we believe, as Bloch states further, that a verbal message was circulated, suggesting a reconciliation of ideas. We believe that the word ṣamavaye was used by Aśoka to mean "concord", in the sense of toleration in spirit, as earlier passages in the edict suggest, and also in the promotion of the essentials of all sects, since it would seem that he believed that the essentials of most sects were common to all.

Moreover a furtherance of these essentials was in fact a furtherance of his own Dhamma, since the latter was based on the essentials of the various sects. Thus he vindicated his own position by showing that there was nothing in the Dhamma which was contrary in thought at least to the essentials in spirit of the sects, and at the same time satisfied the leaders of these sects that his intention was not to supplant their teaching with the Dhamma, but rather to insist on the toleration of each of them.

In order to promote these essentials his own contribution has been to increase the power of the mahāmāttas. He states once more that the dhamma-mahāmāttas are occupied in the promotion of the Dhamma. So also are the ithijikha mahāmāttas, the officers in charge of the women. The precise work of these officers remains uncertain. <sup>(2)</sup> ~~This~~ They may have been the superintendents of the prostitutes, the

(1) Bloch, LIA, p. 123, n. 11.

(2) See Ch. VI p. 412 for a detailed discussion of the work of these officers.

equivalent of the ganikadhyakṣas mentioned in the Arthāśāstra.<sup>(1)</sup>  
 This would suggest that the propagation of the Dhamma was meant to reach every member of the society. The same applies to officials who are inspectors of animal farms or are occupied in other types of work. They have all been instructed in Dhamma and religious toleration, and it is expected of them that they will spread this instruction even in the course of their daily work. The final sentence of this edict sums up the king's view of this approach. He says,<sup>(2)</sup>

".....iyam ca etisa phale yam ata pāsāṃda vadhi ca hoti dhammasa ca dipana....."

"And this is the fruit of it that both the promotion of one's own sect takes place and the glorification of morality."

The point that Aśoka wishes to emphasise is that the practice of Dhamma does not exclude loyalty to one's own sect, even if it may necessitate dis-association from certain rituals. This is a defence of Dhamma against those critics who held that to support the Dhamma in word or action would mean excommunication from one's sect. Aśoka points out the reach of the Dhamma by his own actions and by his good relationship with members of all sects, a sincerely felt tolerance being the way in which this relationship can be achieved.

The 13th Rock Edict is among the most important documents of Aśokan history.<sup>(3)</sup> For the present we must limit

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(1) II, 27.  
 (2) XII, R.E., CII, I, p. 43.  
 (3) XIII, R.E., CII, I, p. 44.

ourselves to what we can gather of the Dhamma from the edict. It appears to have been written a few months after the earlier edicts, since it conveys a tone of recapitulation. It expresses a new idea, that of conquest by Dhamma instead of by war and violence. It must have been a later idea of Aśoka's, else he would have mentioned it in one of his earlier edicts.

It seems that Aśoka, when reviewing the early part of his reign in retrospect, was extremely upset by the unhappiness caused by the Kalinga War. It appears that his remorse over the War grew with the years and that it did not exist to such an extent immediately after the War. It is indeed strange that Aśoka did not announce his remorse in the first few edicts that he issued, as for example the Minor Rock Edict. Eventually by way of repentance he devoted himself to a zealous study of the Dhamma. He considers deplorable the deaths and deportations that accompany war. Even more worrying to him is the fact that the venerated group of the brahmins and śramanas meet with misfortune. The normal rules of social behaviour such as obedience and devotion to one's superiors, parents and elders, and courtesy to friends, slaves and servants, are upset. <sup>(1)</sup> This disruption of social behaviour is bemoaned by the king.

Aśoka's use of the term brahman and śramana is of interest in the context of what is meant by his Dhamma.

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(1) Hultzsch translates the original word agrabhūti as those receiving a high pay; Bühler as those of a higher caste. (ZDMG, 37, 592 ff.) We prefer the translation of Bloch (LIA p. 126 n. 7) as superior.

He states in the edict that there is no country where these two classes do not exist except among the Greeks.<sup>(1)</sup> In view of the fact that the countries known to him were all bordering on Jambudvīpa, and were acquainted with Indian religions and in many cases had religions similar to those in his own kingdom, such a remark is obvious. The Greeks are excluded because they were known to have totally different beliefs and therefore their religious orders were not the same. The brahmins were known to the Greeks as one of the more important classes of Indian society, referred to by Megasthenes as the philosophers.<sup>(2)</sup> But there was some confusion in their minds as to the distinction between the brahmin and the śramaṇa. A fragment of Megasthenes quoted by Clement of Alexandria refers to the ascetics as the ὕλοβιοι and adds that there are some philosophers who follow the precepts of Boutta.<sup>(3)</sup> It is not clear from this passage whether the author means that the ὕλοβιοι were followers of the Buddha or whether they were a separate group. The latter appears to be a more probable interpretation. The ὕλοβιοι were probably the brahmin ascetics, and the followers of Boutta were the śramaṇas. The author probably confused the two groups. It appears from these accounts that the brahmins and the śramaṇas were both highly respected groups.

Aśoka continues to state that there is no place in any country where men are not attached to some sect.<sup>(4)</sup> This

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- (1) XIII R.E., CII, I, p. 45.  
 (2) Strabo XV, 1, 59.  
 (3) Clem. Alex. Strom. I, p. 305 A, B.  
 (4) XIII R.E., CII, I, p. 45.

statement once again clarifies the relationship between the Dhamma and the various religious beliefs of the period. The Dhamma was a code of ethics, largely social ethics, which it was possible for every man to follow and practise without its interfering in essentials with his personal religion. Thus the king himself, although a Buddhist, could still practice the Dhamma, just as could a non-Buddhist or a follower of any other sect, since the policy of Dhamma was broad enough to allow people of all shades of opinion to accept it.

The brahmins and śramaṇas in the eyes of Aśoka were more or less equals, in so far as they were both highly respected groups, being the religious leaders of the community. Apart from the occasions when he specifically states his faith in Buddhism he does not in any way differentiate between the two groups when referring to them in the edicts. Usually the terms occur together almost as a compound. The placing of one in precedence to the other is quite arbitrary. We have counted the number of times the word brahman precedes śramaṇa in the edicts and vice versa, and we find them almost equally divided. Brahman precedes in about twenty instances and śramaṇa in about sixteen, and the word brahman occurs alone in about five instances. (1) Aśoka can certainly not be accused of partiality towards the Buddhists on this count. Since he was a Buddhist himself this speaks in favour of the general impartiality of the Dhamma towards particular sects.

The idea of conquest through Dhamma is a logical

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(1) In the following Rock Edicts, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, XI, XIII.

development of the theory of Dhamma. It is opposed to conquest by force and thus eliminates aggressive warfare. By conquest Aśoka does not mean the actual over-running or control of foreign territory. The use of the term conquest by him implies the adoption of the principles of Dhamma by the country in question. Thus he includes the Greek kingdoms of Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Macedonia and Epirus as having been conquered by Dhamma, whereas in fact all that may have happened was a cordial exchange of embassies or missions or merely the sending of one of these by Aśoka to the Greek kings mentioned.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is of particular interest to notice that although the conquest by Dhamma brings great satisfaction to Aśoka and he hopes that his descendents will not wish to make the more usual type of conquests, he nevertheless does not prohibit the latter altogether. He merely modifies older conventional views of international ethics, by saying that if a conquest is necessary it should be accompanied by mercy and light<sup>(2)</sup> punishments.

Kaliṅga was conquered in the eighth year of Aśoka's reign. After the conquest of Kaliṅga Aśoka ceased to indulge in wars of aggression. This, we believe, was not because he completely forsook the idea of war as a means to an end, though he claims to have done so, but because with the conquest of Kaliṅga the consolidation of the empire was complete. Furthermore there was now no opposing power within the empire.

(1) See Ch. IV, p. 218 .

(2) Kāl. R.E. XIII, CII, I, p. 43.

The people on the frontiers were generally too weak to consider a war against him. The only possibility of a war was against the Greek kingdoms of Asia Minor. But they were too distant and the acquisition of their territory was not of particular interest to the Aśokan empire.

It may be asked why Aśoka did not continue his wars in southern India and include the entire peninsula within the empire. We believe that such a war would have been for him both unnecessary and undoubtedly against his principles. The kingdoms of southern India were on very friendly terms with the Mauryan empire, judging from the edicts. As long as these kingdoms received the dhamma-mahāmāttas and made at least a show of respecting the policy of Dhamma, Aśoka would not be ill-disposed towards them. Passages from Tamil literature which we have dealt with elsewhere suggest that the Mauryan power was held in awe by the southern peoples when the first Mauryan invasions took place. <sup>(1)</sup> This predisposition towards remaining in Aśoka's favour applied to Ceylon as well, particularly with the accession of Tissa.

Hindu theorists have glorified war in itself as great and glorious. <sup>(2)</sup> Wars could be interpreted as opportunities for the display of power and might. A king's greatness depended more than usually on his military prowess. This was an attitude that Aśoka could not accept. He did not believe in passive resistance, nevertheless war was an

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(1) See Ch. IV p.23].  
 (2) *Mam.* VII, VIII.

extreme measure not to be used unless absolutely necessary. Whereas a Samudragupta in his place would have marched right down to Cape Comorin and perhaps even have taken a fleet across to Ceylon, Aśoka was willing to pause at Mysore and leave the now friendly south Indian kingdoms alone, until such time as they should become provocative.

The Conquest of Kalinga was of importance to the empire. Lying between the Godāvarī and Mahānadī rivers it was of strategic importance particularly with regard to south India. It cut off access to the southern part of the empire via the eastern route. <sup>(1)</sup> The eastern route was the direct route to the south from Magadha, which was the nucleus of the empire. No doubt the western route could have been used, but it was a more complicated one. It meant first travelling to central India and then across the Satpura and Vindhya mountains to the plateau proper. The western route was easier, since it followed to a large extent the river valleys, particularly the Godāvarī and its northern tributaries. The sea-route from the Ganges delta following the coastline to the Kṛṣṇā delta would not have been a good alternative either, if three-quarters of the length of the coastline was in hostile hands.

Having such an extensive coastline, it is possible that Kalinga had developed trading relations with the coast

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(1) Trade routes and communications in general are discussed further in Ch. IV p.285ff.

opposite to it, that of Burma or Suvarṇabhūmi.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, because of its maritime and commercial importance, Kalinga would have been of value to the Aśokan empire. Kalinga must have pursued a fairly independent policy before its conquest by Aśoka, and may have been perhaps a little too defiant for the security of the eastern part of the empire. That it was conquered only after an important and hard-fought war is clear from the prominence which Aśoka gives to it in the edicts and from his perhaps exaggerated figures of those killed and captured.<sup>(2)</sup>

For Aśoka the possibility of further territorial conquest was almost at an end. unless he was deliberately provoked by any country. The conquest of Kalinga secured him strategical and economic advantages. It brought the eastern part of the empire with its flourishing maritime trade under the direct control of the Mauryan administration. Thus Aśoka could with assurance feel satisfied with his conquest by Dhamma, since the empire now had few enemies to fear and the strongly centralised administration was rapidly crystalising<sup>(3)</sup>

The last of the major Rock Edicts is the 14th.

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(1) See Cha. IV p. 245.

(2) Aśoka refers to it as Kaliṅgas, which Kern takes to mean the trikaliṅga or "three Kalingas" of the medieval inscriptions. (A. p. 84). We have no good evidence of the extent of Kalinga before its conquest, or after Khāravēla. The phrase trikaliṅga is a late one and refers to the times when the area was divided into three kingdoms. There is no evidence that trikaliṅga was ever used until after the Gupta period. The context of the word in the edict shows that it is used in the plural because it refers to the people of Kalinga and not to the kingdom itself. Similar usages are frequent in the Aśokan inscriptions and are widely to be found in Pāli and Sanskrit literature.

(3) XIV, R.E., CII, I, p. 49.

It is a short edict in which he explains that he has had these edicts inscribed throughout the country in complete or abridged versions. It appears from this that the existing editions were not the only ones to be published. It seems that many more versions were either inscribed on rock and remain as yet undiscovered, or else were made public in other forms. With his enthusiasm for the Dhamma Aśoka must have done his utmost towards having these edicts distributed in every part of his domains, so that the word of the Dhamma would penetrate to all parts of the country. Where there were no suitable rocks the edicts may well have been written on tablets of wood or on cloth banners and posted in the more important parts of each town, thereby giving them as much publicity as was possible. They also appear to have been read aloud at public gatherings and on similar occasions. <sup>(1)</sup>

At Dhauri and Jaugada the 11th, 12th, and 13th edicts were omitted. In their place two separate edicts were issued which are generally referred to as the 1st and 2nd Separate Edicts. <sup>(2)</sup> It appears from this that the edicts could be varied according to the locality in which they were inscribed. The reason for omitting Rock Edict 13 from the Kalinga area is obvious. The reference to the suffering caused by the Kalinga war was too close to the feeling of the people of Kalinga to make it pleasant or instructive for them to read the edict. We believe further that it was politically unwise to

(1) 1. S.R.E. CII, I, p. 93.

(2) I and II S.R.E. CII, I, p. 92 and p. 111.

publicise the king's remorse over the war among the people against whom the war was fought.

The 11th Edict is similar to the 9th and expounds the practice of the Dhamma. In the 12th Edict, Aśoka makes a strong plea for toleration amongst the various sects, and explains how the Dhamma can be practised alongside personal beliefs. It is possible that this Edict was excluded at Dhauri and Jaugada because the strife between the sects was not as serious there as it was in other parts of the country, and that the people of Kalinga were not fully acquainted with the Dhamma. No doubt it was introduced by gradual stages in these parts, since to have rushed it would have been politically tactless. Thus the emphasis in these two edicts is on administration, justice and the practice of the Dhamma,

The 1st Separate Rock Edict is addressed to the mahāmāttas at Tosāli and Samāpa and is concerned largely with instructions to these officials in the proper administration of justice in the territory. <sup>(1)</sup> The term mahāmātta is qualified by reference to nagalaviyohālaka which Hultzsch translates as "the judicial officers of the city". <sup>(2)</sup> Bloch gives an interesting reference to the use of the term pauravyavahārika in the <sup>(3)</sup> Arthaśāstra, meaning officials who have judicial functions.

The first demand made by the king on these officials is that their object should be to gain the affection of the people; for he adds,

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(1) I.S.R.E., CII, I, p. 92.

(2) Ibid.

(3) LIA, p. 136, n. 3.

save munise pajā mama....

"For all men are my children"

He desires the welfare of his subjects in the same way as he would that of his children. In the first part of the statement there can be a play on the word pajā since it can mean the children or the subjects of the king, and either meaning would apply in this case. The latter meaning would imply that since all men under the jurisdiction of these officials are his subjects, he wishes that the officials gain their affection, But the latter part of the statement makes it quite clear that he means "children" in using the word pajā.

The king is aware that there are lapses in justice owing to a number of reasons, some of them connected with the personal character of the officers. He lays great emphasis on impartiality in judgment and on the efficient working of the judicial system. He speaks of the debt which the officials owe to the king and declares that their proper functioning will win them not only his satisfaction but enough merit to attain heaven. Here again heaven is held out as a reward beyond even the pleasure of the king.

The public reading of the edict is insisted upon on each day of the Tiṣya and also on frequent occasions in between. This information bears out our suggestion that the edicts were read to the public at special gatherings, or even in the ordinary course of events in the towns. This, no doubt had the double purpose of making the public aware both of the king's wishes with regard to it, and also of the

relationship he envisaged between the officials and the public. As a further check on the officials a supervisory officer was to be sent every five years to tour and inspect the working of the judicial system and insist on the king's instructions being carried out. In the 2nd Separate Edict he states that even a single person can demand to have the edict read out to him.<sup>(1)</sup>

The 2nd Separate Rock Edict is directed mainly to those officials at Tosāli and Samāpa who worked amongst the people at the frontier, presumably the less civilised tribes of eastern India, who now after the Kalinga war either had been incorporated within the empire or had been placed in much closer relations with the empire.

Once more the king states that his subjects are to him like his children and this time he includes the frontier people or the borderers. He expects the officials to create in these people the confidence that the king has a paternal love towards them and will care for them. This idea of the king treating his subjects as his children was known to ancient Indian political thought. Hultzsch quotes a passage from Aśvaghōṣa by way of comparison,<sup>(2)</sup>

"svābhyah prajābhyo hi yathā tathaiṣa sarvaprajābhyah

śivamāśāśa<sup>m</sup>se"

"As for his own children even so he desired welfare for all his subjects".

Similar passages occur in the Arthaśāstra, where the king is

(1) II, S.R.E., Jaug. CII, I, p. 115.  
 (2) Buddhacarita, II, 35.

called upon to place the welfare of his subjects among his foremost duties, and is told that only if he regards them with the same concern as a father regards his children will the kingdom prosper.<sup>(1)</sup>

The emphasis is largely on building up confidence, particularly among the borderers. The fact that Aśoka's approach to these people is distinctly different from that to his other subjects, shows not only the tremendous variety of the people he had to deal with, but also his own understanding of the type of appeal to be employed with each group of people. Obviously with the tribes on the eastern frontier the main thing was to gain their confidence. Then possibly they would be more ready to accept the Dhamma.

After the last of the major Rock Edicts there is an interval of a few years, before another set of edicts, the Pillar Edicts, are issued. In between these years a number of minor Pillar Edicts were issued, some of which referred to a specific site or institution. Thus the major Rock Edicts were issued in and before the year 255 B.C. The first Pillar Edict was issued in 242 B.C. after a period of twelve years. It was during these twelve years that some of the minor Pillar Edicts were inscribed. Whether any major edicts were issued during this period remains open to doubt. Since there is as yet no evidence of such edicts we must perforce work on those that exist. This interval therefore afforded a

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(1) I, 19.

convenient break in which the ideas of Dhamma might be assimilated by Aśoka's subjects and have developed in his own mind, and whatever change may have occurred in Aśoka's thinking will be apparent in the next series of edicts, the Pillar Edicts.

The Minor Rock Edict inscribed largely in the south was issued at about the same time as the major Rock Edicts. We have discussed the major Rock Edicts before the Minor Rock Edict, because we believe that the former are more revealing as far as his Dhamma-policy is concerned, and taken as a series give us a better indication of the development of the Dhamma. We have discussed the Minor Edict earlier in the chapter, when considering the relationship between Aśoka and Buddhism. His status was at first that of a lay worshipper, but later he had a closer relationship with the Saṃgha and he has consequently been more zealous in this connection. The result of this zeal is the considerable spread of righteousness in the country. He calls upon his subjects to be zealous as this will lead to progress, but he does not equate Dhamma with Buddhist teachings. Buddhism remains his personal belief. He has been zealous and has thereby achieved much. Therefore he asks that everyone be zealous in their beliefs, for that in itself achieves much. The Yerragudi version of the Minor Rock Edict makes it even more certain that he wishes the Dhamma to permeate through all social levels, from the brahmans to the elephant drivers

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(1) Bloch, LIA, p. 151.

and the responsibility for this lies with the officials.

In speaking of his principles he lays deliberate stress on the importance of the family, and refers this to ancient custom and usage. Nowhere else in the edicts has the family been referred to in such a pointed way.

Since the versions of the Minor Rock Edict chiefly refer to a private matter, the personal conviction of the king in the Buddhist religion, it may be said that they were therefore a token of respect for the southern peoples. The same edict occurs elsewhere but not in so many versions as in the south. The concluding half of the edict introduces the idea of the Dhamma, and suggests practical ways in which the Dhamma could be put into action.

Aśoka may have felt that since the people of the south were more distant and less familiar with the development of his ideas, it would make his position more clear, if he first declared his own personal belief and then followed it with an explanation of the Dhamma. We are of the opinion that, as compared with the Major Rock Edicts, this edict expresses a certain unsureness or lack of confidence in the belief that his readers or listeners will fully understand what he wants of them. This attitude is justifiable in that few north Indian rulers had penetrated so far south up to this period. For Aśoka the land and the people of this region were still unfamiliar. Indeed if it be true that the brāhmī script was their first acquaintance with the symbols of writing, then a certain amount of bewilderment on the part of Aśoka as to how

best to explain himself is excusable.

The inscription on the Nigalisāgar pillar is connected with Aśoka's personal adherence to Buddhism. (1) It is recorded that he visited the Konākamana stūpa at the site in his fourteenth year and had it enlarged some time later. The date cannot be read on the inscription owing to its being in a damaged condition. The visit was probably connected with his pilgrimage to various Buddhist sites in his twentieth year, as is suggested by the Rummindei inscription. (2) It is apparent from the Nigalisāgar Pillar inscription that his personal attachment to Buddhism has grown stronger with the years.

During this interval of twelve years while Aśoka's minor Pillar Edicts were being inscribed, events in the Buddhist world were moving fast. In 250 B.C. the Buddhist Council was held and later missionaries were sent to various parts of the country and to neighbouring countries. (3) Aśoka as a Buddhist must certainly have been most interested in these developments. Yet his lack of narrow sectarianism is proved by the fact that even at this stage when the Council was busy weeding out dissident elements and attacking other sects, Aśoka in his nineteenth regnal year, donated a further cave to the Ājivikas in the Barābar Hill of the Khalataka mountain. (4) The inscription refers to "king Priyadarśin" and is similar to

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- (1) Nig. P.I., CII, I, p. 165.  
(2) Rum. P.I., CII, I, p. 164  
(3) See Ch. II p. 101 .  
(4) Bar. Cave I, CII, I, p. 182.

the two previous inscriptions. It is clear that though Aśoka was himself a Buddhist he was not unconcerned with the welfare of other sects, even those in opposition to Buddhism. The legends relating the events leading up to the calling of the Council at Pāṭaliputra do not speak of the Ājīvikas in a friendly manner.<sup>(1)</sup> It is to his credit that Aśoka was conscious of his responsibilities as the head of the state and as the propounder of the Dhamma to be as impartial in his patronage to the various sects as he could permit himself to be.<sup>(2)</sup>

In 249 B.C. there had been an eclipse of the sun. At the end of that year and at the beginning of the next he appears to have made a journey, visiting many sites sacred to Buddhists on a kind of royal pilgrimage. It was on this occasion that he recorded his visit to the Lumbinī grove by a pillar inscription at the present day site of Rummindei.<sup>(3)</sup> This we may also regard as one of the private edicts of the king, recording his visit to Lumbinī, and the reduction of the land tax. This edict was not meant for the edification of the public. The latter part of the edict may certainly be regarded as part of the royal archives and be treated as such.<sup>(4)</sup>

Seven years later in 242 B.C. the first six Pillar Edicts were issued by Aśoka. This was in his twenty-sixth regnal year. The new set of edicts were meant primarily for

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(1) See Ch. II p. 90 .  
 (2) See Ch. II p. 109 .  
 (3) Rum. P. I. CII, I, p. 164.  
 (4) See Ch. V p. 315 for a detailed discussion.

the public, and were composed in much the same spirit as the Rock Edicts. They were inscribed on pillars situated in places where people gathered so that ample publicity was given to them. He resumes the explanation of the Dhamma in these edicts.

In the 1st Pillar Edict, Aśoka states that the  
 In the 1st Pillar Edict, Aśoka<sup>(1)</sup> states that the n  
 (1)  
Dhamma has progressed through the years. On viewing it in his  
 retrospect he is satisfied with the result. He speaks of his  
 agents of all ranks who in practising Dhamma have been able to  
 stir the waverers. Presumably this refers to the activities  
 of the dhamma-mahāmāttas.

The last statement is of some interest. The original text refers to those yet undecided about the Dhamma  
 (2)  
 as capalam. Hultzsch translates this word as "fickle". Bloch translates it as "les hesitants".<sup>(3)</sup> Hultzsch's translation is closer to the usual Sanskrit meaning of the word but in the context of the edict we prefer Bloch's translation since it conveys the meaning of those still wavering in their acceptance of the Dhamma. But the point of interest is that the tone of the sentence and indeed of the edict suggests that the officers have made the propagation of Dhamma their prime function. The king appears to be obsessed with the idea that everybody must practise the Dhamma. The aṃtamahāmāttas, the frontier officials, are busy among the borderers, trying to win them round to the practise of the Dhamma. Whereas previously the king spoke of the virtues of the Dhamma with enthusiasm

(1) I.P.E., CII, I, p. 119.

(2) CII, I, p. 120.

(3) LIA, p. 161

and presented it as a new and possible solution to the ills of the society of that time, now a note of imperiousness creeps in. The constant repetition of the word Dhamma shows that his enthusiasm is no longer the devotion of a new convert as it was twelve years previously, but has become part of his very being.

Previously simple virtues and a high minded social code were enough to secure merit, now the latter depends upon a great love for Dhamma, careful examination, great obedience, great fear and great energy. <sup>(1)</sup> The clear thinking of a man determined to establish the superiority of social behaviour has been obscured by the erroneous belief that his own understanding of the problem is responsible for whatever clarity there exists. For he adds that it is through his instruction that Dhamma has progressed. The picture of the mahāmāttas wooing the waverers is not entirely a happy one. The degree of self-responsibility that was apparent in the early pronunciations of the Dhamma seems to have given way to an ordered approach which leaves little choice with the individual. Dhamma seems to have acquired a far more organised set of rules which the dhamma-mahāmāttas enforce not entirely according to the will of the individual. It is not perhaps an exaggeration to say that Dhamma seems to be turning into a magical formula to solve all problems, and the Dhamma workers begin to assume the form of a religious body. The closing sentence of the edict runs thus,

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(1) CII, I, p. 120

.....esa hi vidhi yā iyaṃ dhammena pālanā dhammena vidhāne dhammena sukhiyanā dhammena gotī ti.

"For their orders are these, to protect according to Dhamma, to dispense according to Dhamma, to satisfy according to Dhamma and to restrain according to Dhamma."

The germ of fanaticism and megalomania begins to show itself in this edict.

The 2nd Pillar Edict continues in much the same strain. (1) Aśoka describes Dhamma as a minimum of sins, many virtues, compassion, liberality, truthfulness and purity. He adds that he has bestowed the gift of cakḥudāne in many ways. The term is literally "the gift of the eye". Hultzsch translates it as the gift of spiritual insight. Bloch, reading it in the light of Buddhist terminology, takes it to mean that he refers to himself as the "donneur de clairvoyance" (2). Bloch's translation may be closer to the original thought. By giving the gift of clear-sightedness, Aśoka's meaning may have been that through the practice of Dhamma, social and personal relationships become clarified within themselves and this leads to a better understanding of social life and the real merit of the virtuous deeds which may ensue. Thus "the gift of the eye" may well have been just a turn of phrase suggesting that Aśoka wished to say "I have shown the way".

His remark that he has conferred many boons on men

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(1) II, P.E., CII, I, p. 120.  
(2) LIA. p. 162.

and animals and has performed innumerable righteous deeds is another manifestation of his growing self-adulation. This was a most unfortunate tendency since it must have led at times to a complacent satisfaction which no doubt prevented him from maintaining his earlier contact with the opinion of his subjects. Even at this stage when his obsession with the Dhamma increases, he still sees it as an ethical concept and not a religious idea. The means he adopted for its publicity may have rivalled those of religious systems but the teaching itself did not assume a religious garb.

The 3rd Pillar Edict attempts to differentiate between virtuous deeds and evil deeds.<sup>(1)</sup> The sinful passions are listed as fierceness, cruelty, anger, pride and envy. An indulgence in these is said to be ruinous. There is on occasion an indirect reference to greed as a sinful passion. Strangely enough Aśoka never mentions lust among these passions, particularly as the passionate enjoyment of desire for something would be regarded as sinful according to the principles of the Dhamma.

Nowhere is the actual practice of the Dhamma indicated in detail. At best even Aśoka's pronouncements in the edicts are general ideas. It is significant that in the elucidation of social relationships the relationship between men and women is not included. It would seem from this that by now the rôle of women in society was so completely regulated, that any remark in relation to it was considered

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(1) III P.E., CII, I, p. 122.

unnecessary. Or else it was an entirely personal and private relationship determined in each little community and not discussed in public.

The edict closes with the sentence,

".....iyam me hidatikāye iyammana me pālatikāye" -

"this (action conduces) to my (happiness) in this world, that other (action) to my (happiness) in the other (world)."

This brings us to a fundamental concept in ethics, that of relative morality. It is indeed unfortunate that the edict closes at this point, and that no explanation of the concluding sentence is given. It would appear from the sentence as it stands that Aśoka was beginning to think in terms of a double standard of virtuous action, one that was conducive to earthly happiness and the other to heavenly bliss. This would imply a serious deviation from his original ethical concept of virtue being meritorious here and in the life to follow. However if we regard this sentence as a continuation of the earlier debate on sin and virtue, its interpretation is somewhat different. The happiness on earth refers to the brief pleasure which the satisfaction of a passion produces, whereas the avoidance of passion leads to eternal happiness in heaven.

Another change from the early ideas of Dhamma is the continual stress laid on sin and actions that are sinful. Possibly his increasing association with Buddhism brought with it a fear of sin, and a fear of involvement in actions which may be called sinful. There is a strong hint in these later edicts that he was becoming involved in a puritanical

fantasy of sin and virtue, and that the pristine force that had moved him to his earlier social ethics was beginning to die away.

There is a return to the tone of the Major Rock Edicts in the 4th Pillar Edict.<sup>(1)</sup> To some extent this edict is connected with the two Separate Edicts at Dhauri and Jaugada. There the officers are called upon to be responsible and efficient. By now it would seem that both qualities are recognised in them, for the power to reward or punish is delegated to the local officers. After the centralising tendency of the quinquennial inspections and the institution of the dhamma-mahāmāttas this may appear to be a step in the reverse direction. In a further chapter we have explained this step in the light of administrative expediency.<sup>(2)</sup> Although these officials have the power to cause pleasure or pain, they are asked to attend carefully to the welfare of the people.

The king explains that in order that these officials may perform their duties fearlessly and confidently and remain undisturbed he has given them the power of reward and punishment. This was indeed a very advanced step and demanded considerable confidence on the part of the king in the officials. It would seem that the bureaucracy and administration of the country were functioning well, otherwise a king such as Aśoka would not have delegated this authority.

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(1) IV, P.E., CII, I, p. 122.

(2) See Ch. VI p.391.

However we must not overlook the fact that, with increasing years, any king in the position of Aśoka would have had to delegate some powers, since old age does not permit the energetic interest of earlier years to continue.

Another move of great importance was that of insisting on a uniformity of judicial proceedings and of punishments. This was not meant merely as a pious thought. If there was no intention of carrying it out, it need not have been mentioned. The statement can be interpreted in two ways. Either as the equality of all subjects in the eyes of the law, or as the equality of law throughout the country. We have discussed the matter in further detail in a later chapter and we are of the opinion that it referred to the latter. (1) For the moment we must comment on the fact that in either case it was an unprecedented step. It shows the emphasis that he continued to place on social values and social justice.

Continuing his efforts to secure greater welfare for his subjects, he orders a respite for three days before a death sentence is carried out. This is an act of grace, since he recognises that this time may, in certain cases, be utilised to prove the innocence of the condemned person or to secure his repentance. It is curious that, despite his firm belief in Buddhism, he did not abolish capital punishment. Doubtlessly he regarded capital punishment as essential to the maintenance of law and order, and, despite his personal convictions to the

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(1) See Ch. VI p.382

contrary, felt that justice in the state must be based on recognisable painful or pleasurable punishments and rewards respectively. <sup>(1)</sup> This is another example of his separating his personal beliefs as a man from his social responsibilities as the head of the state.

Much the same idea is expressed in the 5th Pillar Edict, where he orders that certain animals are not to be killed on certain days, and others are not to be killed at all. <sup>(2)</sup> The list given is most perplexing. Some are obviously beasts of burden such as bulls, others are edible as for example some of the fish. But many are declared inviolable without any apparent reason. <sup>(3)</sup> The curious feature is that he does not, as a pious Buddhist, order non-violence throughout the empire, he merely specifies certain animals which are not to be killed. He was probably aware that complete abstention from killing animals would be an impossible law in that it could never be enforced.

In the 6th Pillar Edict, the last to be inscribed in the year 242 B.C., Aśoka briefly explains why he has issued his edicts. <sup>(4)</sup> The primary reason was a concern for the welfare and happiness of his subjects, who, if they ordered their lives according to the principles of the Dhamma would attain happiness.

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- (1) There is an interesting passage in the Mahābhārata which is very similar to Aśoka's attitude to this matter. (Santi parvan, 259). According to the Chinese travellers, capital punishment was abolished in later centuries.
- (2) V.P.E., CII, I, p. 125.
- (3) We have discussed this matter at length in Ch. V p. 323 .
- (4) VI P.E., CII, I, p. 128.

He claims that in this effort of bringing the Dhamma to his people he has been impartial to all classes and all sects. And this because he considers visiting the people personally to be his most important duty.

Dhamma was therefore a system of welfare combined with his own humanitarian approach. He genuinely wished Dhamma to be the means of communication between him and his subjects. This alone, apart from any other reason, made it imperative that the Dhamma and consequently Aśoka himself in his capacity as the ruler should be impartial to all sects and beliefs.

The 7th Pillar Edict was inscribed in the year after the first six, that is in 241 B.C. in Aśoka's twenty-seventh regnal year. <sup>(1)</sup> It occurs on only one of the pillars, the Delhi-Toprā. It is difficult to explain why it was omitted from the other pillars, unless so ordered by Aśoka as an afterthought. A.C. Sen has suggested that Aśoka died soon after and therefore the edict was not inscribed on any of the other pillars. <sup>(2)</sup> But this idea conflicts with all other chronological evidence, and, as we have shown in the previous chapter, we believe his reign to have lasted for thirty-seven years. <sup>(3)</sup> The edict appears to be a recapitulation of his work, particularly in connection with the Dhamma. A detailed examination of the edict may reveal why it was inscribed only

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(1) VII, P.E., CII, I, p. 130.

(2) A. pp. 142, 143.

(3) See Ch. II, p. 113 .

on one pillar.

The edict states that many improvements for the well-being of the people were carried out. For instance roads were built and many shady banyan trees and mango groves were planted beside them. At intervals of eight kos,<sup>(1)</sup> wells were dug and water was made available for man and beast. But all these schemes are of little value as compared with the one ambition of Aśoka's rule, the practice and spread of Dhamma. This gives him real satisfaction, much more so than any amount of welfare work.

The Edict commences with the following statement,  
"ye atikantam amtalam lājāne husu hevam icchism kītham jane  
dhamma vadhiyā vadheyā no cu jane anulupāyā  
dhamma-vadhiyā vadhithā."

"The kings who ruled in times past had this desire that men might (be made to) progress by the promotion of morality; but men were not made to progress by an adequate promotion of morality".

This makes it fairly clear that Aśoka still regarded Dhamma as a more general concept than the doctrine of a specific sect, more particularly Buddhism. The practice and propagation of Buddhism had not previously been adopted by any important king. But the principles of Dhamma as enumerated in the edicts could well have been in accordance with a policy that many a king may have wanted to popularise.

Aśoka therefore decided to issue edicts explaining the

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(1) See Ch. IV. p.287. There is still some doubt as to whether this is 8 kos or  $\frac{1}{2}$  kos.

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Dhamma and together with this instituted a service of officials whose concern was primarily with the expounding of the Dhamma to the people. The inscribing of edicts was not enough, the officials were responsible for giving publicity to the Dhamma. Even those in charge of the day-to-day administration were asked to emphasise the importance of the Dhamma whenever possible.

The activities of the dhamma-mahāmāttas are not restricted to any one group in the community. They range through the entire scale of society from one extreme to the other<sup>(1)</sup> or as Aśoka puts it from the householder to the ascetic. This remark is of some significance in so far as it exposes the workings of the king's mind. He does not classify his subjects as brahman theoreticians are wont to do ranging them from brahmans to sūdras. He does on occasion refer to brahmans and ibhyas, the latter being taken usually to mean vaiśyas, since<sup>(2)</sup> the literal meaning is a wealthy man. But this would appear to be a general term referring more to the various castes rather than to the range of society. It is apparent from the phrase in the Pillar Edict that he does not measure the range of society on the basis of social prestige but on that of social responsibility. The phrase occurs in Pāli literature in various forms and is often used to express this difference in responsibility. The householder being the head of the family represents a fundamental unit of society and should have

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(1) VII, P.E., CII, I, p. 131.

(2) Kāl. V, R.E., CII, I, p. 33; and n. 6.

of necessity the greatest amount of social responsibility. The ascetic who deliberately lives outside the confines of society has therefore the least amount of social responsibility.

The dhamma-mahāmāttas are expected to work impartially amongst the various sects. Some of them are specially assigned to particular sects. The sects mentioned are the Samgha (the Buddhist clergy), brahmins, Ājīvikas and nirgranthas. The Buddhist sect is mentioned first because the king personally adhered to it. The brahmins and the Ājīvikas are mentioned together, which possibly the brahmins may have taken objection to!

Another group of officers are concerned solely with the charitable donations made by the king and the various members of the royal family. These donations are made with the purpose of furthering the Dhamma. Possibly the idea was much the same as among certain royal families to this day, wherein each member adopts a particular institution or sect and makes regular donations towards its maintenance. In this case no doubt the donations would be brought by a dhamma-mahāmātta who would in addition preach to the institution on the value of the Dhamma. This system appears to be linked with the inscribing of the Queen's Edict in which Aśoka orders the officials to record the donations of the Queen Kāruvāki. <sup>(1)</sup>

Further in the Edict Aśoka explains that Dhamma has been taught in two ways, by restrictions and by persuasion.

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(1) We have discussed this edict in Ch. II p. 117 .

For the latter process he uses the word nijjhāṭi which means literally "to induce to meditate". Hultzsch's translation of it as "persuasion" is used in a wide sense. <sup>(1)</sup> The officials were probably expected to preach to the people, who in turn would give some thought to what they had heard before accepting the Dhamma. Aśoka admits that much more has been achieved by persuasion and that the regulations have been of little consequence. By way of an example he explains that he has declared certain animals inviolable and has therefore placed a restriction on their killing. However through an understanding of Dhamma there would automatically be no killing of animals, thereby making the restrictions unnecessary. Even at this stage Aśoka appreciated the value of persuasion as a stronger force than restriction and although by now the institution of the dhamma-mahāmāttas had acquired tremendous powers of interference in the lives of the people, nevertheless Aśoka still theoretically stressed the importance of persuasion.

The reason why this Edict was inscribed only on one pillar remains a mystery. All we can suggest is that the order for it to be inscribed was revoked by Aśoka soon after the Edict was issued, when it had already been inscribed on the Delhi-Toprā pillar but not on any of the other pillars. Aśoka may have thought that, as it was largely a summary of his work in connection with Dhamma, it contained no further

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(1) VII, P.E., CII, I, p. 137, and n. 1.

elucidation of Dhamma it served no particular purpose and therefore it was better to withdraw it. Instead of having it erased from the one pillar on which it had already been inscribed, he may have decided to allow it to remain.

The Schism Edict, with three known versions, at Sanchi, Sarnath and Kosam, was issued in circa 240 B.C.<sup>(1)</sup> It threatens monks and nuns with expulsion should they attempt to cause disunity in the Samgha. We have mentioned earlier that we believe this edict to be partly the result of the attitude of an exasperated administrator being constantly asked to reconcile antagonistic sects and dissident elements in the religious orders. We may add that this again is an edict which we would include amongst the personal edicts of the king. As a Buddhist Aśoka is concerned with the unified functioning of the Samgha, and by issuing this edict he wishes it to be known that he will not tolerate dissident elements in the Samgha. He orders that one copy of the edict should remain in the office of the Samgha, and another copy be made public, so that lay-worshippers and the officials concerned may know his wishes on the subject.

The Edict is addressed to the special mahamāttas who work for the Samgha. The Kosam version is addressed to the Kosambi mahāmāttas, and the Sarnath version has a fragment of the word Pāṭaliputra. The Edict must have been sent to all the Buddhist centres and all the local mahāmāttas

(1) CII, I, p. 159-161.  
We have given our reasons for this date in Ch. II p. 94 .

must have received these instructions. This does not of course mean that all the mahāmāttas were concerned with the Buddhist sect alone. We have seen from the 7th Pillar Edict that each religious order had its own staff of mahāmāttas. The Schism Edict is addressed to those who have been delegated to work with the Samgha.

The last remaining edict the Bhābra Edict known also as the Calcutta-Bairat rock inscription is undated, but we believe it to have been issued towards the end of Aśoka's reign. The hill on which it was found contains the ruins of two Buddhist monasteries. This agrees entirely with the inscription which is addressed to the Samgha and is an avowal of the king's faith in Buddhism, and an enumeration of the many Buddhist scriptures with which all Buddhist monks or lay-worshippers should necessarily be acquainted.

This Edict is of importance since it states in no uncertain terms the fact of Aśoka being a Buddhist. It speaks of his faith in the Buddha the Dhamma and the Samgha. There is no ambiguity in the statement. Nevertheless this is again a personal edict addressed by the king directly and solely to the Samgha, and not to the public at large. It is more than likely that it was addressed to the monks at the two monasteries, near the present-day site of Bhābra. The Edict is issued by Aśoka primarily as a Buddhist. This explains

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- (1) CII, I, p. 172.  
 (2) See Ch. II p. 121 .  
 (3) Arch. Reports, 2, p. 248.

why he refers to himself not with his usual title of Devanamaprya Priyadarśi but with the much more humble title of, "Piyadassi, the king of Magadha",  
 ".....piyadasi lājā māgadhe....."

The concept of Dharma used in the sense of Law and the Social Order was by no means new to Mauryan India. Aśoka, with the propagation of his Dhamma, made an attempt to humanise it and to show that in fact what mattered most was virtuous behaviour. The ability to distinguish between virtuous and unvirtuous behaviour is the birthright of human beings and the practice of virtue can be made common to all men. The Dhamma embodying such behaviour transcends all barriers of sectarian belief. As we have said before, the Dhamma was largely an ethical concept related to the individual in the context of his society. In the propagation of his Dhamma Aśoka was attempting to reform the narrow attitude of religious teaching, to protect the weak against the strong and to promote throughout the empire a consciousness of social behaviour so broad in its scope that no cultural group could object to it.

## CHAPTER IV

Foreign Relations and the Extent of the Empire

In determining the quality of governments or rulers, an evaluation of their foreign relations is essential. This would include relations based both on diplomacy and on geographical proximity. The former entails a consideration of previous relations. The latter requires an examination of the geographical extent of the country in question. Aśoka was well aware of the importance of foreign relations and contact with peoples outside his empire. He showed both an interest in, and a curiosity about foreign countries and certainly his century was one of tremendous intercommunication between the eastern part of the Hellenic world and south Asia. Most of his contacts were to the south and the west of his empire. The east was as yet almost outside his sphere of interest.

It would appear that this interest was not one-sided. There must have been a fair number of foreigners in the capital city of Pāṭaliputra at this time. Megasthenes refers to special committees under municipal management which were appointed to supervise the needs and welfare of foreigners.<sup>(1)</sup> It is possible that the term foreigner here referred only to

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(1) Strabo XV, 1, 50-52.

people from outlying parts of the empire, who would be almost as foreign to the citizens of Pāṭaliputra as the Greeks themselves. Nevertheless the coming of people from distant places seems to have been common, otherwise these committees would not have been needed.

The fact of Indians going in large numbers to foreign countries and travelling in distant places seems to have been something new, although Indian troops are known to have fought under Xerxes. <sup>(1)</sup> Megasthenes states that the Indians have never migrated from their own country. <sup>(2)</sup> This new spirit of adventure was no doubt due in part to familiarity with foreigners after the Greek invasion, and in part to the opening up of trade with foreign countries, particularly to the west. Aśoka's missions to various Greek kingdoms and elsewhere could be regarded as pioneers in this matter. <sup>(3)</sup>

These missions were the chief contact that Aśoka had with neighbouring kings and countries. They can be described as embassies, though the word mission is perhaps more appropriate. Their main purpose was to preach the policy of Dhamma in countries outside the empire. It is more than likely that they were not resident in any single country for long. They may be compared to modern goodwill missions, moving from area to area, addressing the local people, exchanging gifts and messages, and generally helping to create an interest

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(1) Herodotus, VII, 65.  
(2) Strabo, XV, 1, 6-8.  
(3) Kāl, R.E., XIII, CII, I, p. 43.

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in the ideas and peoples of the countries from which they come.

It is unlikely that Aśoka expected all those kings who had received such missions immediately to put the policy of Dhamma into practice, though he claims that this did take place. But as long as these missions described his policy against the background of Mauryan India and elicited some interest among the people they visited, it was enough to convince him of their success. It would seem that the only place where his missions had tremendous success was Ceylon. We shall discuss this matter in greater detail at a further point.

Whether these missions were accompanied by some member of a religious sect, probably Buddhist, is uncertain. There is no evidence to prove it to be so. We know that Buddhist missionaries were dispatched after the Buddhist Council in 250 B.C., but there is no proven connection between these missions and those of Aśoka. The former were sent for specifically religious purposes, whereas the latter were more concerned with a broad humanitarian ideal.

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(1) Aśoka claims that the rulers to whom he sent these missions had accepted his policy of cultivating medicinal herbs for their subjects and planting trees for shade, etc. It is possible that in order to encourage this idea, Aśoka sent packets of seeds and cuttings of plants with the missions. In the botanical work of Theophrastus there is no direct reference to the knowledge of new plants from India, among Greek botanists of the time (Rostovtzeff, *SE. HNW*, II, pp. 1164-69, 1182). Pliny however remarks that the Seleucids attempted to naturalise certain Indian plants like Amomum and nardum, which apparently were brought by sea from India (*Nat. His.* XVI, 135). He also states that the Asiae reges and the Ptolemies made attempts to plant frankincense trees (*Nat. His.* XII, 56). The introduction of these plants may have been the direct result of Aśoka's missions or their cultivation may have been encouraged due to commercial reasons since there was already a demand in the west for spices and herbs from further east.

Kern has raised the interesting question of why there is no reference to these missions in the last edict of Aśoka, the 7th Pillar Edict. <sup>(1)</sup> In this Edict, Aśoka mentions the success he has had with his welfare services and the widespread propagation of the Dhamma, but all within the empire. Nowhere is there any mention of the foreign missions and their work. The more obvious explanation is that the missions did not succeed to the extent that the king wished. His mentioning them in the major Rock Edicts was due to the fact that they had been recently sent and therefore the king in all enthusiasm was over confident of their success. But by the twenty-seventh year of his reign he had had enough time and experience to realise that the missions might have created an interest in things Indian, but had achieved nothing tangible in the way of establishing the practice of the Dhamma in the countries which they had visited. Thus the king decided to refrain from making any mention of these missions.

Another possible reason why these missions were ignored in this Edict was because in this particular Edict the king restricted himself entirely to matters of domestic policy, otherwise he would certainly have mentioned his success with Deyānampiya Tissa the king of Ceylon. Tissa having acknowledged Aśoka as an elder in all matters must doubtless have agreed to further the principles of Dhamma in Ceylon.

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(1) A, §. 102.

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Had the missions been resident embassies as Eggermont appears to believe,<sup>(1)</sup> and if they had had some degree of permanent success in the countries they had visited there would have been a reference to them in Classical sources. The fact that they are quite unheard of in any of the contemporary or later sources would suggest that they made only a short-lived impression in the West.

Although these embassies were pioneers in preaching the Dhamma, the countries they visited were already familiar with things Indian. The Dhamma may have been a new idea for them, but Indian life was by no means unknown. The territory immediately adjoining the empire of Aśoka on the west, the Achaemenid Empire in pre-Mauryan times and now held by Antiochus, had been a close neighbour both in thought and action.

There are many examples of contact between Persia and India. Some are of a superficial nature, such as the fact that Indian mercenaries from the north-west border fought in the Achaemenid army on various occasions,<sup>(2)</sup> others of a more lasting nature such as the inclusion of the Indian province of Sindhu and of Gandhāra in the empire of Cyrus, mentioned in the Persepolis inscription of Darius.<sup>(3)</sup> Rapson has suggested that Gandhāra included western Panjab.<sup>(4)</sup>

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- (1) CRAM. p. 97.  
(2) Herodotus, VII, 65; and see Jouguet p. 43.  
(3) Sircar, S.I., p. 6-8.  
(4) A.I., p. 84.

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Some similarities of custom and culture have been described as due to the influence of Persia on India. We feel that this may be the result of imposing twentieth-century national boundaries on culture systems of two thousand and more years ago. These "influences" are apparent in the third and fourth centuries B.C. Some of these customs are the result of practical necessity and are common to many cultures. For example the shaving of the head on certain occasions is described as a Persian form of punishment.<sup>(1)</sup> The Arthaśāstra lists it as a punishment as well,<sup>(2)</sup> as also does the Mahāvamśa.<sup>(3)</sup> But it is used even in modern India where the eye-brows of a criminal are shaved in order to make him more conspicuous. Doubtless it was for this reason that it was employed as a form of punishment.

Many of the other customs were held in common because of a common ancestry. The Iranians and the Indo-Aryans, coming from the common stock of early Aryans, would naturally continue many of the earlier customs even when the two had settled in new areas. One such may have been the ceremonial hair-washing on the king's birthday,<sup>(4)</sup> which on the part of the Indian king may not necessarily be due to Persian influence. Furthermore where the Indian ceremony is reported by Megasthenes we must keep in mind the possibility of

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(1) Kingsmill. Athenaeum, 19 July 1902; and Smith, EHI, p. 137, n. 2.

(2) IV, 9.

(3) VI, 42.

(4) Herodotus, IX, 110; and Strabo, XV, 69.

confusion in the second hand record of Megasthenes.

Further evidence of close contact or some degree of common culture is the similarity between the edicts of Darius and those of Aśoka. There is no certainty as to whether Aśoka knew the edicts of Darius. He may well have known that the Persians engraved inscriptions on rocks and he may have decided to do the same with his edicts. The similarity of the form of address in certain sections of the edicts of both kings may suggest that Aśoka may have actually read the text of one of Darius' edicts. Darius uses the phrase, <sup>(1)</sup>

"thatiy Darayavush kshayathiya....."

"thus saith the king Darius....."

<sup>(2)</sup>  
Aśoka uses the following phrase,

"Devanampiya Piyadassi raja evam aha....."

"the king, the beloved of the gods, of gracious mein, speaks thus....."

However it is possible that Aśoka may have known only the formula for commencing edicts, "thus speaks the king....", and this in turn may have been used even by Candragupta.

Kosambi is of the opinion that there was no borrowing on the part of Aśoka from the pattern of edicts as issued by Darius, as the tone of Aśoka's edicts is far more <sup>(3)</sup> humble. But we are of the opinion that this humbleness was largely because the content of the edicts was different.

Darius was concerned mainly with proclaiming his greatness and

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(1) Senart, I, A. XX, p. 255-56.  
(2) Gir. R.E., III, CII, I, p. 4.  
(3) ISIH, p. 189.

the value of his achievements. Aśoka, though he did not refrain from boasting about his achievements in some edicts, was nevertheless more concerned with preaching the Dhamma. This difference is markedly apparent in the titles taken by both kings. Darius writes of himself, "I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King of countries containing all kinds of men, King in this great earth far and wide,....." (1) Aśoka on the other hand refers to himself as, "the king, the beloved of the gods, of gracious mein....." (2) Despite these differences it is quite possible that some knowledge of Darius' inscriptions no matter how distant may have inspired Aśoka in the same direction.

That this similarity in culture did not rest only with ideas is clear from the linguistic affinity between the people living in the north-west part of the Mauryan Empire and those in what was Achaemenid Persia. The use of kharoṣṭhī by Aśoka in the Shahbāzgarhī and Mānsehra edicts in the north is evidence of strong Persian contact. The fragmentary Aramaic inscription at Taxila, thought to be of the period of Aśoka's viceroyalty there, (3) is even more suggestive of continued intercommunication between the two areas. The use of the Persian words dipi and nipiṣṭa in the north-western versions of the major Rock Edicts, adds conviction to this (4) idea.

The Junāgadh inscription of Rudradāman mentions the area of Aparānta governed by the yonārāja Tuṣāspa, a

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(1) Girshman, Iran, p. 153.  
 (2) For a further discussion on the titles adopted by Aśoka see App. D.  
 (3) See Ch. II p.47 . (4) CII, I, p. xliii.

(1) governor of Aśoka. (2) Smith refers to him as a Persian. He could as well have been an Indian who had lived for some time in a Persian dominated area and had assumed a Persian name. Since the inscription describes him as Greek it is possible that this area had Greek settlements, the nucleus of which were either deserters from Alexander's army who left during the voyage down the Indus or were those who had deliberately stayed behind. The periplus mentions that relics of Alexander's invasion were to be found as far as (3) Broach. While Alexander's expedition never reached this region, it may be suggested that Greek contact with Gujarat existed in Mauryan times and a small Greek colony at Broach (4) formed the basis for the false statement in the Periplus. It is equally feasible that Persian mercenaries whom no doubt Alexander must have employed for his Indian campaign may have deserted at this point. Thus Tuṣaspa may have come from an important family of Greeks or Persians of Indo-Greek or Indo-Persian descent, or equally well he may have been a Persianised Indian.

Finally the architectural similarities of certain buildings in Achaemenid Persia and Mauryan India have raised much comment. The royal palace at Pāṭaliputra is the most striking example and has been compared with the palaces

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(1) Sircar S, I, p.169

(2) EHI, p. 140, n. 1.

(3) ES, 41, 47.

(4) For a further discussion on this matter see A.K. Narain IG, pp. 34, 89, 93-94.

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(1)  
at Susa, Ecbatana and Persepolis. The ground plan is much the same as that of Persepolis. The central hall at Persepolis has an alignment of a hundred pillars and the one at Pāṭaliputra has eighty pillars. A peculiar mason's mark on one of the stones at Pāṭaliputra is remarkably similar to the one found at Persepolis, suggesting the employment of Persian craftsmen in India. Since the mark occurs only on one stone it would seem that there may have been a single craftsman from Persia working on the Indian site.

Pryzluski has attempted to link Persia and India through the channel of religious thought. (2) He writes, "Sri Samudra et Girika representent le bien et le mal et que la lutte de ces deux principes ait pris une réelle importance pour les Bouddhistes, comment se fait-il que ces personnages tiennent si peu de place dans les écritures? Leur aventure n'est contée que dans les ouvrages de cycle d'Açoka. On est surpris de n'en point trouver ailleurs le récit". He adds that the development of the idea of Māra was aided by the influence of Mazdaism. The Mazdian idea of millenia of rise and decline in history was partly responsible for the spread of the belief that Buddhism was declining after Aśoka. The acceptance of the decline of Buddhism can however be explained on a purely Indian basis from the cyclic conception of time.

Further west the Mauryan period saw the growth of

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(1) Waddell. Discovery of the Exact Site of Aśoka's Classic Capital at Pāṭaliputra.

Spooner. ARASI. Eastern Circle, 1912-13, pp. 51-61.

(2) LEA, p. 156.

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(1)  
trade and commerce with Babylon. This was of great assistance to communication between India and the west, since it kept the maritime route open.

Contact with the Greeks was again not a new development. The word used for the Greeks, yona or yavana comes via Persia. The Persians first came into contact with the Ionian Greeks and therefore they later employed the term yauna to refer to Greeks in general. Sanskrit introduced the word as yavana using what seems to be a "back-formation", and in Prakrit it occurs as yona.<sup>(2)</sup>

There is evidence of Greek settlements in the trans-Indus and Afghanistan areas, during a period before the coming of Alexander. Xerxes it was claimed settled a colony of Ionian Greeks in the area between Balkh and Samarkand. They are referred to as the Branchidae and were later massacred by Alexander during the course of his campaign in that area.<sup>(3)</sup> The people of Nysa in the Swat valley claimed Greek descent when questioned by Alexander.<sup>(4)</sup> There is a reference to yavana-lipi in the work of Pāṇini, and this is believed to be pre-Mauryan.<sup>(5)</sup> The invasion of Alexander, though it appears to have made little immediate impression on India at the time, must certainly have familiarised the local people with Greek ways.

Interest in India on the part of various Greek

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- (1) Bevan, HS, I, p. 239.  
(2) Rapson IC, p. 86.  
(3) Strabo, XI, 11, 4; XIV, 1, 5, and see Narain I-G. p. 3.  
(4) Arrian, Indica, I, 4-5.  
(5) Pāṇini, 4, 1, 49; Kātyāyana, Varttika 3 on Pan. 4, 1, 49.

kings is apparent from the fact that they sent ambassadors to the Indian court, particularly during the Mauryan period. It is however difficult to determine whether these envoys were resident ambassadors in the modern sense. We know that Megasthenes, Deimachus and Dionysius resided at the court at Pāṭalīputra. Megasthenes we are told came on an embassy sent by Seleucus Nikator but there is no certainty as to whether he came as an official ambassador or as a private visitor but with the equivalent of a letter of introduction from Seleucus. In none of the sources is he mentioned specifically as the ambassador. <sup>(1)</sup> It is possible that Indians visited Greek settlements even prior to the sending of Aśoka's missions, but no accounts of such visits have yet been found.

Smith has suggested that certain administrative ideas may have been borrowed by the Mauryas from the Greeks. <sup>(2)</sup> He cites the example of the functions of certain officers maintained by Candragupta to attend to the entertainment of foreigners, as described by Megasthenes. <sup>(3)</sup> These functions Smith believes to be identical with those of the Greek

πρὸ ξένων . But this may well have been a coincidence, since, as Smith himself points out, little else can be described as a direct borrowing from the Greeks.

There are references to the yonas in the Rock Edicts of Aśoka. These have been variously interpreted as referring to the Greek kingdoms or to foreigners settled along

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(1) For a detailed discussion of this point see App. E.  
 (2) EHI, p. 134 n. 1; p. 253 n. 1.  
 (3) Strabo XV, 1, 50-52.

the north-west frontier and further west. In the 2nd Rock Edict the Greek king Antiochus is mentioned"....antiyako yonarāja....<sup>(1)</sup> " This has been unanimously interpreted by Hultzsch, Bloch, Smith and others as referring to Antiochus II Theos of Syria.<sup>(2)</sup> It is understandable that Antiochus would be better known to Aśoka than other Greek kings because of earlier family connections and also because Antiochus was the nearest Greek ruler geographically. Seleucus Nikator and Antiochus I, the grandfather and father of Antiochus II, were responsible for sending Deimachus and Megasthenes to the court of Candragupta and Bindusāra respectively. In the same edict of Aśoka there is a general reference to the kings who are the neighbours of Antiochus. Aśoka claims that in all these and other neighbouring kingdoms, medicinal herbs for men and animals have been planted through his intervention. This it would seem was rather a case of wishful thinking on the part of Aśoka than actuality, unless Aśoka sent packets of seeds, cuttings, etc, with the missions, and in sending them assumed that the neighbouring kings had had them planted.

In the 5th Rock Edict the yonas are mentioned again.<sup>(3)</sup> The sentence reads,

"te savapāsaṃdesu vyāpatā dhāmadhiṣṭānaya...dhammayutssa ca yonakambōjagāṃdhārāṇaṃ ristikapetematikānaṃ ye vā pi aṃṃe āparātā....."

(1) Gir. R.E., II, CII, I, p. 2.

(2) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. 3, n. 11; Bloch, LIA, p. 93; Smith, A. p. 116.

(3) Gir. R.E.V., CII, I, p. 8.

"These (the dhamma-mahāmāttas) are occupied with all sects in establishing morality...of those who are devoted to morality even among the Yonas, Kambojas and Gandhāras, the Ristikas and Pitenikas and whatever other western borderers."

Smith explains the word yona here as implying some of the semi-independent foreign tribes of the north-west frontier, suggesting thereby that it did not refer specifically to the Greeks. <sup>(1)</sup> Hultsch translates the term as Greeks. We are of the opinion that in this particular context the term refers to the Greek settlements on the north-west borders of Aśoka's empire. Of the other peoples mentioned the Kambojas and Gandhāras certainly and the Ristikas and Pitenikas probably were within the confines of Aśoka's empire and it is therefore probable that the yonas referred to here were also within it. If the term was meant to refer to the Greek kingdoms they would have been mentioned by name, as is usually the case in the other edicts. <sup>(2)</sup> It is hardly likely that these kingdoms would permit the dhamma-mahāmāttas of Aśoka to preach the Dhamma or work amongst their subjects. The Greek settlements however were less strong and were not in a position to object to the dhamma-mahāmāttas.

We would suggest that there was no distinct boundary line on the north-west frontier, since there was no large kingdom immediately adjoining the Aśokan Empire. The Greek settlements were probably dotted all along the frontier and

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(1) A, p. 188.

(2) R.E. II and R.E. XIII.

their friendliness or hostility to the Mauryan state depended largely on their relations with the local viceroy at Taxila. No doubt the Mauryan state must have extended a fairly direct control over them, although refraining from conquering them, as that may well have caused Antiochus further west to come to their defence, resulting in a full scale war. Although mainly Greek in character, the proximity of India may have produced much Indian influence in these settlements. Thus there would be no strong objections to allowing dhamma-mahāmāttas to work amidst the people, particularly if it meant assistance in matters of welfare, such as building roads or planting medicinal herbs. Aśoka refers to them as aparāntas which term may be interpreted as implying their immediate geographical proximity, their coming within his cultural "sphere of influence."

The same interpretation cannot be given to the term Yonarājā mentioned in the 13th Rock Edict, although Kern <sup>(1)</sup> has attempted to do so. Here, Aśoka indicates quite clearly whom he is referring to as the Greek kings. He mentions five, Antiochus II Theos of Syria, Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, Magas of Cyrene, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia and Alexander of Epirus. There can be no uncertainty about the geographical position of these kingdoms, for Aśoka states in the edict, "the Greek king Antiochus and beyond this Antiochus, the four kings named...." The conquest by Dhamma which he refers to in connection with these kingdoms refers in the main

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(1) A. p. 64 and p. 175, n. 137.

only to the sending of Dhamma missions to these kingdoms.

In the north relations with Kashmir have been suggested by various authorities but there is no certain evidence of the precise extent of Aśoka's control. Kalhana states in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* that Śrīnagara was built by Aśoka. (1) Cunningham has attempted to identify this town with Pandre~~m~~thān (2) three miles north of modern Srinagar. There is another tradition that after quelling the revolt at Taxila, Aśoka conquered the area known as Khaśa, which is located in the south-west of modern Kashmir. (3) According to Hsüan Tsang the officials who were responsible for the blinding of Kunāla were exiled from Taxila. They settled in the land to the east of Khotan. (4) An exiled Chinese prince settled in the west of Khotan at the same time, leading inevitably to a conflict with the exiles from Taxila. Unfortunately there are no remains in this area which can be dated with certainty to the Aśokan period. It would seem from the literary evidence that there was considerable activity in the Kashmir area. Owing to its comparative inaccessibility it was obviously not as important as the north-western border. There is no reason to disbelieve that the empire included Khaśa. If the rest of present day Kashmir was not within the empire, it appears to have been within the Aśokan orbit. Probably the people of the region had the same status as the rest of the borderers.

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(1) *Rāj.* I, 101-107.

(2) Cunningham, *AGI*, p. 110.

(3) *Tārānātha*, *CB*, VI, p. 27; and Stein, *JASB*. Extra No. 2. 1899, p. 69.

(4) Watters, *II*, p. 295.

Tibetan tradition has it that Aśoka visited Khotan 250 years after the death of the Buddha, that is in 236 B.C. or in the king's thirty-second regnal year. <sup>(1)</sup> Also it recorded that the kingdom of Khotan was founded by Indians and Chinese during the reign of Aśoka, the story being the same as the one related by Hsüan Tsang, who probably first heard it when he visited Khotan. Aśoka's journey to Khotan does not sound very convincing. In his thirty-second regnal year he must have been at least sixty years of age and for him to have made such a hazardous and difficult journey over the mountains is hardly probable. It is possible though that there was an Indian settlement in Khotan during his reign, and that he may have sent a Dhamma mission to the area.

Aśoka appears to have had closer connections with the area of modern Nepal. Part of it at least must certainly have been within the empire, since Aśoka's visit to Rummindei cannot be regarded as a visit to a foreign country. Tradition has it that he was accompanied by his daughter Cārumatī on this visit and she was married to Devapāla, a kṣatriya of Nepal. <sup>(2)</sup> If his administration did not extend right into Nepal, despite the fact that he was supposed to have suppressed a rebellion there when still a prince, it must certainly have included the Tarai region. Nepalese tradition has it that Aśoka actually visited Nepal. This may be a reference to the visit to Rummindei, or he may have journeyed further into

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(1) JASB, 1886, p. 195-97.  
 (2) Oldfield. Sketches from Nepal. II, 198, p. 246-52. IA, XIII, p. 412; Wright, History of Nepal, p. 110.

(1) Nepal on the same occasion. Some Nepalese temples are ascribed to Aśoka, among them the sanctuary built by Buddhist monks on the hill of Svayambunātha in western Nepal. (2) But this may well be a late story, invented to give prestige and antiquity to the shrine.

On the east it would appear that the empire included the province of Vaṅga, since Tāmralipti, the principal port of the area, seems to have been among the more important ports of the Mauryas. Missions to and from Ceylon are said to have travelled via Tāmralipti. (3) The conquest of Kalinga in 260 B.C. must have strengthened the Mauryan hold in eastern India.

The extent and influence of Aśoka's power in south India is better documented than in north India, though here again a fair amount is left to speculation. Evidence exists both in literary and epigraphical sources. A late Pallava charter mentions Aśokavarman as among the early rulers of Kāñci. (4) This may refer to the Mauryan emperor or to a south Indian king who assumed the same name. To some extent the south Indian sources may be regarded as more authentic than some of the Buddhist texts, since the southern tradition did not seek to obtain prestige by connecting events with the more important north Indian rulers. Furthermore with regard to the reign of Aśoka there were no Buddhist chroniclers to interfere with the original tradition.

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(1) Tārānātha, GBI VI, p. 27.  
 (2) S. Lévi, Le Nepal, pp. 10, 11.  
 (3) Mah. XI, 38.  
 (4) S.I.I. II, p. 342; Ep. Ind. XX, p. 50.

The epigraphical evidence consists of the edicts of Aśoka found at the following sites in south India, Gāvimath, Pālkiguṇḍu, Brahmagiri, Māski, Yerragudi, Siddhāpur, and Jatiṅga-Rāmeshwar. These sites give us some indication of the southern border of the empire. There are references to the peoples of these areas in the edicts and we shall examine these references at a later stage.

Arrian mentions a princess Pandaia the daughter of Heracles, ruling a southern Indian Kingdom<sup>(1)</sup>. The identity of Heracles remains uncertain. According to Megasthenes his capital was at Palimbothra the Greek form of Pāṭaliputra<sup>(2)</sup>. The tradition may well relate to an early Magadhan king. References to what appears to be the Mauryan dynasty do occur in literary sources from south India.

There is a tradition that Tamil poetry was first committed to writing in the third or second century B.C. by foreign immigrants who were inveterate makers of stone inscriptions<sup>(3)</sup>. The foreign immigrants were no doubt the Aryan tribes pushing south. The reference to stone inscriptions strongly suggest the officials of Aśoka. If this tradition can be accepted then we may say that there was no script in south India until the coming of brāhmī from the north, which raises interesting questions as regards the administration of the southern territory of the empire<sup>(4)</sup>.

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- (1) Indika, VIII.  
 (2) Diod. II, 35-42.  
 (3) S. P.T.Aiyangar, HT, p. 215.  
 (4) See Ch. IV, p.361 .

We have stated earlier that Bindusāra was responsible for the conquest of the southern dominions of the empire. (1) Mamulanar and other Tamil poets refer to the Nandas and Mauryas in Tamil literature of the first three centuries A.D. The Nandas are described as accumulating treasure in Pāṭaliputra and then hiding it in the waters of the Ganges. (2) Tamil anthologies do refer to the invasions of the Moriyar, who appear to be the Mauryas. (3) They are described as a splendid force coming from the area north of the Tamil region, Vatukar, and have to retreat when they arrive at a narrow pass, which they cannot penetrate. On one occasion they do succeed, but their shining cakra is brought low by the valour of those defending the pass. They are described as coming from the broad kingdom which is called the land of the sun. The commentary explains that the pass was situated in the Vēllimalai or the Silver Mountain and the mention of the Vatukar defending it would suggest that it may be a reference to the Andhras or the Kannada-Telegu people as suggested by Sastri. (4) The land of the sun is explained as Ādityamaṇḍala in the commentary. It would seem that the conquest of the southern kingdoms was by no means easy. It was perhaps the memory of this as well that kept Aśoka from a campaign in the south.

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(1) See Ch. I, p. 42 .

(2) Aham 265.

(3) The sections we refer to here are as follows; Puram 175, 6-9; Aham 69, 10-12; Aham 281, 8-12; Aham 251, 10-14.

(4) Sastri, ANM, p. 255.

Hsüan Tsang mentions two stūpas he saw in southern India, one in the Cola kingdom and one in the Pāṇḍya kingdom, both said to have been built by Aśoka.<sup>(1)</sup> This would suggest that Buddhist missionaries may have reached those areas. The Chinese pilgrim mentions that in the Malakotta kingdom south of the Cauvery there was another stūpa built by Aśoka and a monastery built by Mahinda. We cannot be sure that Hsüan Tsang's informants were not trying to impress him with the antiquity and importance of the places he visited by associating them with Aśoka. This may also be the result of the confusion of two traditions. Aśoka must certainly have sent Dhamma missions to these south Indian kingdoms. These missions may have been of a more permanent nature than those sent to the west, to the Greeks. Buddhist missionaries may have arrived at the same time, or later, building monasteries and stūpas and claiming Aśoka as an ardent Buddhist. Mahinda, if he did not go to Ceylon by sea, must certainly have stopped at these places en route.

In the first century A.D. there is a reference to Varkadu in Tamil literature.<sup>(2)</sup> This was the boundary line of the northern empire. It corresponds very closely to the southern limits of Aśoka's empire. We have already mentioned Tārānātha's statement that Cānākya and Bindusāra conquered the country between the eastern and western seas.<sup>(3)</sup>

The degree of civilisation of these south Indian

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- (1) Watters, II, pp. 224, 228.  
 (2) Krisnaswami Aiyangar, p. 83.  
 (3) GBI, XVIII, p. 89.

kingdoms at the time of Aśoka's reign is an interesting question. That they were able to build up a large-scale trade with the Roman Empire three centuries later would suggest a fair degree of civilisation in the Aśokan period. It is possible that the kingdoms were not wholly antagonistic to Aśokan authority and therefore there was no need for Aśoka to conquer further. His Kalinga experience did not make him too eager to indulge in war for its own sake. From the descriptions of the Mauryan forces in Tamil poetry it would seem that they made a great impression on the people of the south and no doubt the Mauryans were regarded with considerable awe, since the conquest had taken place hardly a generation earlier. The reports of the Kalinga War must certainly have played an important part in their decision to submit to the Mauryan emperor. Those outside the boundary of the empire probably accepted Aśoka as the nominal suzerain, allowing as his other borderers had allowed the entry of the dhamma-mahāmāttās, but not being in effect part of the empire.

Throughout the reign of Aśoka, Ceylon remained a friendly neighbour in the south. It is referred to in the edicts under the name of Tambapanni. Smith early in his career maintained that this was a reference to the Tāmraparṇi river in the Tinnevelly district which was known to the author of the Rāmāyaṇa, <sup>(1)</sup> but it is now generally accepted that it referred to Ceylon. It occurs in the Dīpaṅgaṃsa as a name

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(1) Bombay Ed. IV, 41, 17.

for Ceylon and at one point is listed as such.<sup>(1)</sup> It is mentioned in the 2nd Rock Edict in connection with the planting of medicinal herbs in the empire and in neighbouring countries. There is also mention of it in the 13th Rock Edict and on this occasion it is listed amongst the areas where Dhamma has been successful. It is included with the Colās and the Pāṇḍyas as one of the southern countries.

Information is available in the Ceylonese chronicles on contacts between India and Ceylon. Allowing for the interpolations of later centuries we may regard this as evidence. As we have seen from an earlier chapter, Mahinda came to Ceylon in c. 250 B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> This was obviously not the first official contact between the two countries, since we are told in the 13th Rock Edict, which dates to 256/55 B.C.,<sup>(3)</sup> that Dhamma missions had been sent to Ceylon.

It seems fairly clear from the evidence that not only was Ceylon in contact with India before Aśoka, but also that Buddhism had already arrived in Ceylon before the coming of Mahinda. Mahinda's importance lay largely in the fact that he persuaded the king Devānampiyā Tissa to become a Buddhist, which gave the religion a more or less official status in Ceylon. Mahinda arrived in the north of Ceylon. It would seem that Buddhist temples of an earlier date existed in the

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(1) V, 80; IX, 20; XVII, 5.

(2) See Ch. II, p. 98 .

(3) See Cha. II, p. 97 .

south since the southern area has the ruins of some very ancient stūpas. <sup>(1)</sup> Numerically too the northern area has fewer remains of such shrines.

The coming of Buddhism to Ceylon raises the problem of the language used by the preachers, more particularly by Mahinda. It would appear that the early Buddhist missionaries had already started teaching in Prākṛit. The inscribing of edicts in south India in Prākṛit would suggest that the language was not completely unknown in the southern territories. The fact that the Ceylon chronicles relate the story of Vijaya coming from India as the civilising force in Ceylon is of some importance. <sup>(2)</sup> Perhaps the story disguises a larger scale cultural and political conquest of the island by a maritime force from India. The strange legend of the origin of Vijaya seems an obvious attempt at making him an extraordinary person, as also the fact that he landed in Ceylon on the day of the Parinirvāṇa. It is quite possible that the first Buddhists came with Vijaya as part of his entourage, and no doubt brought the language with them.

Prākṛit inscriptions in Ceylon, the earliest of which dates back to Uttiya the successor of Tissa, are not very different in language from Aśokan Prākṛit and are inscribed in the Brāhmī script. <sup>(3)</sup> This would suggest that the

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(1) It is related in the Mahavaṃsa (XXII, 2-9), that Tissa's brother, the vice-regent fled to Rohana in southern Ceylon to a Buddhist monastery. The existence of this monastery so far south would suggest it was established before the coming of Mahinda.

(2) Mah. VII.

(3) Ep. Zey. I, Ritigala Inscriptions, p. 139 ff.

language may have had a history prior to the coming of Mahinda, which would give it greater justification for being used in an official document.

The Ceylon chronicles describe Vijaya as coming from the kingdom of Vaṅga in eastern India, but there appears to be some confusion as regards his original home. He is described as landing first at Suppāraka during the journey to Ceylon.<sup>(1)</sup> This would suggest that he came from an area on the west coast of India. This would confirm the strong tradition among the Sinhalese that their ancestors came from the west coast of India.<sup>(2)</sup> Although early Sinhalese was influenced by eastern Prākṛit, the substitution of ha for sa suggests a western source. It is curious that when Ariṭṭha travels to Pāṭaliputra, he goes by sea and then crosses the Viñjha mountains, which strongly suggests that he travelled along the west coast and across the Vindhya range to Pāṭaliputra.<sup>(3)</sup> It would appear therefore that the Indian settlers in Ceylon came both from the east and the west and that the confusion in the texts is due to these two traditions. The Mahāvamsa suggests that people of all sects resided in Ceylon before the coming of Mahinda. The princess Bhaddakaccana comes from the Pāṇḍyan kingdom to be Vijaya's wife, so that there was considerable contact between Ceylon and south India even at that period.<sup>(4)</sup> She is said to be related to the Buddha and strangely enough she and her women friends arrive disguised as

(1) Mah. VI, 46; also Dīp. IX, 26.

(2) Basham. CHQ, 1952, Jan. No. 2. Vol. I, p. 163 ff.

(3) Dīp. XV, 87.

(4) VII, 48.

nuns, presumably for the purpose of protection en route. This in itself would suggest that Buddhism was known in Ceylon before Mahinda. This existing contact was no doubt deepened by the arrival of Aśoka's dhamma-mahāmāttas in his twelfth regnal year. Mahinda arrived later to convert the king Tissa, and, as Adhikaram suggests, to organise monastic orders in Ceylon.<sup>(1)</sup>

Aśoka's relationship with Ceylon was not purely political. It would seem that he and Tissa were on very close terms. Tissa as a young man must have come into contact with the dhamma-mahāmāttas of Aśoka sent to Ceylon five years before Tissa's coronation. Obviously the personality of Aśoka as it emerged from the work of the dhamma-mahāmāttas must have impressed Tissa. Possibly he may even have decided to model himself on the older king. His first coronation took place in Aśoka's seventeenth year, and some time later he had a second coronation to which he invited a representative of the Indian king. Aśoka returned the courtesy with gifts and a mission. As we have shown earlier Mahinda probably came with this mission as a personal representative of Aśoka, and no doubt he brought with him other monks for the furtherance of Buddhism in Ceylon.<sup>(2)</sup> Tissa accepted the faith and it assumed the status of a state religion. Tissa also adopted the title of Devānampiya, which was probably also the result of enthusiasm for Aśoka. It can be argued that this was a royal

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(1) EHBC, p. 48.  
 (2) See Ch. II, p. 97, 98.

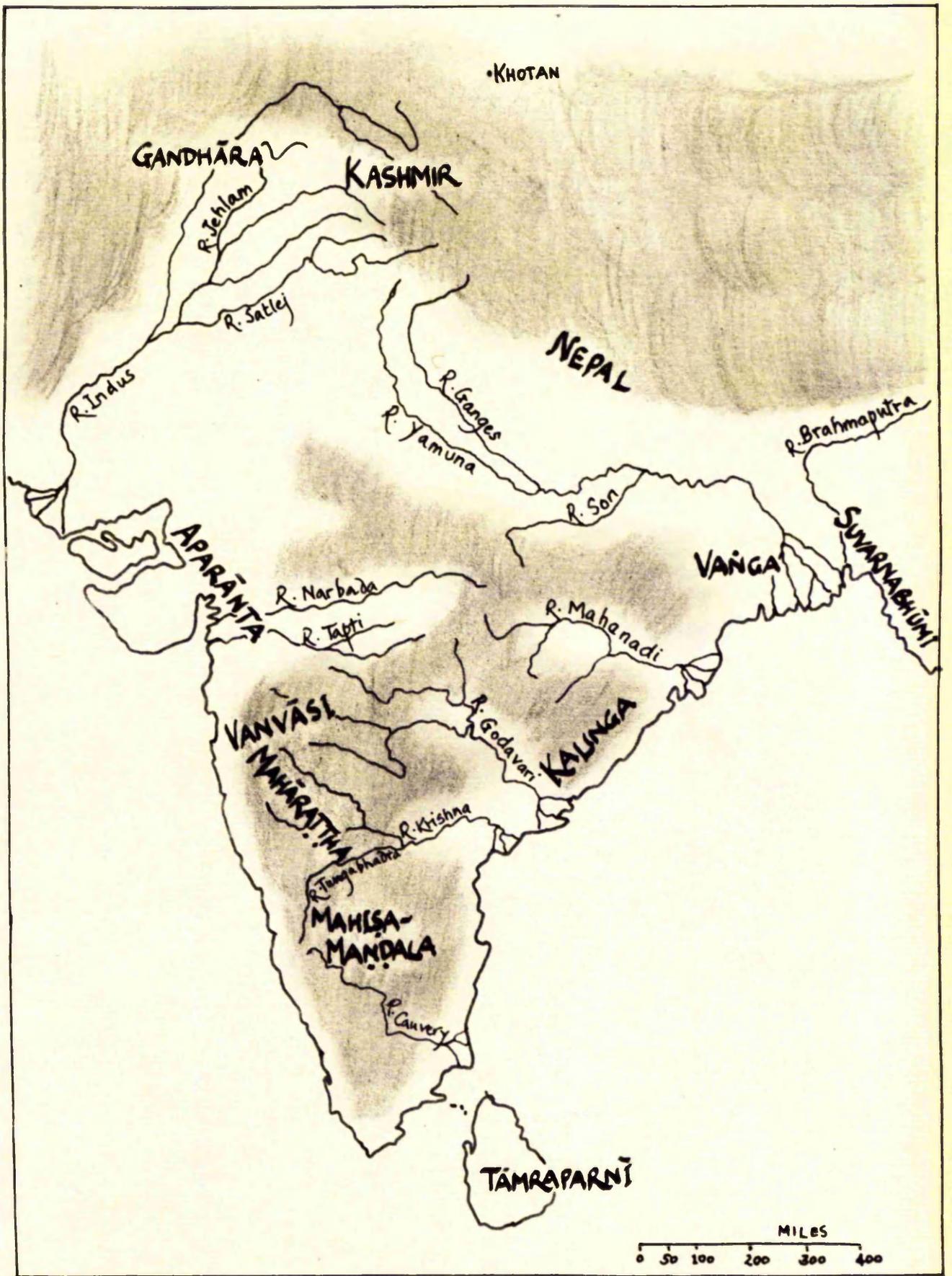
title, but it is significant that he was the first among the Ceylonese kings to adopt it.<sup>(1)</sup>

The chronicles state that in his eighteenth regnal year Aśoka sent Tissa a branch of the Bodhi-tree. We have suggested earlier that the date may not be correct, but the event probably did occur. It was, as we have already said, a gesture of goodwill and courtesy on the part of Aśoka to a foreign king who was obviously a valuable asset to his policy. Tissa's enthusiasm for Aśoka does not imply that he was a vassal of the latter. It was a relationship based on the admiration of the one for the other, among other things. Though there must have been a considerable interchange of missions, Ceylon remained an independent kingdom. No doubt trading facilities must have existed between the two countries and strengthened the political ties.

The Ceylon chronicles mention the sending of Buddhist missionaries to various parts of Jambudvīpa and to foreign countries after the Buddhist council had met at Pāṭaliputra. Allowing for the fact that the list of places may be a later interpolation we can nevertheless use this evidence as a fair gauge of places known and familiar to Aśokan India. The places mentioned are Kashmir, Gandhāra, Mahiṣamaṇḍala, Vanavāsī, Aparāntaka, Mahārattha, Yona, the Himalayan country, Suvarṇabhūmi and Lankā.<sup>(2)</sup>

Hultzsch takes Gandhāra to be north-western Panjab.<sup>(3)</sup>

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- (1) See App. D.  
 (2) Dīp. VIII, and Mah. XII.  
 (3) CII, I, p. 10.



AREAS TO WHICH BUDDHIST MISSIONS WERE SENT.

Smith refers to it as the Usufzai area.<sup>(1)</sup> The location of Gandhāra has been well documented in Indian history and does not need a discussion here. We may take it as the trans-Indus area in the north-west, extending into modern Afghanistan north of Kabul.<sup>(2)</sup> The area around Laghman was within the empire, but the rest constituted a border state.

Mahiṣamaṇḍala is identified by Nilakantha Sastri with modern Mysore and this is the generally accepted identification.<sup>(3)</sup> Fleet and Pargiter are of the opinion that it refers to the territory of the Mahiṣa, with its capital at Mahiṣmatī.<sup>(4)</sup> This was situated on an island in the Narbada now called Mandhāta. We prefer the first interpretation. Since the purpose of the missions was the reorganisation of Buddhism and proselytizing in the more distant parts of the empire and in foreign countries, it is more likely that the missionaries would be sent to the extreme ends of the empire.

Vanavāsī is referred to in the Purānas in connection with people living in South India.<sup>(5)</sup> Generally it is identified with northern Kanara, the area between Baroda, the Tungabhadra river and the Ghats.<sup>(6)</sup> The modern town of Banavāsi in northern Kanara may well be the historical town of Vanavāsī. Aparānta is generally identified as modern Saurāṣṭra. It was the western border of the Mauryan Empire

(1) A, p. 120 n. 2.

(2) Cunningham, AGI, p. 54.

(3) ANM, p. 216.

(4) Fleet, JRAS, 1910, p. 429 ff.

(5) Skanda Purāna - Vanavāsi-Māhātmya

(6) Mookerji, A, p. 33; N. Sastri, ANM, p. 216; Law, GEB p. 66

in the reign of Aśoka, as the king refers to the people of Aparānta as westerners.<sup>(1)</sup> Rapson believes it to be the ancient name of northern Konkan, that is, the area between the Western Ghats and the sea.<sup>(2)</sup> Its capital was then Suppāraka the modern Sopārā, where a fragment of rock containing the 8th Rock Edict was found. Mahārattha is generally thought to be modern Mahārāṣṭra.<sup>(3)</sup>

It is uncertain whether the Yona in this list refers to the Greek settlements of the north west which we have already discussed earlier in this chapter, or to the Greek kingdoms of Bactria or even Syria. As we have seen both areas were in frequent contact with India.

The reference to the Himalayan country is clear enough. Here the missionary activity must have been in areas of modern Nepal and the Tarai region, in the foothills of the Himalayas.<sup>(4)</sup> Suvarṇabhūmi in later texts refers to Burma.<sup>(5)</sup> Fleet has suggested that Suvarṇabhūmi included a part of Bengal visited by Hsüan Tsang and which the pilgrim called Kā-lo-na-su-fa la-na,<sup>(6)</sup> i.e., Karṇasuvarṇa, or else it may have been the land along the river Son in central India called Hiranyabāhu. But the latter was too near the centre for a special Buddhist mission to be sent there. We believe that during the Aśokan period it did not refer to the entire area of present day Burma as some writers suggest,<sup>(7)</sup> but only

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(1) Gir. V. R. E. CII. I. p. 8; Fleet JRAS. 1910 p. 427.  
 (2) A. I., p. 161.  
 (3) Mookerji. A, p. 33; Dey GDAMI, p. 118.  
 (4) Dey. GDAMI, p. 198.  
 (5) JRAS, 1910, p. 428.  
 (6) Watters II, p. 191.  
 (7) Mookerji, A, p. 33.

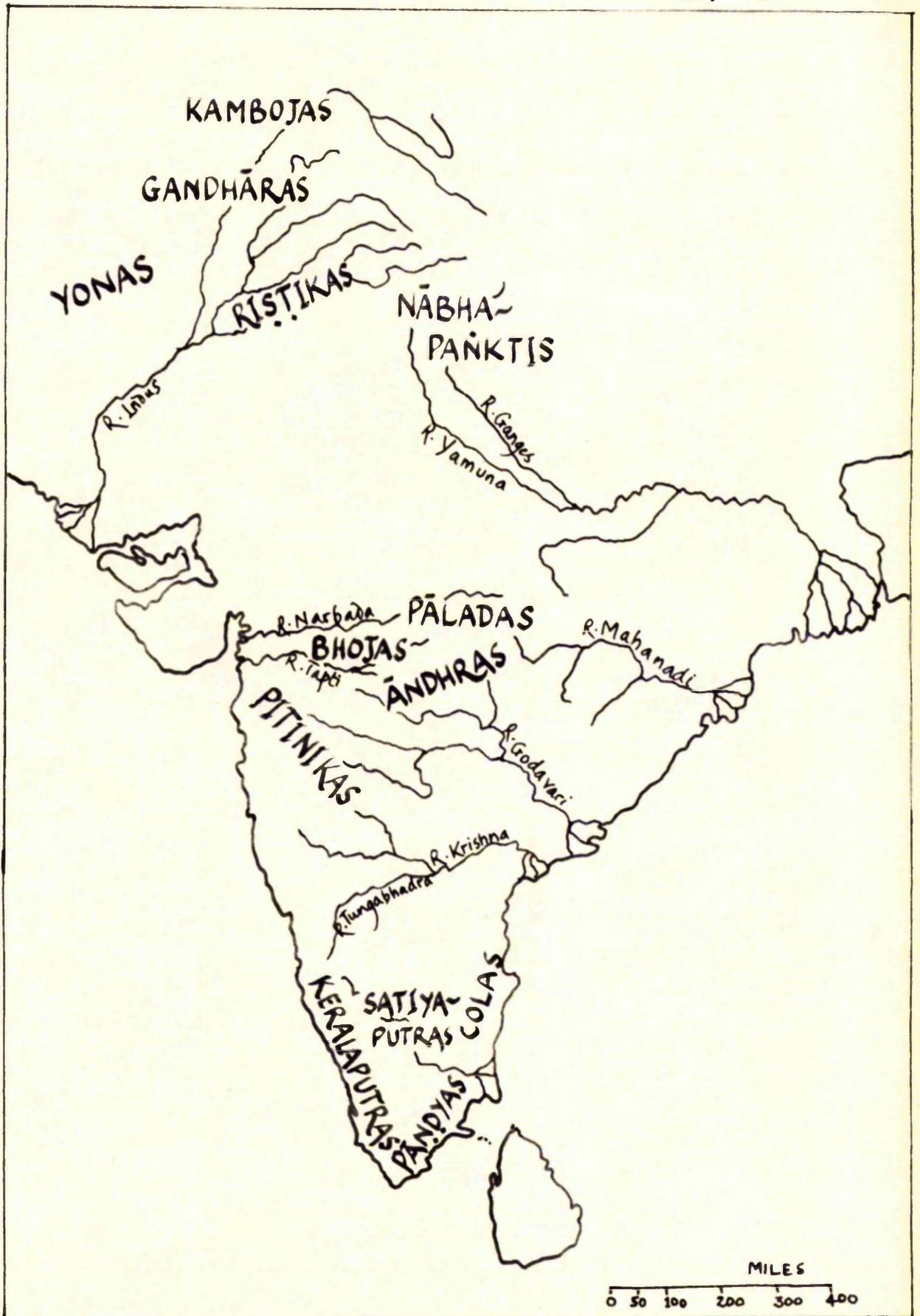
to the coastal area around modern east Bengal and the Arakan. It is possible that after the inclusion of Kalinga within the empire the river traffic on the Ganges brought this coast into greater contact with the mainland of India. An increase in commercial adventurousness may have taken some Indian ships to the north coast of Burma. With the development of the silk trade in later years, the route taken for the transportation of silk from Szechuan via Burma to the ports of east India must no doubt have made this coastal region one of the foremost trading centres. Hence the meaning of Suvannabhūmi, the land of gold.

The identification of Laṅkā raises no problem since the Dīpavaṃsa mentions that this was one of the names for the island of Ceylon. <sup>(1)</sup> Laṅkā it would seem was a name adopted in the post-Mauryan period since it first occurs in the Rāmāyaṇa as the name for Ceylon. <sup>(2)</sup> This would also suggest that the list may have been compiled by Buddhist monks considerably after the sending of the missions. Thus the geographical areas to which the missions were sent were remembered, but the names had by then altered.

Before we attempt to identify the various places mentioned in the Aśokan edicts or others connected with the Aśokan period, it will be of greater assistance if we first attempt an identification of the tribes mentioned in the edicts.

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(1) Dīp. XVII, 5.  
 (2) III, 31; 32.



TRIBAL PEOPLES MENTIONED IN THE AŚOKAN EDICTS

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The 13th Rock Edict mentions many of the peoples<sup>(1)</sup> within the empire to whom Aśoka makes particular reference. The Bhojas and the Pitinikas are mentioned among others. They are mentioned together in a compound, bhojapitinikesu, so were obviously connected; most probably they were close neighbours. Bhandarkar is of the opinion that Pittinika is an adjective used with Riṣṭika and Bhoja denoting a hereditary<sup>(2)</sup> right.<sup>(3)</sup> Barua is not in complete agreement with this view. He suggests that it refers to the main Bhoja tribe and to an off-shoot of this tribe. The latter view seems more feasible. Apart from the linguistic difficulties it is unlikely that a qualifying adjective would have been used for only one tribe amongst the many mentioned. Smith believes that the Bhojas dwelt in the area between the Vindhya hills and the Western Ghats and that the word Pittinika may signify merely "residents of Paithan (on the Godavari)."<sup>(4)</sup> Law is of the opinion that they later occupied the districts of Thana and Colaba.<sup>(5)</sup> If we accept this identification it may well explain the edict at Sopārā, which would then have been inscribed specifically for these people.

In the same edict the Colas are mentioned and are listed among the bordering kingdoms where the Dhamma has been successful. We have earlier in this chapter considered

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- (1) Kāl. XIII R.E. CII, I, p. 43.  
 (2) A. p. 33.  
 (3) AI, p. 83.  
 (4) EHI, p. 193, n. 2.  
 (5) GEB, p. 62.

Aśoka's relations with south India, which includes the Cola kingdom. The name of the present day Coromandel coast is derived from Cola-maṇḍalā<sup>a</sup>. Ptolemy refers to it in his work as the area to the north of the Tamil country.<sup>(1)</sup> He also mentions the region of Arkad in connection with it. This would suggest the modern district of Arcot.

In the 2nd Rock Edict the Colas are mentioned again together with the Keralaputras and others.<sup>(2)</sup> Hultzsch has suggested that the term Keralaputra refers to the king of Malabar or Kerala,<sup>(3)</sup> the κηρὸβουθρος<sup>(4)</sup> of Ptolemy. We however prefer to interpret it as a tribal name referring to the people of Kerala. As Lüders has shown, the word putra at the end of a compound frequently means belonging to a tribe.<sup>(5)</sup> The geographical identification of this tribe lies in identifying Kerala with Cera. Ptolemy mentions Karoura which Caldwell takes as the ancient capital of the Ceras or Keras, who came to be known as Keralas.<sup>(6)</sup> The area is generally identified with the Malabar coast stretching from south Kanara to Travancore. Bhandarkar included the region of Coorg and north-west Mysore in his identification.<sup>(7)</sup> Cunningham has suggested that the Kerala territory stretched across the Palghat gap through Salem and Coimbatore.<sup>(8)</sup> We believe that the

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- (1) Ptolemy, AI, I, 68. Quoted MacCrindle, p. 162.  
 (2) Mān. II, R.E., CII, I, p. 72.  
 (3) CII, I, p. 3.  
 (4) Ptolemy AI, I, 86. Quoted MacCrindle, p. 180-182.  
 (5) ZDMG, 58, p. 693 ff.  
 (6) Comparative Grammar, p. 95 ff.  
 (7) A. p. 42.  
 (8) AGI, p. 743.

territory of the Keralaputras was largely around the coastal areas. Further inland they would have come up against the Satyaputras north of the Coimbatore district. Their control over north-west Mysore is also doubtful since it is more than likely that the Aśokan empire stretched across this area, the boundary extending beyond the Tungabhadra river.

The same edict refers to the Pāṇḍyas, another south Indian kingdom. Megasthenes has an interesting story to relate about the people of this area. He writes that Hercules begat a daughter in India called Pandaia. To her he assigned the southern part of the country. This was the only part of India ruled by women.<sup>(1)</sup> Possibly this is a reference to the matriarchal system which existed in some areas of south India. Until recent years it had survived largely in the Malabar region. Another reference to the Pāṇḍyas occurs in the Mahāvamśa, where Vijaya is said to have married the daughter of the Pāṇḍu king from Mathurā.<sup>(2)</sup> Mathura may well have been the present day Madurā.

Raychaudhury maintains that the realm of the Pāṇḍyas corresponded to the Madurā, Ramnad and Tinnevelly districts and perhaps the southern portion of the Travancore state, and had its capitals at Kilkai and Madura.<sup>(3)</sup> Bhandarkar believes that it stretched into the hills as far as the neighbourhood of the Coimbatore gap.<sup>(4)</sup> Both these views are

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- (1) Polyæn, Strateg, I, 3, 4.  
 (2) VII, 72.  
 (3) PHAI, p. 271.  
 (4) A, p. 40.

feasible. We cannot agree with Cunningham however who states that the Pāṇḍya territory included Cochin.<sup>(1)</sup> As we have seen this latter area was most likely a part of the Kerala kingdom. Raychaudhury adds that there was a strong connection between the Pāṇḍavas of the Mahābhārata and the south Indian Pāṇḍyas, and that in fact Madurā was named after the north Indian city of Mathurā, and further that the stories in Megasthenes account are a confused version of this relationship. The similarities are certainly striking but it is difficult to ascertain whether there was any direct relationship. In view of the fact that Madurā is a late name and that the earlier name for the city was Kūḍal,<sup>(2)</sup> it would seem that the association was due to a coincidental similarity of names, resulting later in confused legends about the southern Pāṇḍyas being a branch of the northern Pāṇḍavas.

The Satiyaputras are also mentioned among the southern borderers in the 2nd Rock Edict. Kern connected this name with that of the Satpura Range, which identification Bühler rejected in favour of translating the term as "king of the Satbats."<sup>(3)</sup> Smith has identified the region as the area around modern Coimbatore in the Satyamangalam district.<sup>(4)</sup> Bhandarkar compares this term with a current Maratha surname, Satpute.<sup>(5)</sup> Thomas prefers to explain it as Satyabhūmi, an area

(1) AGI, p. 741.

(2) Sivarajapillay. Chronology of the Early Tamils p. 23

(3) ZDMG, 37, p. 98 ff.

(4) A. p. 161 and JRAS 1919, p. 584.

(5) JBBRAS, 21, p. 398.

corresponding roughly to north Malabar including a portion  
of south Kanara. <sup>(1)</sup> Ventakesvaraiyar has suggested that it is  
Kāñchipuram on the basis of Hsüan Tsang's remark that he found  
some Aśokan stūpas in that area. <sup>(2)</sup> However this area has  
traditionally been called Satyavrata kṣetra, and the term <sup>(3)</sup>  
refers only to the town of Kāñchi not to the area around it.  
Subramaniam first raised the question of identifying the  
Satyaputras with the Kosars famous for their truthfulness. <sup>(4)</sup>  
This point has been accepted by Nilakantha Sastri. <sup>(5)</sup> It is  
based on the derivation of the word satiya from the Sanskrit  
satya meaning truth and on putra, which, as we have already  
noticed implies belonging to a tribe. Therefore the term  
satiyaputra is translated as "members of the fraternity of  
truth". The Kosars are listed amongst the more important  
tribes of south India in early Tamil literature and therefore  
must have been important during the Aśokan periods. They are  
said to have occupied the Salem and Coimbatore districts.  
Whether the Satiyaputras were in fact the Kosars or not, the  
area that they occupied i.e., Salem and north of Coimbatore  
bordering on Mysore, Coorg and Malabar, possibly including  
portions of southern Mysore, is acceptable in our identification  
of these areas, since this is the region that remains after  
the other kingdoms have been identified.

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- (1) JRAS, 1923, p. 413.  
(2) JRAS, 1918, p. 541-42 and Watters, II, p. 226.  
(3) Raychaudhury, PHAI. p. 272.  
(4) JRAS, 1922, p. 86.  
(5) ANM, p. 251.

Thus the geographical distribution of the south Indian peoples was as follows. The Colās occupied the Coromandel coast from roughly the Pennar river to the Trichinopoly area. The Keralaputras inhabited the Malabar coast from southern Kanarā as far as Travancore, but including Coorg and Cochin. The Pāṇḍya kingdom stretched across the extreme south including southern Travancore, and the Madurā and Tinevelly areas. The remaining country from Coimbatore and Salem northwards perhaps including parts of southern and eastern Mysore, was in the hands of the Satiyaputras.

The identification of the Riṣṭikas mentioned in the 5th Rock Edict remains uncertain. <sup>(1)</sup> They are mentioned together with the Yonas the Kambojas, Gandhāras, the Pitinikas and other western borderers. This would suggest a location somewhere along the western border. Bühler has identified them with the Riṣṭikas of the Rāmāyaṇa. <sup>(2)</sup> It has also been suggested that they come from the region of Berar, if the Bhojas with whom they are associated belonged to the region of Paithan. <sup>(3)</sup> Connecting Rathika, the form of the word in the 5th Rock Edict at Shahbāzgarhi, with Mahārathi, Smith has suggested that the Riṣṭikas were the ancestors of the modern Marāthas. <sup>(4)</sup> Allowing for the fact that the Riṣṭikas

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(1) Kāl. V.R.E., CII, I, p. 32.

(2) ZDMG, 37, p. 261. Rāmāyaṇa, IV, 41, 8-11.

(3) Barua, AI, p. 86.

(4) A. p. 169-170 and see R. Bhandarkar, EHD, p. 11 ff.

are mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa as occupying the region of the Tapti river and further east, nevertheless we feel that Aśoka would hardly have referred to this area as the western border of his empire. Furthermore the location of the Riṣṭikas in Berar and the area south of the Tapti would conflict with the location of the Andhras, which we shall discuss further in this chapter. We therefore prefer Hultzsch's identification of the Riṣṭikas/Rathikas as being the Āraṭṭas of the Panjab, referred to as the Ἀράττιοι in the Periplus. They are said to have occupied the Bari Doab area just east of Multan. The Mahābhārata refers to the northern Riṣṭikas together with the people of Kamboja which would suggest a northern location for the former.

The same edict mentions the Gandhāras, whose identity we have already considered. Kamboja is frequently associated with Gandhāra and therefore was located in the north-west. In the Mahābhārata it is grouped together with the region of the Dards, and therefore it is generally taken as Dardistan around modern Rajaouri. Smith suggests that it was either the Hindu Kush area or Tibet. The former would tally with our earlier identification. Nepalese tradition does apply the name Kamboja deśa to Tibet, but we must remember that this word has travelled with the times as far east

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- (1) CII, I, p. 56, n. 21.  
 (2) E.S. 47. Quoted MacCrindle, p. 120.  
 (3) Cunningham, AGI, p. 246.  
 (4) Mahā. BH. II, 27, 25.  
 (5) Mahā. Bh. XII, 207, 43 and Mahā. Bh. II, 27, 23.  
 (6) EHI, p. 193.

as south-east Asia to Cambodia. Since Aśoka mentions Kamboja in connection with the western borderers it is highly unlikely that it could refer to Tibet.

The 13th Rock Edict contains a further list of tribes, among which are mentioned the Nābhakas and the Nābhapaṅktis. Mookerji suggests that they were a Himalayan people of the north western region, possibly connected with Gandhāra.<sup>(1)</sup> They are mentioned immediately after the Yonas and Kāambojas in the edict. Raychaudhuri reads the two names together as the Nābhapaṅktis of Nābhaka, an interpretation which we accept on the basis of the paṅkti referring to the assembly.<sup>(2)</sup> Raychaudhuri locates them in the Na-pei-kea of Fa-hsien, the birth-place of Kṛakucchanda Buddha, about ten miles south or south-west of Srāvastī.<sup>(3)</sup> Govinda Pai<sup>(4)</sup> attempts to associate them with the Nabhakānanas of the south mentioned in the Mahābhārata.<sup>(5)</sup> But since in the edict they are sandwiched between the Kāambojas and the Pitinikas it would seem that they were in the northern half of the sub-continent. The first two identifications mentioned above seem fairly convincing. It can be said that they were a Himalayan people living in the area between Nepal and Kashmir. Possibly, as Barua suggests, the present day Panjab states of Patiala and Nabha in PEPSU still preserve in remnants the name of these peoples.<sup>(6)</sup>

(1) A. p. 165 n. 2.

(2) PHAI. p. 254.

(3) Giles, TF, p. 36.

(4) Aiyengar Com. Vol. p. 36.

(5) VI, 9, 59.

(6) AI, p. 102.

The Āndhras are also listed in the same edict. Hultzsch suggests that this is the old name of the Telugu people and country, <sup>(1)</sup> though it is more likely that they were the same people who rose to power after the decline of the Mauryas. Pliny, probably quoting Megasthenes refers to them as a powerful people. <sup>(2)</sup> They are mentioned again by Hsüan Tsang, but by then they were concentrated in what is now the northern half of Āndhra province. <sup>(3)</sup> The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa mentions the Āndhras together with the Pulindas and the Nīcyas. <sup>(4)</sup> The grouping of the Āndhras together with the Pulindas would suggest that they were neighbouring peoples. Smith is of the opinion that they were located in the deltas of the Krishnā and Godāvārī rivers. <sup>(5)</sup> This would place them in a comparatively small area between the Kalingas and the Colās. It is unlikely that they could have wielded much power in this restricted position. We prefer the view of Srinivas Iyengar, who argues that the Āndhras originated in the Vindhya region and gradually spread in a south-easterly direction until they controlled the deltas of the Krishnā and the Godāvārī, where they were established for many centuries even after their decline. <sup>(6)</sup> <sup>(7)</sup> Further arguments in favour of this hypothesis are that the Hāthigumpha inscription of Khārevela

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- (1) VII, I, p. 48.  
 (2) Hist. Nat. VI, 21, 22, 23.  
 (3) Watters, II, p. 209 ff.  
 (4) VII, 18.  
 (5) EHI, p. 217.  
 (6) IA. 1913 pp. 276-8,  
 (7) Barrett, Sculptures from Amrāvati in the British Museum p. 13.

places the domain of Sātakarni, an early Sātavāhana, to the west of Kalinga and not to the south; (1) the inscriptions of the early rulers of the Sātavāhana dynasty are located at Nāsik and Nānāghāt, in the north-west Deccan; (2) Ptolemy refers to Baithana (Paithan) as the capital of Siro-Ptolemaios, (3) who has been identified with Sri Pulamāvi, a famous Sātavāhana ruler. Thus in the Mauryan period they occupied the region of Berar and the valley of the Wardha river.

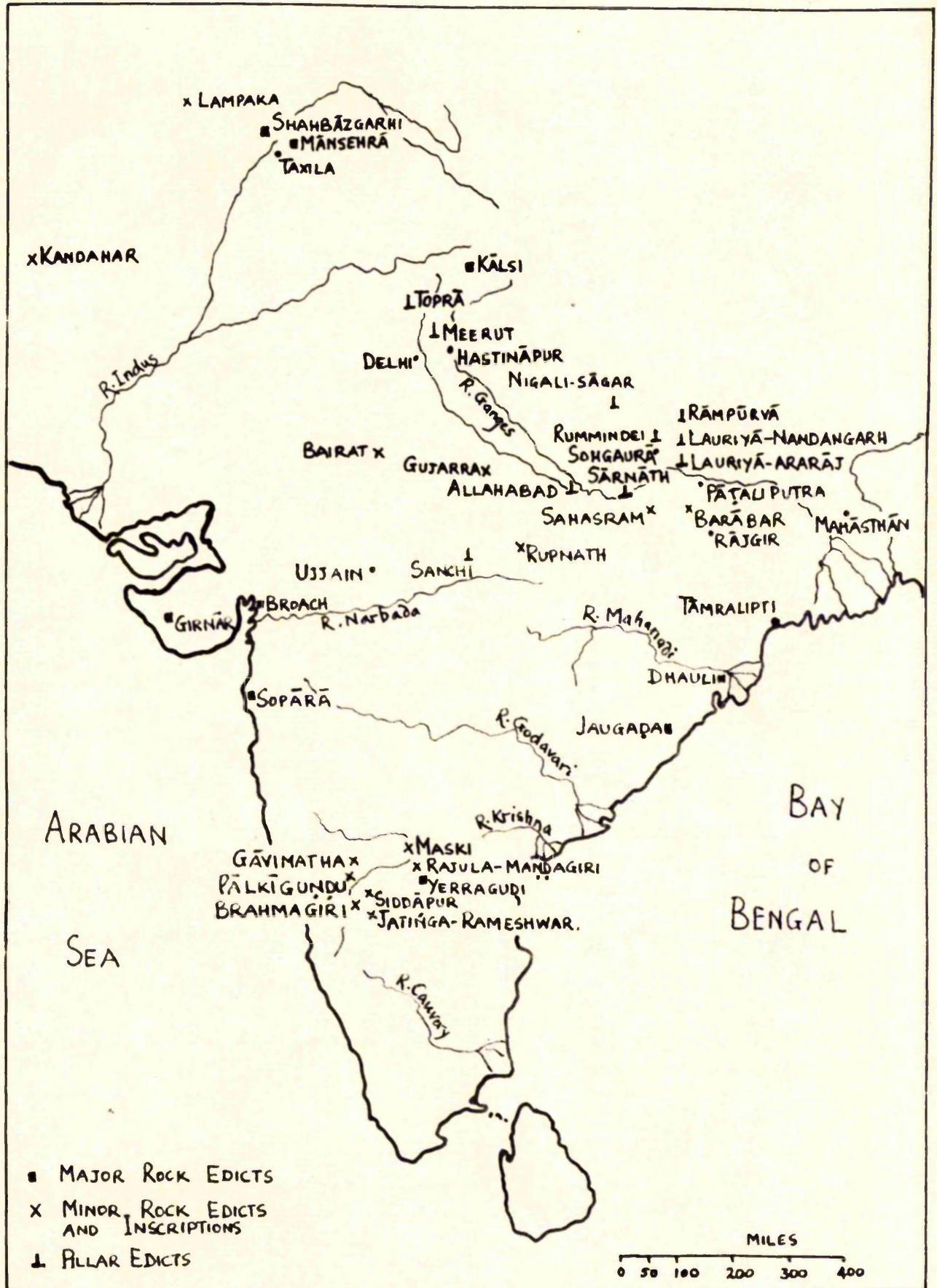
The Pāladas are mentioned together with the Āndhras in the 13th Rock Edict. Variations on this name occur in the Girnar text which reads Parinda and the Shabāzgarhi edict which reads Pālida. The phrase Āndhras and Pālidās used in the edict is very close to that in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Āndhras and Pulindas, referred to above. Thus Bühler identified the Aśokan name with that in the Brāhmaṇa. (4) In the Vāyu Purāṇa they are mentioned together with the Vindhya<sup>m</sup>ūliyas living at the base of the Vindhyas. (5) The Mahābhārata mentions them as being in the vicinity of the Cedis (6) and the latter were located in Bundelkhand and Jubbulpore. (7) It thus seems likely that the Pāladas lived in the Vindhya region, possibly on both sides of the Narmada valley and were the northern neighbours of the Āndhras.

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- (1) Sircar, SI, p. 206 ff.  
 (2) Ibid, pp. 183-205.  
 (3) Ptolemy AI, I, 82. Quoted MacCrindle p. 175.  
 (4) ZDMG, 40, p. 138.  
 (5) 45, 126.  
 (6) Sabhā Par. 29, 11.  
 (7) Cunningham. AGI, p. 725.

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The listing of these tribes appears to be arbitrary from the political point of view, since some, such as the Yonas, Colās and Pāṇḍyas, were not within the Aśokan empire. Some no doubt, such as the Satiyaputras, had a loosely feudatory relationship. The Bhojas and the Pāladas and other peoples in the central areas of the empire must have been under the complete political control of Aśoka. We must keep in mind the fact that in the edicts in which they are mentioned, i.e., the 2nd, 4th, and 13th, Aśoka is looking upon them not as political units within and on the frontiers of or outside his empire, but rather as groups of people who have received dhamma-mahāmāttas and Dhamma missions. They represent areas where the king believes that his policy of Dhamma has succeeded. Thus we cannot use the names and geographical identifications of these peoples as indicating the extent of Aśoka's empire. They can only indicate relationships and spheres of influence and give us some idea of the cultural position of groups of people within and on the outskirts of the empire. Doubtless there must have been a tremendous variation in the cultural level over such a large area, resulting consequently in a variation in the character of the Dhamma missions.

A more precise means of determining the geographical extent of the Empire is the identification of towns and sites known to be of the Aśokan period. Here we



THE MAURYAN PERIOD - SITES AND IMPORTANT TOWNS -

may use more than merely literary evidence. The remains of the Aśokan edicts and inscriptions give us precise geographical indications of areas which are thus known to have been within the Empire. Furthermore archaeological remains are of tremendous help in determining the date of a site. In the next section of this chapter we propose to review the habitations and sites known to be of the Aśokan period. Sites thus determined purely on the basis of archaeological evidence have however been discussed separately in an appendix.<sup>(1)</sup>

The locations of the edicts are of geographical importance, as the selection of their sites was not arbitrary. They must have been deliberately placed either near habitations, or on important travel routes, or at places of religious interest, thereby ensuring that they would be available to as many people as possible. We shall analyse the reasons for such a choice in so far as it is possible to do so with our present knowledge.

ALLAHABAD-KOSAM. Discussing the sites in alphabetical order we shall first consider the importance of the Allahabad-Kosam Pillar. This has more than just the pillar Edicts of Aśoka inscribed on its surface, since various rulers, important and less important, have used it to record their exploits. There are three sets of Aśokan inscriptions, the first six Pillar Edicts, the Queen's Edict and the Kausambi

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(1) See Appendix C

Edict. The importance of Allahabad the old Pṛyāga was largely that of a pilgrim centre. It lay on what was then a great sandy plain between the two rivers the Ganges and the Yamunā. (1) Such a confluence of two rivers nearly always develops into a place sacred to Hindus. Hsüan Tsang describes it as such and relates many legends regarding its temples. (2)

Cunningham has suggested, and we are in agreement with him, that since the Kausambī edict is directed to the mahāmāttas of Kausambī this pillar was originally situated there. (3) This is the same as modern Kosam on the left bank of the Yamunā, twenty-eight miles south-west of Allahabad. Kausambi having been a place of religious importance in Buddhist times may well have attracted pilgrims from various parts of the country and would therefore have been an excellent site for the Edicts. (4) It would appear from Samudragupta's inscription that the pillar was still at Kausambī during the Gupta period. (5) Possibly Jahangir had it removed to the fort at Allahabad in imitation of Firoz Shah, who brought similar pillars from Toprā and Meerut to Delhi. Both Allahabad and Kausambī being on the same river Yamunā, the transportation of the pillar would not have been too difficult. The Jahangir inscription on this pillar dated A.H. 1014 (or A.D. 1605), and recording the names of his ancestors, appears to

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(1) Cunningham, AGI, p. 445.

(2) Watters, I, p. 361 ff.

(3) Inscriptions of Aśoka, p. 39.

(4) Dig. Nik. II, p. 146, 169; Vin. Pit. I, p. 277.

(5) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xx.

confirm this view.

BAIRĀT. Bairāt is located in Rajā<sup>s</sup>than, 42 miles north-east  
(1) of Jaipur. A rock inscription as well as what is commonly

called the Bhābra Edict are from this site. Cunningham identifies it with Virāta the capital of the Matsya state, a  
(2) place famous in the Epic for the valour of its people.

The Bhābra Edict is meant specifically for a Buddhist community and is addressed to the Śaṅgha. This is confirmed by the archaeological evidence from the locality. Hsüan Tsang speaks of it as a thriving city and mentions that there were eight  
(3) Buddhist monasteries in the vicinity. Cunningham has

tentatively identified the remains of two on a hill about a  
(4) mile southwest of Bairāt. More recently a brick chamber was  
(5) excavated built like a stūpa. It is possible to speculate

on its being an early Buddhist shrine of a period before the  
(6) stūpa form emerged. This points to Bairat being an old and established centre of Buddhism. No doubt the Śaṅgha at Bairāt was among the more important Buddhist communities of the time, hence Aśoka addressed a special edict to it. Thus it was both a centre of religious activity and an important city of the region, with what appears to have been a large population.

BARĀBAR HILL CAVES. The inscriptions in these caves are

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- (1) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xxiv.  
(2) AGI, p. 390. It was occupied by the Five Pāṇḍus during their exile from Indraprastha.  
(3) Watters, I, p. 300.  
(4) Arch. Reports. 2. p. 247-48.  
(5) Sharma. AI, IX, p. 150; D.R. Sahni - Arch. Rem. & Exc. at Bairat.  
(6) Cf. Piggott. Antiquity. XVII, 65, 1943, p. 2 ff.

donatory, and therefore their significance does not rest in the particular importance of the site. The caves were in a group of hills girdling the city of Rājagrha.<sup>(1)</sup> It is possible that the neighbourhood was used by various classes of ascetics, among which the Ājīvikas being in the favour of Aśoka were granted three caves for their permanent use.

BROACH is mentioned in the Periplus with great frequency.<sup>(2)</sup>

It was clearly the most important commercial centre for trade with the west. It is mentioned in Ptolemy's geography as well,<sup>(3)</sup> both texts calling it Barygaza. The fact of its having had a long history as a trading centre is attested by Buddhist literature which refers to it in this context.<sup>(4)</sup> Trade between ports in the neighbourhood of the Indus delta and the ports of ancient Mesopotamia had by now probably died down, though the route taken by Alexander's fleet under Nearchos may well have revived the possibilities of this route as a trade route once more. Since the ports of Saurashtra were connected with the cities in the Ganges basin they became important in the course of this trade. Furthermore the Aparānta area, as we have seen, had considerable Greek and Persian contacts, which no doubt the people of this area wished to maintain.

BRAHMAGIRI. The geographical importance of Brahmagiri, where a version of the Minor Rock Edict was found, remains

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- (1) Cunningham AGI, p. 530.  
 (2) ES. 14, 21, 27, 32, 43.  
 (3) Ptolemy. AI, I, 62. Quoted MacCrindle, pp. 38, 152.  
 (4) Jāt. iii, p. 188; Jāt. IV, p. 137; Divyāvadāna XXXVII, p. 576.

uncertain. It was in the neighbourhood of Siddhapur, an important town in the Aśokan period. Dey has suggested that it was near two places of pilgrimage. (1) Both were mountains, in one of which was the source of the Godāvarī and in the other that of the Kāverī. We feel however that if the inscription was intended for pilgrims at one of these two places it would have been inscribed closer to the actual location of the sacred site. Hultzsch writes, "The boulder (on which the Aśokan inscription was engraved) was well known throughout the neighbourhood as the akṣara guṇḍa or "letter-rock", and was supposed to be endued with medicinal virtues. Accordingly in various ailments of human beings and in diseases of cattle, the stone was washed and the water used for the purpose given to the patient to drink." (2) One wonders if there was not a confused tradition of the 2nd Rock Edict (in which Aśoka declares that he has planted medicinal herbs for humans and animals) somewhere in the neighbourhood, possibly at Yerragudi where the major edicts were inscribed, which led to this strange superstition. The untutored mind may have confused the story of the king planting medicinal herbs with his investing the inscribed rocks with medicinal qualities.

With regard to the importance of the sites in south India we must keep in mind that the area within which most of the edicts have been found tallies closely with the gold

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(1) GDAMI, p. 226.

(2) CII, I, p. xxvii.

mining area of the south. The Arthaśāstra mentions the mining of gold in the south and speaks of it as a special commodity of trade with the south.<sup>(1)</sup> Therefore these parts were of tremendous economic importance. This may have been the reason for the selection of some of these sites. The inscriptions were probably situated in the well inhabited mining areas or along the main routes to this area.

MEERUT and TOPRĀ. The Delhi-Mīrath and the Delhi-Toprā pillars are so called because they were transported to Delhi by Feroz Shah from Meerut and Toprā<sup>(2)</sup> respectively. Both these places lie to the north-west of Delhi. Neither of these two sites has been excavated in recent years so that the reason for the location of the pillar edicts at these two particular sites remains unknown. We can only suggest that the two sites may have been important stopping-places on the road running from Pāṭaliputra to the north-west. If there were caravanserais at these two points no doubt some sort of habitation must have grown up around them.

DHAULI. The Dhauri rock inscription has been inscribed against a very imposing background. It appears high on a rock in a group of hills which rise abruptly from the surrounding plain. Wilford identified it with Tośala-Kośalaka of the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa<sup>(3)</sup> and the Kośala of the Br̥hat-samhita.<sup>(4)</sup> MacCrindle suggested the identification of Dhauri with Tosali,<sup>(5)</sup>

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- (1) VII, 12.  
 (2) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xv.  
 (3) Ch. XLI.  
 (4) JASB, 1838, p. 449.  
 (5) Ptolemy. A.I. pp. 230-31.

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which is mentioned by Ptolemy as a metropolis.<sup>(1)</sup> Dey and  
others have accepted this identification.<sup>(2)</sup> It was situated  
near the sacred pool of Kosala-Gaṅga and therefore probably  
developed into a religious centre as well.<sup>(3)</sup> The identification  
of Dhauli with Tosali is most convincing and is borne out by  
the text of the first Separate Edict which is addressed to the  
mahāmattas of Tosali.<sup>(4)</sup> It seems reasonable that the edict  
would therefore be as near the city as possible if not actually  
within it. Being an important city of the Kaliṅga people it  
was of particular significance.

GĀVIMATHA in the region of modern Mysore has a version of the  
Minor Rock Edict. It is one among the group of places in the  
neighbourhood of Siddāpur where this edict is found with great  
frequency.<sup>(5)</sup> Its importance may have been largely due to its  
being a mining area or on an important route. Judging from  
the lack of reference to it in religious sources it does not  
seem to have been a religious centre.

GIRNĀR. The importance of Girnār, where the major Rock  
Edicts have been inscribed, is not difficult to account for.<sup>(6)</sup>  
It is situated one mile to the east of Junāgadh in Kathiawar.  
That it was site of immense importance is amply proved by the  
number of major inscriptions to be found there, including, apart  
from those of Aśoka, those of Rudradāman and Skandagupta.

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(1) Ptolemy A.I. II, 23. Quoted MacCrindle. p. 225.

(2) GDAMI, p. 205; See Bose. SRENI, p. 177.

(3) Ptolemy AI, pp. 230-31.

(4) CII, I, p. 92.

(5) Bloch, LIA. p. 145.

(6) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. ix.

It is mentioned as Girinagara in the Bṛhat Saṃhitā.<sup>(1)</sup> By tradition the mountain is regarded as sacred both by brāhmins and Jainas.<sup>(2)</sup>

Its importance is increased by the fact that during the reign of Candragupta a dam was constructed on the Sudarśana lake in the neighbourhood of Gīrnār. The Rudradāman inscription informs us that the lake was originally built by Puṣyagupta the provincial governor of Candragupta.<sup>(3)</sup> Subsequently conduits were worked from it by Tuṣāspa in the reign of Aśoka. It refers to the town of Girinagara in the vicinity. It appears from the inscription of Skandagupta that the lake continued to supply water to the surrounding area until well into the Gupta period, eight hundred years later. Since it was the source of water for irrigation it must have been a focal point in the area.

It is possible that in the Aśokan period the city of Gīrnār was closer to the lake than is the present site of Junāgadh, since it would have been more practical to build the city as near the water supply as possible. Thus the hill on which the inscription was engraved was the centre of considerable activity.

GUJARRA, the site of a copy of the Minor Rock Edict, is located in the Datia district near Jhansi.<sup>(4)</sup> We would suggest that its importance was due to its being on one of the routes

(1) XIV, 11.

(2) Skanda Purāṇa. Bastrapatha- mahāmatya. I, XI, and Burgess. Antiquities of Kathiawad and Kacch. p. 175.

(3) Sircar. SI, p. 169.

(4) Sircar. Ep. Ind. XXXI, No. 27, p. 205 ff.

from the Ganges valley to the west coast, possibly via Ujjain to Broach. Hsüan Tsang<sup>(1)</sup> does mention the kingdom of<sup>(2)</sup> the Gurjaras but this has been identified with modern Marwar. JATINGA-RĀMESHVAR. There is another version of the Minor Rock Edict at this site which is located about three miles from Brahmagiri and belongs to the Mysore group of<sup>(3)</sup> inscriptions. The site might originally have been a place of religious interest since the inscription is within the precincts of the present Jatinga-Rāmeshwar temple. JAUGADA. The edicts at Jaugada are the same as the version at Dhauli, including the two Separate Edicts, thus proving Jaugada to have been a part of Kalinga. It is now a ruined fort in the Behrampur tāluka of the Ganjam district. It is situated on the northern bank of the Rishikulya river.<sup>(4)</sup> The Separate edicts are addressed to the mahāmattas of Samāpa, which was probably the name of the town in the Mauryan period. The present day site is in ruins. The fort suggests that it might have been a military centre, perhaps an eastern outpost. The area covered by the ruins suggest that the town must have been a fairly large one. The existence of surface ruins to this day would point to a long habitation. As a military centre it may have lost importance with the decline of the power of Kalinga after

(1) Watters II, p. 249-58.

(2) Cunningham, AGI, p. 696; Dey GDAMI, p. 72.

(3) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xxvii.

(4) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xiv.

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the death of Khāṛavela. Its proximity to the sea may have given it extended life through trade and maritime activities. Its location on the bank of a river may have kept it well supplied with water, thereby avoiding the problem of a constant water supply which many Indian cities have had to face.

We do not have any information on the importance of the Rishikulya river during that period. Flowing from the sea into the hinterland it may have been used for purposes of trade, goods from other areas along the east coast coming by sea and being transported up the river to the hinterland. It is unlikely however that the river was used for this purpose for any great distance inland, since the eastern Deccan plateau rises sharply from near the coastal region.

KĀLSI. The town of Kālsi, near which a version of the Major Rock Edicts was found, lies at the junction of the Tons<sup>(1)</sup> and Yamunā rivers. It may have been a place of pilgrimage or of religious significance, as the junction of rivers often was. The inscription may equally well have been in or near an ancient town, although the remains of a town have not yet been unearthed by excavations in the area. Recent excavations have however revealed a brick altar inscribed with Sanskrit verses almost opposite the rock inscription.<sup>(2)</sup> The altar marked the site of the fourth aśvamedha of King Śilavarman during the third century A.D., indicating thereby that the site was of some significance

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(1) Ibid, p. xi.

(2) Sharma. Anc. Ind. IX, p. 146.

during that period.

The section of the Ganges plain lying between the foot-hills of the Himalayas and Delhi has always been a strategic area. It controls the entrance to the plain extending further east. Thus the towns in this area are of strategic importance. The main artery from north-west India to the east runs through this area, a road system which was consistently maintained by all Indian emperors and which until recent years was called the Grand Trunk Road. Kālsi being in the lower hills of the Himalayas was possibly the controlling centre of this area. It probably bordered on or lay within the area of the Nābhaka tribes.

LAMPAKA. The Lampaka Aramaic inscription now in the Kabul museum is connected with the Mauryan period.<sup>(1)</sup> It comes from Lampaka or Lambaka generally identified with the modern Lamghan on the northern bank of the Kabul river near Jalalabad.<sup>(2)</sup> Ptolemy refers to it as Lambatai.<sup>(3)</sup> Hasūan Tsang calls it Lan-po.<sup>(4)</sup> Altheim regards the inscription as a fragment of one of the Dhamma thambāni mentioned in the Delhi-Toprā edict.<sup>(5)</sup> This view ~~is~~ agrees with a reading by Henning of a fragment of the inscription which is as follows,

"....of Devānampiya anointed....these were ordered to be written on pillar (s of stone...these injunctions which)

(1) Henning. ~~SOAS~~ SOAS. XIII, 1949. Part I, p. 80.

(2) Cunningham, AGI, p. 49.

(3) Ptolemy AI, I, 42, and MacCrindle, AI, pp. 104, 106.

(4) Watters I, p. 180-81.

(5) Weltgesichte Asiens im Griechischen Zeitalter, I, p. 25-43

we have made known (for the benefit of those that will come) after us."

From what little can be read of the fragment it appears to have been an edict issued by Aśoka. This would indicate that the Lamghān region was within the empire and the edict may have been issued for the edification of the people of the north-west.

LAURIYĀ-ARARĀJ. The importance of the site of Lauriyā-Ararāj is difficult to explain. It is located in northern Bihar. <sup>(1)</sup> The possibility of a religious centre having existed in the vicinity during the Mauryan period may explain the significance of the site. The area is associated with Buddhism. Smith believes that the pillars at Lauriyā-Ararāj and Lauriyā-Nandangarh marked the course of the royal road from Pāṭaliputra to Nepal. <sup>(2)</sup> There may certainly have been such a road, though the significance of the sites of the two sets of pillar Edicts may have been due to the proximity of religious centres as well.

LAURIYĀ-NANDANGARH. At Lauriya-Nandangarh there is another pillar inscribed with the Pillar edicts. This site is also in northern Bihar close to the village of Nandangarh and to the previous site. Near this pillar some funerary mounds were found which Cunningham believed to be of a pre-Buddhist

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(1) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xvii.

(2) A. p. 120.

(1)  
 period. He suggested that these may have been the ancient  
caityas of the Vṛjjis referred to by the Buddha. (2) Recent  
 excavations at one of these mounds have revealed a mixture  
 of contents, punchmarked coins, cast copper coins and terra-  
 cotta figurines and clay sealings of the first century B.C. (3)  
 It is more than likely that both Lauriya-Ararāj and Lauriya  
 Nandangarh were places where pilgrims gathered for religious  
 purposes.

MAHĀSTHĀN. The Mahāsthān inscription at Mahasthangarh  
 in the Bogra district of Bengal is, as we have already  
 suggested, of the Mauryan period. (4) The site was probably the  
 head-quarters of the local administrator, its name during that  
 period having been Puṇḍranagara, as is mentioned in the  
 inscription. The mahāmatta of Puṇḍranagara is described as  
 being in charge of measures for famine relief. Excavations  
 at the site have revealed terracottas of the Śuṅga period. (5)  
 Owing to the presence of this inscription we may include the  
 Bogra district of Bengal within the Mauryan empire.

MĀNSEHRĀ a village in the Hazara district of what was known  
 until recently as the North West Frontier Province, has the  
 fourteen Rock Edicts inscribed in the Kharoṣṭhī script. (6)

McPhail has suggested that its importance was due to the fact  
 that it lay on an important pilgrim route. (7) This is quite

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- (1) AGI, p. 514.  
 (2) Udāna Commentary p. 233 ff.  
 (3) Sharma, Anc. Ind. IX, p. 148.  
 (4) See Ch. I, p. 5.  
 (5) Sharma Anc. Ind. IX, p. 157.  
 (6) Hultzsch CII, I, p. xii.  
 (7) A. p. 76.

possible. We would further suggest that it was on the main road<sup>1</sup> running from the north-west to Pāṭaliputra and beyond. This site was probably also chosen because of its proximity to the borderers of the north-west.

MASKI. The inscription at Maski is of great importance since it is the only Aśokan inscription which contains the name of the king, and, as we have described earlier, was used to establish the identity of the author of the edicts.<sup>(1)</sup> It is located in the Raichur district of Hyderabad.<sup>(2)</sup> Dey has suggested that this was in fact the site of Suvarṇagiri the southern capital.<sup>(3)</sup> If this was the case it is surprising that none of the Major Rock Edicts were inscribed at the southern capital. We have discussed the identity of Suvarṇagiri further in these pages.

NIGALI-SĀGAR. The purpose of a pillar inscription at Nigali-Sāgar is fortunately clear from the inscription itself. It was originally erected near the stupa of Buddha Konākamana to record first the enlargement of the stūpa and later Aśoka's visit to the site.<sup>(4)</sup> Hsüan Tsang writes that he saw the pillar at the site of the Konākamana stūpa, six miles from Kapilāvastu, and that the pillar was surmounted by a carved lion.<sup>(5)</sup> Neither the stūpa nor the lion have so far been found, since the pillar has been removed from its

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(1) See Ch. I. p.2 .  
(2) Hultzsch CII, I, p. xxvi.  
(3) GDAMI p. 247.  
(4) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xxiii.  
(5) Watters. II, p. 6-7.

original site. It is now near Rummindei, within Nepalese territory.

PĀLKĪGUṆḌU. The Minor Rock Edict was found inscribed at Pālkīguṇḍu in the southern part of the empire about 4 miles from Gāvimath.<sup>(1)</sup> This site again belongs to the group around Brahmagiri. The reason for its importance remains obscure.

PĀṬALIPUTRA. The identification of Pāṭaliputra is certain and its geographical importance is well-known. It was the capital of the Mauryan empire and at the time of Aśoka had a long history going back three centuries to the rise of Magadha. It is referred to in literary sources both classical and Indian, and in the edicts of Aśoka.<sup>(2)</sup> Extensive excavations have shown that the city existed in certain sites in and around modern Patna, probably by the river, the course of which has changed somewhat through the centuries. These excavations<sup>(3)</sup> have unearthed the wooden palisade which surrounded the city of Pāṭaliputra and which was mentioned by Megasthenes.<sup>(4)</sup> The pillared hall of the palace similar to that of Persepolis and the ārogya vihāra have also been found, including various smaller objects such as beads, terracottas, coins and pottery of a type usually associated with the Mauryan period.

(1) Sen. A. p. 51; Hyderabad Arch: Series. X; IA. 1932. LXI, pp. 39-40.

(2) Strabo, XV, l. 36; Arrian, Indica, X; Hultzsch, CII, i, p. 8.

(3) Waddell. REP. 1903 p. 63; Sharma Anc. Ind. IX, p. 146.

(4) Strabo, XV, l. 35, 36.

RĀJGIR. There is a reference to Rājgir in the Agni  
 Purāṇa. (1) Aśvaghoṣa relates that Rājgir was built as the  
 capital of Magadha by Bimbisāra. (1) Hsüan Tsang claims that to  
 the west of the city of Rājgir was a stūpa built by Aśoka,  
 which stūpa Fa-Hsien had ascribed to Ajātaśatru in his account. (2)  
 Excavations in the area have made it possible to locate the  
stūpa, but its date cannot be definitely ascertained. (3)

Evidence of the Mauryan occupation of the site is available  
 from the bricks used in the construction of the city wall at  
 the southern gate. They are of the standard Mauryan size,  
 18 x 9 x 3 inches. (3)

RAJULA-MANḌAGIRI. The Minor Rock Edict was found inscribed  
 at Rajula-Manḍagiri, a site in the southern group near  
 Yerragudi. (4) The text of this version of the Minor Rock Edict  
 is very close to that of the same edict found at Yerragudi.  
 The precise importance of the site remains unexplained.

RĀMPŪRVĀ. The Rāmpūrvā pillar has the first six Pillar  
 Edicts inscribed on it and is located about 32 miles north of  
 Bettiah in northern Bihar. (5) No indication of the signifi-  
 cance of the site exists. Smith has connected it with the  
 route from Pāṭaliputra to Nepal mentioned earlier. This  
 area between the Ganges and the Himalayas, being extremely  
 fertile, was no doubt heavily populated, which would be reason

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- (1) Agni Purāṇa X; Buddha-carita XLIX.  
 (2) Watters II, p. 147 ff; Giles TF. p. 49.  
 (3) Kuraishi and Ghosh. Rajgir. p. 10; Kuraishi- Guide to  
 Rajgir, p. 8.  
 (4) Sircar. Ep. Ind. XXXI, No. 28, p. 211.  
 (5) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xviii.

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enough for the frequent inscribing of edicts. In addition many of the places sacred to Buddhism, Rummindei and Kapilāvastu for example, were in this area, and probably attracted pilgrims from other parts of the country.

RUMMINDEI. The Rummindei pillar stands near the shrine of Rummindei just within the border of Nepal.<sup>(1)</sup> As stated in the inscription the pillar was erected by Aśoka to commemorate the birth-place of the Buddha, the Lumbinī grove.<sup>(2)</sup> Cunningham is of the opinion that the Rummindei pillar locates the Lumbinī grove, Rummindei being the modern name for Lumbinī.<sup>(3)</sup>

According to Hsüan Tsang the pillar had a horse capital which had been struck by lightning, and the pillar itself had broken in the middle.<sup>(4)</sup> Today the lower shaft of the pillar still stands, the upper part having been split into two. There is no trace of the capital.

RŪPNĀTH. A rock at Rūpnāth has been inscribed with a version of the Minor Rock Edict. The location of Rūpnāth is on the Kaimur hills near Saleemabad in Madhya Pradesh.<sup>(5)</sup> The existence of a liṅga now makes it a spot sacred to Śaivites. There is a waterfall that forms three shallow pools and a fourth secluded pool at the foot of the hill. The three pools are named after Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. It is possible that this was a place of religious significance even in the Aśokan

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- (1) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xxii.  
(2) Ibid. p. 164.  
(3) AGI, p. 711.  
(4) Watters II, p. 14.  
(5) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xxiii.

period. No Buddhist remains have been found. It may have attracted Hindu pilgrims, and hence the edict was inscribed nearby. It is equally possible that it was situated on an important route. The route from Allahabad (Prayāga) to Broach must certainly have passed via Rupnath. From Allahabad there is a rise over the Kaimur hills. Thence to Jubbalpur would be a fairly easy stretch along the top of the plateau. Jubbalpur lies close to the Narmada and from here the route has merely to follow the valley of the Narmada, arriving directly at Broach. An alternative route to Jubbalpur may have been from Pāṭalāputra following the hills. This would explain in part the importance of Sahasram.

SAHASRAM, has a version of the Minor Rock Edict as well.

It is located in the Shahabad district of Bihar not far from the river Son, and ninety miles south-west of Patna. <sup>(1)</sup> The site of the inscription is not far from the modern town of Sahasram. The edge of the Kaimur hills extends as far as this point. The existence of a town here appears to confirm our view that there was a route from Patna, up the Son valley, across the plateau to Jabbalpur and then down the Narmada valley to Broach. Sahasram would then be an important town along this route, being the out-post of Magadha, before the rather uncertain journey across the plateau, a comparatively lesser known region.

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(1) Dey. GDAMI, p. 171.

SANCHI, was known from the Buddhist period until that of the Guptas as Kākanāḍaboṭa, its present name having been acquired at a comparatively late date.<sup>(1)</sup> Aśoka's connections with Sanchi have been considered in an earlier chapter. It has been suggested, as we have seen, that Aśoka built the great stūpa at Sanchi for Devī as an expression of respect for her piety.<sup>(2)</sup> However we do not give much credence to this story because of a lack of sufficient evidence. It is possible that Aśoka was instrumental in the building of the stūpa, at Sanchi, and we believe that it was probably already an important Buddhist site. A fragmentary surviving Aśokan inscription appears to have been addressed to the dhamma-mahāmattaṣ and possibly even the Buddhist Samgha since it deals with the treatment of dissident monks and nuns.<sup>(3)</sup> It is apparent from archaeological evidence that the stūpa was enlarged and encased in its present covering during the Suṅga period.<sup>(4)</sup> No doubt the nearness of the site to Ujjain, one of the four provincial capitals of the empire, would have given Sanchi added importance. It is located near Bhopal, a few miles distance from Bhilsa, thought to be the ancient Vidiśā.

SĀRNĀTH. The Sārnāth pillar is situated in a place of immense importance to the Buddhists, since it was at Sārnāth that Buddha preached his first sermon. The Aśokan inscription

(1) Fleet, CII, III, p. 31; Cunningham. Bhilsa Topes. pp. 183-241, 347.

(2) See Ch. II, p. 52.

(3) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. 160.

(4) HCIP, II, p. 488.

is a copy of the Schism Edict found also at Kosambi and Sanchi. It seems reasonable to assume that there was an important monastery at Sārnāth, to the monks of which the edict was again directed. Hsüan Tsang writes that he saw the pillar carrying the inscription in front of a stūpa said to have been built by Aśoka.<sup>(1)</sup> The location of Sārnāth is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles out of Banares. The ancient name of the latter was Kāśī and it was the centre of considerable activity during the pre-Buddhist period.

The animal capital on the ~~Sanchi~~<sup>Sārnāth</sup> pillar is of some significance. It consists of four lions facing the four quarters and the whole was originally surmounted by a wheel.<sup>(2)</sup> This suggests that it may have been a cakravartin symbol, in which case Aśoka must have been acquainted with the idea of the cakravartin from Buddhist sources. But it is even more significant that it should occur at Sārnāth. If the symbolism of the wheel had a purely political intention, it would have been more appropriate at Pāṭaliputra, even though Kāśī had once in the past been politically important. It would seem that the symbol in this case was that of Buddha's "Wheel of the Law", which was thought to have first turned at Sārnāth and thence rolled to all parts of the world. It is possible that the later Buddhist cakravartin symbol of the wheel of righteousness rolling through the entire world, may have been directly inspired by this capital.

(1) Watters II, p. 46 ff.

(2) See Plate VI. p. 563.

Apart from its religious and political importance, Kāśī must no doubt have been an important centre of trade. Frequent references to it in Buddhist literature point to it as being among the more important towns of the area. (1) Its situation was in many ways ideal for trade. Being on the banks of the Ganges it must have had a fair control over river traffic, which in those days of small boats and few roads must have been of a considerable magnitude, despite the fact that the town lay so far up the river. Its position midway between Prayāga and Pāṭaliputra meant that it must have acted as a point of exchange for goods coming from either place. Much of the commerce must have been conducted via the river, since water is a cheaper means of transport than newly built roads. Owing to its political and economic importance it appears to have been included among the towns touched by the main road running from the north-west to Pāṭaliputra. (2)

SHAHBĀZGARHI. At Shahbāzgarhi is a copy of the Major Rock Edicts inscribed in Kharoṣṭhī. The position of this site is near Mardan in the Yusufzai area of Peshawar. (3) Most authorities (4) now accept the identification of Po-lu-sha mentioned by Hsüan Tsang with this site. (5) Cunningham (6) has also attempted to identify it with Arrian's description of Bazarria or Bazira. (7) According to Hsüan Tsang the town was

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(1) Anguttara Nik. I, p. 213; Jāt. IV, p. 342; Dīgha Nik. II, p. 235 ff.  
 (2) Bose. SRENI, pp. 287, 288.  
 (3) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xii.  
 (4) Dey. GDAMI, p. 257.  
 (5) Watters I, p. 217.  
 (6) AGI, p. 676.  
 (7) Anabasis, IV, 27, 28.

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constructed on the ruins of an ancient stone-built city, which agrees with Arrian's description of the city. Unfortunately the area around Shahbāzgarhi has not yet been excavated, and therefore there is no confirmation of this view from archaeological sources. If, as is probable, there was a town at the site during the Aśokan period, it must have been regarded as a frontier town and the mahāmattas posted there would also be in charge of the welfare of the borderers. Though not actually on the frontier it may have had an importance similar to that of modern frontier towns such as Peshawar. Shahbāzgarhi may also have been on the main road from the north-west to Pāṭaliputra. It is possible that the road ran via Taxila and Shahbāzgarhi to Kabul. Thus the edict at Shahbāzgarhi may also have been intended for travellers along this route and certainly the attraction of Taxila must have invited travellers from both east and west.

SIDDĀPUR. The Siddāpur version of the Minor Rock Edict lies one mile to the west of Brahmagiri, the location of which we have discussed earlier. It lies three miles south of the inscription at Jatinga-Rāmeshwar. The purpose of these inscriptions remains uncertain. In addition to the reasons we have already given we can only suggest that since this area bordered the kingdoms of south India, they are to be found in great numbers in these parts, acting perhaps as indications of the boundary of the empire.

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(1) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xxvii.

SOHGAURĀ. The copper-plate inscription from Sohgaurā in Gorakhpur district has been discussed earlier in this work. (1)

We believe it to be a Mauryan inscription. As the inscription indicates, the area was under Mauryan administration. (2)

SOPĀRĀ. A fragment of the 8th Rock Edict has been found at Sopārā in the Thana district of Bombay. (3) Sopārā is the site of a sea-port and ancient town which no doubt was of importance during the reign of Aśoka. (4) Burgess has identified it with the Soupara of Ptolemy, (5) described as a commercial centre. Its ancient name was Suppāraka and it is mentioned in the Brahma Purāṇa where it is included in the Aparānta-deśa. (6)

Vijaya is said to have stopped at Suppāraka on his way to Ceylo. (7)

The reason for inscribing edicts at Sopārā was no doubt because it was a sea-port. This served a double purpose. Because the place was a port it meant that a constant stream of people coming and going would read the edicts. Furthermore even the foreigners visiting the port would thus be made acquainted with the Dhamma of Aśoka.

SUVARṆAGIRI. The Minor Rock Edict was issued from Suvarṇagiri, as we have seen. (8) There has been some disagreement about the identification of Suvarṇagiri but most authorities are of the opinion that it is the modern

(1) See Ch. I. p. 5 .

(2) Sircar. SI, p. 85.

(3) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. xv.

(4) Burgess. Antiquities of Mathiawad and Kacch. p. 131.

(5) Ptolemy. AGI, I, 6; Quoted MacCrindle, pp. 39, 40.

(6) XXVII, 58.

(7) Mah. VI, 46.

(8) See Ch. II, p. 81 .

(1)  
 Kanakāgiri south of Māski in Hyderabad. The word means  
 "golden mountain" and this has been connected with the ancient  
 gold mining area in Raichur which to this day shows traces of  
 ancient gold workings. Raychaudhuri suggests that  
 Suvarṇagiri was the capital of Dakṣiṇāpatha, the southern part  
 of the empire. (2) Fleet has identified it with Sonāgiri near  
 Rājagṛha. (3) This is unlikely since the edict was issued from  
 Suvarṇagiri, and if this was Sonāgiri, the king might as well  
 have waited to return to the nearby capital before issuing  
 the edict. Furthermore since many more versions of the edict  
 have been found in the south than in the north, it seems  
 more likely that it was issued from Kanakāgiri in Mysore.  
 Hultzsch also suggests the identification of Suvarṇagiri  
 with Kanakāgiri. (4)

TĀMRALIPTI, generally identified with the modern Tamruk  
 in the Midnapur district of Bengal, was the principal port on  
 the mouth of the Ganges. (5) Fa-hsien writes that he embarked  
 for Ceylon from Tāmralipti. (6) Hsüan Tsang states that he  
 saw some stūpas built by Aśoka at the same site. (7) The Ceylon  
 chronicles refer to it as Tāmalitti, derived from its ancient  
 Sanskrit name Tāmralipti, (8) and it appears from these sources  
 (9)

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- (1) Mookerji, A, p. 106; Hyderabad Arch. Series. No. 1.  
 (2) PHAI, p. 236, 256-57.  
 (3) JRAS. 1909, p. 998.  
 (4) CII, I, p. 177.  
 (5) Smith, EHI, p. 171.  
 (6) Giles, TF, p. 65.  
 (7) Watters, II, p. 189-90.  
 (8) Mah. XI, 38; Dīp. III, 33.  
 (9) Mahā. Bh. Bhisma P. IX, Sabhā P. XXIX.

that it was the most important port on the east coast of India. Apart from the sea traffic it controlled the river traffic going up the Ganges, most certainly one of the main highways of travel and commerce during that period. Evidence of Mauryan occupation of Tamruk is available from archaeological remains.<sup>(1)</sup>

TAXILA is mentioned frequently in the literary sources on the Aśokan period. As a young man Aśoka was the provincial governor at Taxila.<sup>(2)</sup> During his last years Taxila is connected with the story of Kunāla.<sup>(3)</sup> It was the capital of the northern province and one of the main cities of the empire. Archaeological remains indicate a high degree of craft and culture.

The importance of Taxila can be accounted for in various ways. Its long history of contact with the west, particularly with the Hellenic world, after the invasion of Alexander resulted in its becoming a cosmopolitan centre. It was noted as a centre of learning and was often mentioned as the place of residence of well-known teachers.<sup>(4)</sup> It was the meeting point of three major trade routes.<sup>(5)</sup> One was what may be called the royal highway coming from Pāṭaliputra. Another was the route from further north-west to India, coming through Bactria, Kāpiśa and Puṣkalāvati (modern Peshawar).

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- (1) Sharma. *Anc. Ind.* IX, p. 155.  
 (2) *Divyavandāna*, XXVI, p. 371.  
 (3) See Ch. II, p. 114.  
 (4) Fick. *SOIB*, p. 200.  
 (5) Marshall, *Taxila*, I, p. 1.

The third was the route from Kashmir and Central Asia, via Srinagar, Mānsehrā and the Haripur valley. It may be suggested that when sea traffic with the west increased, the land route through Bactria and Peshawar became less important and this was one of the factors which led to the later decline of Taxila in the Kuṣāṇa period.

The inclusion and importance of Taxila within the Mauryan empire can also be proved by the evidence of stone found at Bhir Mound which appears to have been brought there from central India<sup>(1)</sup> Two kinds of sandstone are used extensively during this period at Taxila. One is the spotted red and white variety from Mathurā, and the other the buff-coloured hard sandstone from Chunar, used by Aśoka for his pillars. It is evidence of the good transportation system of the time that stone could be conveyed from the Mathurā and Chunar area to Taxila.

UJJAIN<sup>(2)</sup> was the capital of the western province of the empire. As we have seen, Aśoka was for some time the viceroy at Ujjain.<sup>(3)</sup> Apart from its political importance as a provincial capital it was, like Taxila, the meeting-point of many routes.<sup>(4)</sup> It was connected with the ports on the western coast, Broach and Sopārā. Thus much of the trade with places further inland went through Ujjain, and it gradually grew in commercial importance. Indeed Aśoka's alliance with the daughter of a

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(1) Ibid, II, p. 479  
 (2) Smith, EHI, p. 172.  
 (3) See Ch. II, p. 50 .  
 (4) Rapson, AI, p. 175.

merchant, while he was viceroy at Ujjain, could not have been considered too disreputable. The city was also connected with routes coming from the south. Lastly, being a provincial capital, it was connected with Pāṭaliputra and the towns on the way to it.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, merchandise from the Ganges valley going to the western ports would pass through Ujjain. In later years Ujjain was known to the west through Ptolemy's reference to it as Ozene.<sup>(2)</sup>

But Ujjain was not only a political and commercial centre. It was a Buddhist centre during the Mauryan period and judging by the importance of its monasteries had a long history as such.<sup>(3)</sup> An excavation of a mound at Kumbar Tekri four miles north-east of Ujjain reveals that it was a burial-cum-cremation ground dating back to before the third century B.C.<sup>(4)</sup> Hsüan Tsang writes that not far from Ujjain was a stūpa constructed on the site where Aśoka had built a "Hell".<sup>(5)</sup> YERRAGUDI, is situated eight miles from Gooty on the southern border of the Kurnool district, and is eighty miles north-east of Siddāpur.<sup>(6)</sup> It is the site of the only complete version of the Major Rock Edicts in the southern province of the empire found up to now. A copy of the Minor Rock Edict has also been engraved at this site. This copy concludes with a

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(1) Jāt. II, p. 248 ff.

(2) Ptolemy. AGI, 63; quoted MacCrindle p. 154-55.

(3) Mah. XIII, 5; XXIX, 35.

(4) Sharma. Anc. Ind. IX, p. 160.

(5) Watters II, p. 250; and see Ch. II. p.

(6) Mookerji, A, p. 258.

supplementary passage found only at one other site, that of Rajula-Maṇḍagiri. It must have been a site of some significance since it contains both the Major and the Minor edicts. No remains of a town have yet been discovered in the area. It is possible that a frontier town may have existed at the site, with a route leading through it to the south Indian kingdoms.

Having considered the location of some of the place names which occur in the source materials of the Mauryan period, we may now discuss some of the main routes traversing the empire and linking the towns. Rhys Davids has compiled a list of various routes in use in pre-Mauryan India, which he derived from many sources, largely Buddhist.<sup>(1)</sup> The routes must have continued to be used during the Mauryan period. The more important among them ran as follows,

North to South-west. From Sāvattthī to Palithāna, via Sāketa, Kosāmbi, Vedissa, Gonaddha, Ujjain and Māhissatī.

North to South-east. From Sāvattthī to Rājagaha, via Setavya, Kapilāvastu, Kusināra, Pāvā, Hātthi-gāma, Bhaṇḍagāma, Vesāli, Pāṭaliputra and Nālanda.

East to West. This route was mainly along the rivers up to Sahajātī on the Ganges, and Kosāmbi on the Yamunā. The desert of Rajasthan was known and the port of Bharukaccha (Broach). Baveru (Bāylon) was known as a trading centre in the west, and Tambapaṇṇi-dīpa, or the island of Ceylon, in the south.

These routes we may assume were frequently used by

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(1) BI, p. 103 ff.

Buddhists in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. These were the nucleus of the communications which were later to spread across the Mauryan empire. The Buddhist emphasis on pilgrimage no doubt assisted in the care and maintenance of these routes. At the same time the development of commerce both along the Ganges and in the western part of the country made it imperative that good communications be maintained.

With the outward spread of the Mauryan empire from Pāṭaliputra, communications had naturally to be extended either as far as the frontier or even further. The development of bureaucratic administration contributed to the necessity for such communications, since the officials had constantly to be in touch with the capital cities. Thus there were not only the main routes traversing the empire or radiating from Pāṭaliputra, but the provinces had also to be served with their own smaller network of routes.

Mauryan administration seems to have employed a special group of officials whose concern was with the building and maintenance of roads. These are referred to by Megasthenes as *αγορανόμοι*. The literal meaning of the term being "market commissioners."<sup>(1)</sup> But their work was also related to communications. They were in charge of constructing roads and at every ten stadia erecting sign-posts recording distances and by-roads. This is reminiscent of the 7th Pillar Edict where Aśoka states that he has had wells dug at

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(1) Strabo, XV, 1, 50.

every eight kos which is a distance of about nine miles. (1)  
 Bloch has translated the term addhakosikya as half a kos, (2)  
 but we prefer Hultzsch's reading based on Fleet's argument that  
 the addha is derived from the Sanskrit aṣṭam. (3) The digging of  
 wells and the construction of rest houses at every half a mile  
 would not have been necessary. The same every nine miles  
 would be the right distance in view of the fact that travellers  
 who walked for most of their journey would need to rest after  
 a nine-mile walk. (4)

The Royal highway from the north-west to Pāṭaliputra  
 was probably considered the most important route since we are  
 given a detailed account of it. (5) There was an extension  
 eastwards, which was said to have reached as far as Tamruk  
 or even further to the mouth of the Ganges. It was equally  
 important from the commercial as from the strategic point of  
 view. Before the development of sea-trade it was the chief  
 trade route with the west, Taxila being the point of exchange.  
 Even for inland trade it was frequently used, since we know  
 from the Arthaśāstra that there was a considerable trade between  
 the Ganges region and the north-west. (6)

Pliny has recorded distances between important  
 points along this route. (7)

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- (1) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. 135 and n. 1.  
 (2) LIA, p. 170.  
 (3) The precise length of a Kos is difficult to ascertain,  
 since the length of the yojana (which was 4 kos) varied  
 from 5 to 9 miles. Therefore the wells were dug at a  
 distance ranging between 10 to 18 miles.  
 (4) JRAS, 1906, p. 401 ff.  
 (5) Pliny. Hist. Nat. VI, 21.  
 (6) II, 11.  
 (7) The identification of place names is based on Nilakantham  
 Sastri (ANM p. 272) and MacCrindle (A.I. pp. 130-132).

From Peucelaotis (Puṣkarāvātī) to the Indus...	60	(Roman) miles
" thence to the Hydaspes (Jehlum) .....	60	" "
" " " " Hyphasis (Beas).....	270	" "
" " " " Hesidrus (Sutlej).....	168	" "
" " " " Jomanes (Yamunā ).....	168	" "
From the Jomanes to the Ganges.....	112	" "
" thence to Rhodopa (unidentified).....	119	" "
" " " Kalinipaxa ( " ).....	167	" "
" " " the confluence of the Jomanes and Ganges.....	625	" "
" " " Palibothra (Pataliputra).....	425	" "
" " " the mouth of the Ganges.....	638	" "

This is obviously a rather muddled account of the route, since it is measured not from town to town but according to the rivers crossed on the way. However the rivers are mentioned in the right order. It must certainly have been a well-known road for Pliny to have mentioned it in such detail.

In addition to the routes suggested by Rhys Davids, Bose, using Buddhist literature as evidence, has suggested a route from Tāmralipti to Śrāvastī via Gayā and Kāśī.<sup>(1)</sup> This route may have served some of the areas served by river transport as well. The use of rivers as routes for commercial purposes has been suggested by the Arthaśāstra.<sup>(2)</sup> Large

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(1) SRENI, p. 287.  
(2) II, 16.

towns along the Ganges, for instance Campā, Pāṭaliputra, and Kāśī must have been used as river-ports. Bose mentions another east-west route from Pāṭaliputra via Magadha and Sovīra across the Indus delta to Iran.<sup>(1)</sup> References to travelling across the desert in the Jātakas would suggest that there may also have been a south-west to north-west route from Bharukaccha to Gandhāra.

As we have said earlier, within this larger plan there was a network of small road systems. For example Smith has suggested that there was a road from Pāṭaliputra to the border of Nepal via Lauriya-Nandangarh, Lauriya-Ararāj and Rāmpūrvā. Since this area was heavily populated, that in itself would necessitate roads. In addition the existence of many sites sacred to Buddhism in this area would call for good communications to facilitate pilgrimages.

Evidence of routes to south India is scanty. Journeys as far as the Vindhya were probably not extraordinary events, but travelling further south may have been something of an adventure. We have already referred to the sea-route when discussing the importance of Kalinga to the Mauryan empire.<sup>(2)</sup> Ships sailed from Tamruk to various ports along the east coast, some going to Ceylon.<sup>(3)</sup> Similarly ships must also have sailed from Broach and Kathiawar southwards along the west coast,<sup>(4)</sup> though this appears to have been a less

(1) SRENI, p. 288.

(2) See Ch. III, p. 190 .

(3) Mah. XI, 38.

(4) We have noticed earlier that Vijaya travelled from Sopārā to Ceylon. Mah. VI, 46, 47.

frequented route.

Land routes across the Deccan plateau would naturally tend to follow the river valleys as far as possible. The land route to Kalinga for instance might have been along the Son valley as far as Sahasram, then over the plateau, descending later to Tosali then along the coast to the Krishnā delta. Further along the Krishnā valley would lead to the Raichur area. The Tungabhadra valley leading off the Krishnā, would give access to northern Mysore.

Another route from Pāṭaliputra following a more inland course would branch off at Rupnath and would meet a northern tributary of the Godāvarī in the Wainganga valley. At the mouth of the Godāvarī it would go south to the Krishnā river and then follow the Krishnā valley. Another route may have followed the west coast, from Broach to Sopārā and then possibly further south.

Our reasons for suggesting that the routes followed the river valleys are largely geographical. The height of the Deccan plateau is on an average 1200 to 3000 feet, which is certainly not too great a height over which to travel. But the problem in crossing this plateau is that it rises sharply from low-lying areas, which would necessitate steep ascents and descents in roads. But where there are rivers the change from plain to plateau is broken by large valleys which render the rise considerably more gradual, making the area far more accessible by road. Furthermore river transport,

which must have been used as it is to this day, must have made it more economical to travel along river valleys. The plateau being a dry area and thickly wooded in those days, as not much of it had been cleared, may not have been particularly safe for a single traveller. Travelling along river valleys, probably more thickly inhabited than the plateau, would have been a safer proposition.

Routes leading from the empire to countries outside the border were concentrated largely on the western and north western frontier. We have mentioned the possibility of an eastern sea-route from Tamuk to the north Burma coast.<sup>(1)</sup> Contacts further east during this period are not recorded.

Contacts with the Hellenic world were frequent. Tarn has discussed the routes from India westwards in some detail. He classifies them into three main groups.<sup>(2)</sup> The first was the northern route. This ran from India, presumably from Taxila to Kabul, thence to Bactria, the region of the Oxus, the area of the Caspian sea, Phasis and from there to the Black Sea. This route was of comparatively minor importance.

The second group consisted of three routes which were used considerably in the third century B.C. One was from India to Ecbatana, via Kandahar and Herat, and was the most important. The second, less important, branched off at Kandahar and followed the direction of Persepolis and Susa. The third was more southerly and ran from India to Seleucia,

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(1) See p. 246  
 (2) HC, p. 211 ff.

via the Persian Gulf and the Tigris river. This last route was no doubt started after Alexander's army had marched in that direction on its return from the Indian campaign. The Taxila-Kabul-Bactria route was the main highway from India. From Seleucia roads branched off in various directions, to Ephesus via the Euphrates, Antioch and Phrygia; to Damascus and Tyre via Edessa and to Antioch via Edessa.

The third route discussed by Tarn, was the sea-route from the west coast of India, to ports along the south-eastern coast of Arabia, particularly to a point that later developed into the modern port of Aden. During the Mauryan period the ports on the Arabian coasts must already have become the marts where Indian traders exchanged their goods for those of the east Mediterranean lands, the latter goods having been sent down the Red Sea, though no doubt the trade was less than in later centuries.

In determining the geographical extent of Aśoka's empire, the following factors may be taken into consideration. The distribution of his Rock and Pillar Edicts are unchallenged evidence of his authority. Certain places are connected with his name or have a monument dating to his period which is traditionally thought to have been built by him. Peoples and areas under his control are mentioned in his inscriptions.

In the north-west his inscriptions extend as far as Mānsehra, Shahbāzgarhi and Lamghan. He mentions the Gandhāras, the Kambojas and the Yonas as his borderers. The

Mauryan empire had the domains of Antiochus II of Syria as its neighbour. The territory acquired by Candragupta from Seleucus was still in Mauryan hands.<sup>(1)</sup> The reference to the three peoples above as his borderers is rather ambiguous, since it is not certain whether this term meant that they were within the empire or just outside it along the frontier. Judging from the location of the inscriptions it would seem that the peoples mentioned were within the empire.

The southern borderers however do not seem to be included within the empire. These were the Colas, Pāṇḍyas, Sātiyaputras and the Keralaputras. No Aśokan inscriptions have yet been found in the areas controlled by these kingdoms. As we have pointed out earlier in this chapter, the relationship between these peoples and the empire appears to have been a close one. The exact frontier in the south is not known. Inscriptions have been found as far as the Raichur area but no further south. It would seem that the frontier ran from the west coast to the east, just south of the Chitaldroog district. The valley of the Penner river may have been used as a natural frontier on the eastern side of the southern boundary.

In the east the empire extended as far as the Ganges delta, possibly not including modern East Bengal. Tamruk was within the empire, and Hsüan Tsang claims that he saw an Aśokan stūpa at the port. He also mentions the existence of Aśokan stūpas in Pundravardhana and in Karnaśuvarṇa.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) See Ch. I, pp. 27, 28.

(2) Watters, II, p. 184 ff; and p. 190.

## CHAPTER V

Social and Economic Conditions

Before we discuss the administration of the empire, it would be as well to consider the social and economic conditions of the society of that period. The particular type of administration, started and developed by the Mauryas, that of a centralised bureaucracy, was possible because of these conditions which helped to fashion this administrative system. The influence of social and economic forces upon each other is equally important. We do not believe that any one force is entirely responsible for the development of a society, be it a religious force, an economic system or a philosophical movement. Each of these forces is inter-related and plays a significant part in the general development. The study of the history of a period must of necessity take into consideration the role of various forces.

In this chapter we shall analyse the social forces and the economic factors which fashioned Mauryan society. Since the two are closely related an examination of the one may merge into an examination of the other. These factors are of particular significance during the Mauryan period since the organisation of the empire meant the acceptance of a new

type of economy, which in turn effected the social order. In the pre-Mauryan period, the early pastoral economy had changed to a village economy based on agriculture. This was a natural step after the forests had been cleared and agrarian village communities became the general pattern in the Ganges valley. Comparative permanence of settlement brought with it the organisation of other facilities such as trade, to which again the Ganges was well-suited. Gradually as the new economic system was adopted in other areas, it became possible to regard them as one unit and this, once it was brought under a single political control, considerably facilitated the administrative system. Administrative ideas could be developed more easily since the same general pattern existed in most areas.

This is not to suggest that no other type of economy was possible once the agrarian economy became permanent. Other types of economy continued as before or were newly developed in areas where they were more valuable. The expansion of the agrarian economy accelerated the realisation that a single predominant economy facilitated the evaluation of taxes. For instance coastal areas dependent on maritime trade would continue the trade or increase it as the case may be, but nevertheless would be regarded as areas specifically devoted to one main economic pursuit and would be taxed accordingly. There was much to be gained by those governing from a settled economy which would permit of a near-permanent

este Kautalya devotes an important portion of the Arthashastra  
 (1)  
 Kautalya devotes an important portion of the Arthashastra of  
 (1)  
 to the application of taxation. The predictability of

revenue in the form of taxes created a feeling of economic and social security. It also simplified the working of the administrative system, in so far as in its embryonic stages administration was largely a matter of collecting taxes. Social security led to the idealistic desire to organise society in such a way that it would function consistently and with advantage to its constituents.

Social organisation had already begun in the Vedic period. Based on the organisation of social labour, the system of dividing society into four castes had emerged. Until the Mauryan period the system had tended to be fairly fluid. Rhys Davids quotes examples of considerable social mobility. (2)  
 The position of the first two castes was interchangeable. The prince often appears to be socially superior to the brahman who is regarded very much as a mere priest and is sometimes ridiculed. Buddhist literature often gives the list of the four castes as Khattiyas, Brahmanas, Vessas and Suddas, suggesting that in the time of the Buddha the brahmans had a position socially inferior to the kṣatriyas. (3)

By the time of the Mauryas it would appear that the brahmans had gained the upper hand. The later rigidity of

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(1) Book II.  
 (2) BI, p. 56.  
 (3) Ang. Nik. III, p. 362 ff. Jāt. III 19; IV, 205.

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the caste system was not prevalent in the Mauryan times, since some degree of the earlier fluidity remained. But the process of crystallisation had begun. Certain priorities and privileges for the brahmins were accepted as a matter of course, as for example those mentioned in the Arthaśāstra, such as free passes for ferries, etc. <sup>(1)</sup> The earlier indication in the Brāhmanas of the leading role of the purohita in matters relating to the state is emphasised in the Arthaśāstra. <sup>(2)</sup> Nearchos' statement that brahmins took part in politics as councillors is thus borne out by Indian sources. <sup>(3)</sup> Certainly the theoretical aspect of the caste system had been fully accepted, as we shall find when we discuss Megasthenes' account of Indian society. Buddhism could have been a check on increasing brahmin power, but it was never effectively used as an anti-brahminical weapon. Once triumphant, brahminical forces held fast to their position by all and every means, as is demonstrated by Manu, and the rigidity of the caste system became a permanent feature. <sup>(4)</sup>

In considering social organisation on the evidence of Indian texts, it is of considerable interest to examine the reports made by contemporary visitors and foreign sources on the same subject. Classical sources for instance refer to the caste system in India. These references may be traced

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- (1) II, 28.  
(2) I, 10.  
(3) Quoted by Strabo. Geography, XV, 66.  
(4) I, 88-98.

largely to the account of Megasthenes.

Megasthenes states that Indian society was divided into seven classes. <sup>(1)</sup> These he lists as philosophers, farmers, soldiers, herdsmen, artisans, magistrates and councillors.

Arrian states that there are about seven but does not speak with certainty. <sup>(2)</sup> Megasthenes' observation is partly based on

fact and partly confused. The idea of society being divided into groups was no doubt a prevalent one. Certainly the system must have been explained to him by local brahmins. But the number and the categories must have become confused in his mind. His divisions appear to have been rather economic divisions than social, as in the caste system proper. This too is not entirely his fault since the system of the four varnas originated in an economic division and it is possible that vestiges of its economic origin still remained in Mauryan times. It is obvious, as Timmer suggests, that the divisions of Megasthenes could not follow rules of endogamy and restrict themselves to their own trade. <sup>(3)</sup> He appears to have confused his own observations with brahmanical theory.

The numerical confusion may be due to the fact that in writing his account possibly some years after his visit to India he may have accidentally arrived at the number seven, forgetting the facts as given to him. We must also keep in mind that the fragments remaining to us are not the original

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(1) Diod. II, 40-41.  
(2) Indica XI.  
(3) MIM, p. 66.

accounts but are quotations from the original. Some of the inconsistencies may be explained by erroneous quoting on the part of later authors. Megasthenes may also have had in mind the description of Egyptian society as given by Herodotus, where it is divided into seven classes. <sup>(1)</sup>

Amongst the general remarks Megasthenes makes about the castes, he states that, "No one is allowed to marry outside of his own caste or to exercise any calling or art except his own." <sup>(2)</sup> But he adds elsewhere, "and exception is made in favour of the philosopher who for his virtue is allowed this privilege." <sup>(3)</sup> This passage is reminiscent of a later text, the Dharmaśāstra of Manu, where brahmins are permitted marriage with a lower caste. <sup>(4)</sup>

The first caste mentioned by Megasthenes is that of the philosophers. This group is generally believed to represent the brahmins. Before we examine Megasthenes' remarks on them we should consider their position as described in traditional literature. Fick in examining the question has come to the conclusion that the brahmins were divided into two groups. <sup>(5)</sup> The udicca brahmins were the orthodox brahmins who were the teachers and the priests. The satakalakkhana brahmins were the worldly brahmins full of superstition and ignorance. They practised fortune-telling and magic.

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- (1) Herod. II, 164.  
 (2) Diod. II, 40.  
 (3) Strabo XV, 1, 48.  
 (4) III, 13.  
 (5) SOIB, p. 212.

Sacrifice was the stock remedy for all ills, and money was made by the brahman each time he conducted a sacrifice. Thus the ban on the killing of animals by Buddhists may have been resented by these brahmans, as also Aśoka's disapproval of <sup>(1)</sup> maṅgalas and other ceremonies which he considered useless.

The second group of brahmans was sometimes driven to non-brahmanic occupations through economic necessity. For example a brahman living on the edge of a forest might take to <sup>(2)</sup> carpentry if there was a surplus of priests in the area. Thus it would seem that some degree of mobility within the caste was allowed provided it was the direct result of economic pressure.

However, on the whole the laws of endogamy were strictly observed, and marriage within the brahman caste <sup>(3)</sup> preserved the brahmanical birth. It prevented the brahmans from merging with with rest of the population.

Fick makes particular mention of the purohitas who, according to him, were not content with the occasional care of political affairs but were greedy for more permanent <sup>(4)</sup> power. This policy naturally had a disastrous effect over a weak or superstitious king who would find himself a pawn in the hands of the purohita. As Fick points out, the Jātakas are certainly prejudiced against the brahmans, but

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- (1) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. 15. IX, R.E. Gir.  
 (2) Jāt. IV, 207, ff.  
 (3) Fick, SOIB, p. 232.  
 (4) Ibid, pp. 174, 187.

nevertheless they do present the other side of the story, a view of the brahman as he appeared to members of the lower orders.

Megasthenes' description of the brahman is certain-  
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 more sympathetic than the one we find in the Jātakas. H  
 more sympathetic than the one we find in the Jatakas. HIS  
 accounts of the philosophy of the brahmans suggest that he was on the whole a reliable observer. He mentions briefly that the brahmans offer sacrifices and perform ceremonies for the dead and foretell the future. He adds that they are small in numbers but very powerful.

In another longer fragment quoted by Strabo, he classifies them into two groups, the Brachmanes and the  
 (2)  
 Sarmanes. The Brachmanes undergo a severe training in a retreat, and study there for thirty-seven years. This number is strikingly close to that given by Manu, who states that the maximum length of time that a man can spend as a  
 (3)  
brahmacārya is thirty-six years. The Barachmanes then return to a family life. They eat meat but not the flesh of animals employed in labour. Therefore they refrain from eating the meat of cows, oxen, horses and elephants. They have many wives and consequently many children. The children do most of the work since there are no slaves in Indian society. The women are kept in ignorance of philosophy.

Megasthenes appears to have taken an interest in the

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- (1) Diod. II, 40.  
 (2) Strabo, XV, 1. 59.  
 (3) III, 1.

philosophy of the Brachmanes since he adds that they believed that life was a dream-like illusion. This appears to be a reference to the doctrine of Māyā. Their attitude to death was that dying was the real birth. He states that their ideas about physical phenomena were crude, but that they did hold some beliefs similar to the Greeks. For example some of their ideas about the earth and the universe were the same.

The Sarmanes he divides further into various smaller groups. <sup>(1)</sup> The ὀβριόται are the most respected of these and they live as ascetics. The second group are the physicians and finally the diviners and sorcerers. Here again there appears to have been some confusion. This description suggests brahman ascetics and the satakalakkhana brahmins mentioned by Fick. It hardly agrees with the normal description of Buddhist and Jain śramanas. Megasthenes must surely have known about Buddhists if he took an interest in religious ideas. It is possible that in later years he confused the two groups of brahmins, the udicca and the satakalakkhana and referred to the latter as the Sarmanes. Timmer believes that Megasthenes confused the Sarmanes with the vānaprastha. <sup>(2)</sup> stage of the four aśramas of orthodox Hinduism. In Indian religious works they would not be regarded as true ascetics. The reference to their leaving their retreats after thirty-seven years and becoming householders would suggest that they were either brahmacāryas or vānaprasthas.

(1) Strabo, XV. 1, 59.

(2) MIM p. 105.

In another fragment there is an even more confused (1) account of a group of philosophers again called brachmanes. The confusion here is not to be wondered at, since the passage is quoted in an early Christian text, the Pseudo-Origen Philosophia which has been dated to the third or fourth century A.D. This group of brahmans is described as subsisting on gathered and fallen fruit. The region they live in is that of the Tungabhadra river. They wander naked since they believe that the body is merely a covering for the soul. They are celibate. There follows an even more confused passage dealing with the mysticism of the words used by this sect. References to God being very frequent amongst them it is possible that this may have been a colony of brahman ascetics. We feel however that this description tallies far more closely with that of Jainas living in south India. The ban on eating food cooked by fire and living instead on fruit is quite in keeping with Jaina practices. (2) The location of the group at Tungabhadra again suggests the Jainas. We know that Candragupta Maurya went to south India with Bhadrabāhu and he may well have spent his last days in this region. Unfortunately Megasthenes does not state clearly whether he actually went as far as the Tungabhadra to see these ascetics or whether this was a part of the Mauryan empire and the life of these ascetics was reported to him. The

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(1) Pseudo-Origen Philisophia, 24.

(2) Filliozat, L'Inde Classique. 2447-2454.

idea behind the nakedness agrees with that of the digambara sect of the Jainas.

Megasthenes' comments on the privileges of the philosophers are interesting. Amongst them he mentions the exemption from taxation. Diodorus states that they were free from service, <sup>(1)</sup> and Arrian that they were free of all duties to the state except that of state sacrifices. <sup>(2)</sup> This freedom is granted to them if their predictions to the state synod are correct. It is not clear whether those that did not accurately forecast the future were made to pay a tax. It is possible that the reference to duties and services to the state may have been forced labour or viṣṭi which was current in Mauryan times and which we shall discuss in detail later. Megasthenes also states that philosophers who make wrong predictions have to keep silent for the rest of their lives. It is not quite clear whether this meant complete silence or only a prohibition on foretelling the future again.

The fragment quoted by Diodorus states that the philosophers are hereditary. Here he disagrees with Arrian who says that anyone can be a philosopher, the only deterrent being that it is a hard life. Pliny makes no mention of the castes. He merely states that the philosophers burn themselves to death. <sup>(3)</sup> This remark is perhaps based on the

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(1) Diod. II, 40.

(2) Indica, XI.

(3) Nat. Hist. VI, 21. 8-23. II.

story of the Indian philosopher Kalanos who gave up his life in this way during Alexander's return from India. <sup>(1)</sup>

Timmer is of the opinion that it appears from these fragments that Megasthenes based his caste divisions on observation and not on information. <sup>(2)</sup> We feel however that he must have had some knowledge of the Indian caste-system, however confused, to attempt to divide the society into classes thus. His observations, though confused in detail, do present certain acceptable general points. It is clear that the brahmans were a privileged section of society. He states that they were small in numbers but highly respected. They were not expected to contribute their share in forced labour, and it would seem were generally exempted from taxation. This in itself was a valuable right, marking them out immediately as a special body. We have already noticed that the Arthaśāstra gives them special privileges too. It is clear from the frequent references to the brahmans and śramanas together in Aśoka's edicts and his constant exhortation to his subjects to respect them, that they were granted special treatment and were almost a pampered section of society, their religious merit being taken into account in place of productive labour..

With the growth of the agrarian economy the cultivator began to assume an increasingly important economic

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(1) Strabo. XV, 1, 68.

(2) MIM pp. 66-69.

role. His social position was inferior but his economic significance could not be ignored. According to Megasthenes the second class among the seven Indian castes was that of the farmers. <sup>(1)</sup> This class was numerically large and was devoted to the land. It was generally left unmolested by armies fighting in the neighbourhood. <sup>(2)</sup> He states further that all the land belonged to the king and was cultivated by the farmers for the king. The cultivators paid  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the produce in tax. In addition to the tax the cultivators paid a land-tribute to the king. Strabo's quotation from Megasthenes agrees with that of Diodorus except in the matter of taxation. Strabo states that the cultivators received  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the produce as payment from the king. <sup>(3)</sup> Arrian in his account does not specify the amount when he refers to the tax. <sup>(4)</sup> He merely states that the husbandmen cultivate the soil and pay tribute to the kings and the independent cities.

It would seem that the cultivators then as now formed the majority of the population. They were kept disarmed, according to all accounts, and the sole task was the cultivation

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(1) Diod. II, 40.

(2) cf. Breloer in Grundeig. p. 119. A Buddhist work, the Abhidharmakośavyākhyā (see, IHQ, II, no. 3, 1926, p. 656) states, "Philosophers should follow logic in debate, even as kings allow peasants to go on working even when enemy country is over-run".

(3) XV, I, 40.

(4) Indica, XI.

of the land. Although some villages were exempted from taxation in lieu of providing soldiers, as the Arthaśāstra states, <sup>(1)</sup> the Classical accounts would suggest that the peasants were left untouched during a war. This no doubt was the theoretical ideal, but it is hardly likely that when hard pressed in battle the king did not employ whatever man power was available in the form of local peasants, or attack the villages in enemy territory. The figures quoted by Aśoka of the dead and wounded in the Kalinga War, no matter how exaggerated, could hardly refer only to army casualties. <sup>(2)</sup> Of the one hundred and fifty thousand who were deported from Kalinga, a fair percentage must have been peasants who were probably made to clear forested regions and to cultivate virgin lands. The Arthaśāstra does not give any details as to how the commissariat department of the army was to be organised. It would seem that supplies were collected locally, i.e. the army lived on the land. Peasants must certainly have been forced to surrender whatever food and supplies they had, in order to feed the army.

In discussing the connection between the castes listed by Megasthenes, and the traditional Indian division of the castes, Kosambi suggests that the cultivators were the Sūdras. <sup>(3)</sup> He is of the opinion that new villages were built in the waste land by deported sūdras from over-populated cities and from

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(1) II, 35.  
 (2) XIII, R.E. Kāl. CII, I, p. 44.  
 (3) ISIH, pp. 185, 218.

conquered areas. They were kept unarmed and under state control and the state took their surplus wealth. The śūdra helot had come into his own under state control to make large scale slavery unnecessary for food production.

The Arthaśāstra suggests the formation of villages either by inducing foreigners to immigrate (paradeśāpavāhanena) or by causing the excessive population of the thickly populated centres of his own kingdom to leave for the newly settled areas (svadeśābhiśyandavamanenavā)<sup>(1)</sup>. The foreigners were most probably people from conquered areas; as Kosambi suggests and the Arthaśāstra advises, śūdras may well have been deported from over-populated areas. Naturally the śūdra peasants would not be the only settlers to move to virgin lands. Members of other professions necessary for the establishment of a village would also be included, as for example carpenters and merchants. The distinction rested no doubt on the śūdras being ordered to move and the others going voluntarily for improved economic prospects. As Rhys Davids has noticed, village economy under the Mauryas emphasised the collective efforts of each village.<sup>(2)</sup> The village tended to develop into a self-sufficient unit in so far as the everyday needs of the villagers were concerned. The overall authority was with the state and the economic integration of the village into a larger economic unit, the district, was supervised by the administrative officials of the state.

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(1) II, 1.  
 (2) BI, p. 49.

Megasthenes' statement that the land was owned by the king is open to debate since some historians are of the opinion that this was an incorrect statement. Foremost among the latter, Jayaswal has consistently maintained that the various texts quoted on this matter should be interpreted as referring to the king as the protector of the land, and not as the owner. (1) Ghoshal was at first in opposition to this view, but in his later works he has accepted the idea of the king not being the owner of the land. (2)

The possibilities of land ownership in Mauryan society are five, the king, the state, large-scale land owners, communal ownership and the cultivators. Nowhere in the Classical sources, the Arthaśāstra or the Jātakas is there even a hint of land being owned by the cultivators. Since most of them were śūdras it was out of the question for them to own land. Communal ownership was a much later conception and does not appear to exist in this period. (3) Land-owners are referred to in Jātaka literature but in neither of the other two sources. (4)

Fick draws attention to the frequent reference to land owners in the Jātakas. (5) They are said to have employed hired labourers on the land, the living conditions of whom were poor but not nearly as bad as those of the dāsa. The precise function of the gahapati in this period remains uncertain.

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- (1) HP, II, pp. 173-88.  
 (2) ASAI, p. 85 ff.  
 (3) Jaiminī nyayāmalavistāra, p. 358.  
 (4) Jāt. IV, p. 276 ff.  
 (5) SOLB, pp. 253, 305.

Fick suggests two possibilities, that the term referred either to the land owning gentry, or to the rich middle class urban families. If the land was owned by the king it is hardly possible that an extensive land-owning gentry would exist as well, without the organisation of the political system indicating the presence of such land-owners, as was the case in European feudalism and in Mughal India. It is possible that they were the pioneers responsible for the development of a village in a new area, financiers both to the cultivators and the tradesmen. Thus while they were neither land owners nor tax collectors they did have a semi-official status. They may well have been wealthy merchants who had acquired some land of their own, apart from the state lands and not sufficiently large as to form an independent source of income.

The term gāmabhojaka also occurs widely in Pāli literature in connection with land ownership. Bose interprets it as a landlord, either in the sense of a man who has acquired territory and has had it confirmed by the king, or a man who has been given a village as reward for services. Here again we feel that there is no direct implication of the ownership of land in the term. Certainly the gāmabhojaka was entitled to the revenue of the land or village over which he had authority, but it does not necessarily follow that he was the owner.

The question may be clarified further by examining a few of the terms and ideas prevalent in the Indian texts. Originally no doubt the king was not the owner of the land.

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(1) SRENI, p. 38.

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We may refer here to the story of king Viśvakarman Bhauvana who was rebuked by the earth when he treated the land as his private property. <sup>(1)</sup> But gradually the position changed. Later lawbooks refer distinctly to the ownership of the land by the king. Kātyāyana for instance states that the king is ~~the~~ the lord of the earth but not of any other wealth. He may take <sup>(2)</sup> 1/6 of its fruit. Ghoshal points out that there is a distinction in brahmanical law between the ownership of land and the enjoyment of land. <sup>(3)</sup> For the former the word svam and its derivatives are used, (svatra, svāmya, svāmitra,) For the latter the word bhoga is used. Thus there would be a difference between the land personally owned by the king, which he could dispose of as he wished, and the state lands, the tax of which he received as the head of the state, which lands he did not therefore own, but merely enjoyed the produce thereof. Private donations of land to religious sects or to anyone to whom the king wished to make a private gift, would be made from the lands he owned in his personal capacity and not from the state lands.

Thus we have a reference in the Arthaśāstra to the crown lands. <sup>(4)</sup> These are the lands owned personally by the king, the income from which formed part of what would be termed in modern times the privy purse. The rest of the land

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(1) Sat. Brāh. XIII, 7, 1, 15.

(2) Kane. Kātyāyanasmṛtisāroddhara. 16-17.

(3) ASAI, p. 84.

(4) II, 24.

theoretically would belong to the state. Here however usage complicates theory. Since the king is in fact the state it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the king in his personal capacity and the king as the head of the state. Certainly the same chapter of the Arthaśāstra dealing with the work of the superintendent of agriculture, <sup>(1)</sup> treats of the administration of the land as if it was owned by the king, as it in fact was, in his capacity as the head of the state. Since the conception of the state in Indian political thought was not developed at this stage, this distinction in the power and position of the king was not made. The subtle and gradual change from the king's not owning the land to the king as the sole land-owner is accepted by later theorists. <sup>(2)</sup>

A section of a chapter in the Arthaśāstra deals with the sale of land and buildings. <sup>(3)</sup> It appears that this land might be bought by those who were willing to bid for it. Timmer explains this passage by the fact that land was not completely and absolutely the property of the individual. The Indian idea of property is based on the just and fair use of a thing, as opposed to the western idea which implies more absolute ownership. <sup>(4)</sup> State ownership of land however did not exclude individuals from owning small areas of cultivable land, which they themselves could cultivate. The passage referred to in the Arthaśāstra seems to treat this land as subsidiary to

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(1) <sup>1</sup> II, 24.

(2) Manu. VIII, 39.

(3) III, 9.

(4) MIM, p. 123.

the buildings upon it.

Nilakantha Sastri is of the opinion that the Classical references to the king owning the land are erroneous. (1) He writes that the sources, though based on the fragments of Megasthenes, nevertheless differ in content, and that Arrian is silent on the question of ownership, merely stating that the same payment was made in the monarchies as in the republics. We feel however that this stresses the point that in the monarchical lands, the king, being the representative of the state, was regarded as the owner of the land.

The distinction made by Diodorus between land tribute and the tax paid to the treasury, may be explained as (2) implying a rent for the land distinct from tax on its produce. This appears to indicate a heavy total taxation. Since Diodorus alone refers to it we may suggest that there may have been some confusion regarding the interpretation of the source from which he obtained this evidence. Alternatively it is possible that in some areas, the tax of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the produce was applied only in connection with certain crops, the land-tribute being the basic revenue. Ghoshal has pointed out that later two types of land revenue developed. One was known as bhāga, based on the early Vedic tribute or bali, and the other was hiranya, that is, the cash tax on certain special classes of crops. (3) Thus we feel that it may have been possible under

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- (1) ANM, p. 114.  
(2) Diod, II, 40.  
(3) ASAI, p. 6.

very special conditions to apply both types of revenue in an area.

Although Arrian does not mention the amount that was paid in tax, both Diodorus and Strabo, basing themselves on Megasthenes, give the figure as  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the produce of the soil.<sup>(1)</sup> Strabo states that the cultivators receive  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the produce as their payment, the rest of the produce presumably going to the king. This discrepancy may have been due to an error on the part of Strabo or the source from which he took his information and instead of stating that the cultivators paid a quarter of the produce to the king, he states that they received the same amount. The other possibility is that it refers to those cultivators who are working as labourers on the crown lands. With three quarters of the produce going to the king these lands must have been an important source of income for him. Such revenue is referred to in the Artaśāstra.<sup>(2)</sup>

The revenue being assessed at a quarter of the produce was no doubt a general estimate or applicable only in very fertile areas such as the region around Pāṭaliputra with which Megasthenes was most familiar. The precise amount must have varied according to local conditions. We have an example of this variation in tax in the Arthaśāstra, where the type of irrigation provided changes the amount of tax on the water, this ranging from a fifth to a third.<sup>(3)</sup> The same must

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(1) Indika XI; Diod, II, 40; Strabo, XV, I, 40.  
(2) I, 6.  
(3) II, 24.

undoubtedly have been the case with land tax, but with a smaller degree of variation. A quarter of the produce is more than the normal amount suggested by most Indian texts, which is a sixth. Variations occur of an eighth, a tenth or even a twelfth. The Arthaśāstra advises that in time of need the tax may be raised to a third or a quarter, or a system of double cropping may be adopted, but only in areas of fertile land, irrigated by rain.

Raychaudhuri has suggested that a quarter was a very high tax and was consequently a heavy burden on the people. He cites this as a reason for the revolt under the later Mauryas, a matter which we shall discuss in a further chapter. Although a quarter was a high tax, later periods saw an even higher regular tax of a third, as for example during the reign of Akbar.

The Rummindei inscription is the only Aśokan inscription which states an amount demanded in taxation. We are told that because the village of Lumbinī was the birth-place of the Buddha, the king had made it free of taxes, and it was paying only an eighth share of the produce. The word used for the first phrase is udbalike, which is generally equated with the ucchulka of the Arthaśāstra. It carries the meaning of freeing from bali. This probably refers to the land tribute

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(1) Ghoshal. CHIRS, p. 58; Manu. VII, 130.  
 (2) V, 2.  
 (3) PHAI, p. 303 ff.  
 (4) See Ch. VII.  
 (5) Moreland. The Agrarian System of Moslem India. p. 91.  
 (6) CII, I, p. 164; see Plate VII. p. 564.  
 (7) Ibid, p. 165, Hultzsch trans.  
 (8) Bloch. LIA, p. 157; Thomas, JRAS, 1909, p. 466 ff.

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which the village had to pay to the state. The atṭhabhāgiye<sup>(1)</sup> or eighth share, no doubt refers to the produce of the soil. It is uncertain whether this was a reduction from the normal amount paid, which may have been a quarter or a sixth, or whether it was a reference to the continuance of the usual share of an eighth. We are of the opinion that had it been the latter there would have been no necessity for the king to have mentioned the tax. Since the village was now exempted from land tribute, it is more likely that the tax would be reduced by only a small amount and not by a half. We are of the opinion that the usual tax in this area was a sixth.

If we accept that a sixth was the normal taxation in this area, it would appear that the assessment was lower in this part of the empire as compared with the quarter in the region of Pāṭaliputra. Possibly this was due to the fact that the land as far north as Rummidei, was not as fertile as that nearer the Ganges in the heart of the plain. Thus it is possible that Megasthenes' statement about the assessment of revenue being a quarter was based on the amount collected in the vicinity of the capital, which he assumed applied to the whole country. A quarter in the region around Pāṭaliputra may not have been excessive, since it was a fertile area, irrigated with the water of the river. Variations in taxation were probably introduced as the settlements spread further away from the fertile region of the Ganges basin.

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(1) Fleet. JRAS, 1908, p. 479

Another interesting fact which emerges from the Rummindei inscription is that the king deals directly with the question of exemption from land tribute. If there had been any intermediary in the form of a land owner, the king would have had some difficulty in granting the exemption, since it would have affected the land owner's economic position.

If the land had belonged to land owners, and not to the king, there would surely have been frequent references to such a group of people in Indian sources, other than Buddhist literature. It is more than likely that they would have formed an important section of the Indian caste system. One of the possible ways of building up a system of landlords appears not to have been in use. Megasthenes mentions that military officers were paid in cash. <sup>(1)</sup> This eliminated the necessity of granting them land revenue by way of payment, as was done by most later Indian governments, both Hindu and Muslim. Land revenue given to religious sects did not imply a transfer of ownership but literally only the gift of the revenue, so that the members of the sect in question did not have to work for a living. <sup>(2)</sup> Where the transfer of land ownership was involved, it was known as a brahmadeva gift. <sup>(3)</sup>

Certain rights of the king listed in the Arthaśāstra imply that his ownership of the land was tacitly accepted even though not theoretically stated. The fact that the king could

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(1) Diod, II, 41.  
 (2) Bose. SRENI, p. 18  
 (3) V, 2.

demand a compulsory second crop in time of need is such a one.

Ghoshal is of the opinion that direct assessment of cultivators by the state officials was the prevailing rule (1) in Mauryan times. This is borne out by the Arthaśāstra, where the revenue collector is responsible for the assessment (2) on each village. However the assessment is based not on the village as a whole, but considers the details regarding each cultivator and member of the village. The first step in the process of assessment is the sub-division of the lands of the village into high, middle and low quality categories. The village is then listed under one of the following heads, villages that are exempted from taxation (parihāraka), those that supply soldiers (āyudhiya), those that pay their taxes in the form of grain, cattle, gold (hiranya) or raw material (kupya) and those that supply free labour (viṣṭi) and dairy produce in lieu of taxes. It is thus amply clear that the administration took into consideration all local features before any assessment was made.

(3) Megasthenes states that there were no famines in India. We are of the opinion that this was an exaggeration. Bose modifies it by explaining that this was true only to the extent that there were no famines arising from administrative reasons, as for example from over-taxation. (4) But there

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(1) ASAI, p. 33.

(2) II, 35.

(3) Diod. II, 36.

(4) SRENI, p. 114.

is other evidence to contradict this statement. Jaina tradition has it that there was a famine in the reign of Candragupta Maurya.<sup>(1)</sup> Evidence of famine may also be gathered from the two Mauryan inscriptions at Sohgaūrā and Mahāsthān, which are concerned specifically with measures to ameliorate famine conditions in areas of the Ganges valley.<sup>(2)</sup> Either Megasthenes was attempting to describe India in such glowing terms that he wished his readers to believe that it was a land of plenty which never suffered from famines, or, as is more likely, he left India just before the famine occurred.

Increased centralisation under the Mauryas, more particularly during the reign of Aśoka, meant the increased control of the state over the economy. The administrative system was improved and developed and was made capable of examining and controlling even the minutiae of the economic structure. The king in turn, controlling and co-ordinating this system, assumed a corresponding increase in power. The cultivator came into direct contact with the administration, which to him signified the state. The king became an even more remote symbol than before, and the immediate world of the cultivator was concerned with officials, a condition which was to remain current for many centuries.

The third caste listed by Megasthenes is described as that of shepherds and herdsmen.<sup>(3)</sup> They are said to be nomads,

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(1) Parisistaparvan, p. lxxi, VIII, p. 415 ff.  
 (2) Sircar: SI, pp. 82; see Ch. I, p. 5.  
 (3) Diod. II, 40.

and the only group of people allowed to hunt animals. They were probably called in when an area had been cleared, for ridding it of whatever wild animals remained. There is no confirmation of their existing as a major class in Indian sources. But the mention of the Abhīra or Ahīr caste in later texts would suggest that they existed in smaller groups, probably as a sub-caste. Megasthenes adds that they paid tribute in cattle. It may be suggested that these were the remnants of the pastoral Aryans, who were still nomads living on the waste lands and had not yet settled to an agricultural occupation.

The Arthaśāstra does not pay much attention to herdsmen or shepherds. Its remarks on this subject are largely general, as for instance the statement that, "the king shall make provision for pasture grounds on uncultivable tracts." (1) Bose is of the opinion that there was no particular caste whose work was the care of animals. (2) This is confirmed by a lack of evidence to the contrary. Megasthenes looked on them as a caste because he was thinking in terms of economic divisions. In the hierarchy of the social order the shepherds may have been included amongst the śūdras. Although, as we have suggested above, they may have been of Aryan origin, nevertheless the nature of their occupation would relegate them to the lowest order. If they tended domestic animals then they were probably

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(1) II, 2.

(2) SRENI, p. 61

included with the cultivators. If they were huntsmen leading a nomadic life they would still be regarded as degenerate Aryans by those that were now living in settled communities.

Of the domestic animals reared and maintained by herdsmen, cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep, asses and camels are mentioned. <sup>(1)</sup> Horses and elephants were also maintained, but they came under a different category and had their own <sup>(2)</sup> superintendents. Presumably this difference was made because they were important for military purposes. Draught oxen are also referred to, <sup>(3)</sup> so the wooden plough drawn by an ox must have been known to the cultivator.

Of these domestic animals the cow is certainly the most important. There is no reference to its being a sacred animal, but the economic value of the cow is certainly appreciated. Dairy products and hide were regarded as the chief commodities for which the cow was bred. This is borne out by the statement in the Arthaśāstra that when a man rears a herd of cows he has to pay the owner a certain quantity of clarified butter per year, together with the branded hide of the <sup>(4)</sup> cows that may have died during that year.

Although the cow was not killed for purposes of meat yet it appears that cow's flesh was eaten. A passage in the same chapter of the Arthaśāstra as that quoted above, states that the cowherd may sell either the flesh or the dried flesh

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(1) II, 29.  
 (2) II, 30, 31.  
 (3) II, 29.  
 (4) II, 29.

of the cow when it has died. Another passage states, "Cattle (1) such as a calf, a bull or a milch cow shall not be slaughtered." The motive for this is obvious since they were animals of labour and provided dairy products, and were of considerable value. Presumably if any cattle died a natural death then the flesh could be sold.

With regard to Megasthenes' remark about the herdsmen paying tribute in cattle, it appears from the Arthaśāstra that the tribute was paid not in cattle but in dairy produce. A certain percentage or share of the produce is given either to the owner of the herd, or to the Superintendent of Cows. (2) The reference to the owner of the herd points to the fact of private ownership of cattle. Herds were not maintained only by the state but by wealthy individuals as well. The work of the superintendent covers the paying of taxes (i.e. a share of the produce) the condition of the animals, and the work of the herdsmen.

As we have noticed in an earlier chapter, Aśoka made repeated requests in his edicts that animals should be treated with kindness and care. (3) In the 2nd Rock Edict he mentions that arrangements have been made for the medical treatment of animals in his kingdom, and also in neighbouring areas and countries. (4) Furthermore trees have been planted along the main highways, and wells have been dug so that men and cattle may rest in the shade of the trees and assuage their thirst at the wells.

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(1) II, 26.  
 (2) II, 29.  
 (3) See Ch. III, p. 208 .  
 (4) II, R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 2.

In a further edict he calls upon his subjects to abstain from killing animals.<sup>(1)</sup> He himself had reduced the number of animals killed daily in the royal kitchen to two peacocks and a deer and even the killing of these would not continue for long.<sup>(2)</sup> In the 8th Rock Edict he states that he has discontinued the practice of royal hunts.<sup>(3)</sup>

This policy was no doubt prompted both by a genuine regard for animals and by the fear that indiscriminate killing would harm the country's livestock. The sacrificing of animals was a particularly harmful custom, since, to propitiate the god fully, the best animal of the herd was selected as the victim. Had non-violence been Aśoka's only purpose in instituting this ban on the killing of animals, then surely the royal kitchen by way of an example would have been the first to come under the ban.

The 5th Pillar Edict contains a detailed list of animals that are not to be killed under any circumstances, and a further list of animals and creatures which are declared inviolable on certain days.<sup>(4)</sup> The superficially arbitrary nature of the first list has long been a puzzle. Why geese, queen-ants and iguanas should be declared inviolable seems hard to explain. The king concludes the list by stating that all quadrupeds which are neither useful nor edible should not be killed. This is a justifiable ban on unnecessarily killing animals. We are of the opinion that there may be a connection

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(1) IV, R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 6.  
 (2) I R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 1.  
 (3) VIII, R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 14.  
 (4) V P.E. CII, I, p. 125

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between this list and the names of the animals which occur in Book XIV of the Arthaśāstra. This section is devoted to the making of spells and poisons incorporating various parts of the bodies of a wide range of creatures. The lizard family occurs with great frequency, for instance, and if we accept Hultzsch's translation of okapinḍe as "iguana"<sup>(1)</sup>, also a member of the lizard family, we may postulate that some of these animals were declared inviolable because they were used in the making of poison and magic potions. We have noted previously Aśoka's disapproval of sacrifices and what he calls useless ceremonies and rituals.<sup>(2)</sup> He may well have regarded the use of certain animals in magical rites as ill-befitting his subjects. This may have been a subtle attempt on his part at undermining the influence of sorcerers and magicians on the more gullible section of the population.

In the chapter dealing with the Superintendent of the slaughter-house, the Arthaśāstra contains a list of animals and birds that are to be protected from molestation.<sup>(3)</sup> Animals having the form of a man are included. This probably refers to monkeys. Fish of all kinds are mentioned in the list, and the following birds which are included in Aśoka's list as well: swans, geese, parrots and mainas. Animals coming under the general term of other auspicious animals are also included in the Edict. Unfortunately there is no

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(1) Hultzsch, CII, I, p. 127, V.P.E.  
(2) See Ch. III, p. 175.  
(3) II, 26

explanation in the Asthaśāstra as to why these animals should be protected. The ban on killing the particular fish listed can be explained more easily. The zoologist Hora, has (1) described all five varieties as fish common to Gangetic rivers. Today they are regarded as inedible fish. They may have been so even in the time of Aśoka, and thus he would include them in the list.

The edict continues with the statement that she-goats, ewes and sows which are with young or in milk, and young ones under six months are also inviolable. (2) This statement hardly needs any explanation. The reason for the ban is self-evident. Aśoka obviously considered it a heartless thing to kill animals in such conditions. Furthermore they were all domesticated animals, bred for meat and subsidiary products.

Fish generally are prohibited from being killed. But on certain days the sale of fish is also prohibited. Hora has explained the latter prohibition on the basis that the indiscriminate catching of fish interferes with their natural breeding habits. He interprets the phrase tīsu cātummāsīsu tisūyam as "the third caturmāsi", and not as Hultzsch has taken it to mean "on the three caturmāsis". Hora takes the third caturmāsi to mean the rainy season which is the chief breeding season of fish and therefore catching and selling fish

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- (1) S.L.Hora. Archives Internationales d'histoire des Sciences No. 15, 1951, p. 405-412. "Zoological knowledge with special reference to fish and fisheries in India before 225 B.C.
- (2) V. P.E., CII, I, p. 127.

during this season was not permitted. In the context it would seem that Hora's interpretation is more correct. The remaining days on which fish were not to be sold were the days of the moon's phases, the full moon and the new moon, and also on festival days. This system was no doubt employed as a means of evenly regulating the sale of fish throughout the year.

Fish in Mauryan times was regarded as an important commodity. (1) There was a fine on persons who caught any fish that did not prey on other creatures. (2) Furthermore there was a toll on the capture of fish and birds. The Superintendent of the slaughter-house could take one tenth of the catch as the toll.

Although in the Arthaśāstra fish was regarded as edible food and the organisation of fisheries was given much thought, fish were also used for various other purposes. The value of fish manure for instance was known. (3) Dried fish was a regular commodity of daily use. (4) It would seem that fish was an important article of diet by the fact that the poisoning of fish in streams running into enemy territory was regarded as one of the many means of attacking the enemy. (5)

One of the more important results of the political unification of India under the Mauryas, and the control of a strong centralised government, was the development of various

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- (1) Artha. II, 1.
  - (2) Artha, II, 26.
  - (3) Ibid. II, 24.
  - (4) Ibid, II, 1.
  - (5) Ibid, XIV, 1.

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crafts. With the improvement of administration, the organisation of trade became easier, and the crafts gradually assumed the shape of small-scale industries.

Megasthenes refers to the artisans and craftsmen as the fourth class in his seven-fold division of Indian society. He writes of them that some pay tribute and render to the state certain prescribed services. Diodorus writes of them that they were the armourers and implement makers<sup>(1)</sup>. They were exempted from paying tax and instead were paid wages by the royal exchequer. Strabo, quoting Megasthenes, also states that they received regular wages<sup>(2)</sup>. Arrian explains that most of the artisans and handicraftsmen paid a tax to the state. The exception were armourers and ship-builders who received wages from the state<sup>(3)</sup>.

Thus it appears that certain members of the artisan class were exempted from tax, since they were employed directly by the state. In the case of armourers it is almost to be expected that they would be state employees. Megasthenes' remark about the artisans rendering the state certain prescribed services concerns those artisans who are not employed by the state, and probably refers to them having to work for the state for a certain number of days per year. This would be in addition to the regular tax they paid to the state.

That these artisans were strictly and systematically

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- (1) Diod, II, 41.
  - (2) Strabo XV, I, 46.
  - (3) Indika XII.

organised is clear from remarks both in Classical writings and in the Arthaśāstra. For instance Megasthenes while speaking of the six boards into which the city commissioners were divided, mentions of the fifth, that they were the officers who stamped the finished products of the artisans, so that it was possible to distinguish between an old product and one newly completed.<sup>(1)</sup> The Arthaśāstra states that the boundary officer has to stamp all goods coming into the area and send them on to the Superintendent of tolls.<sup>(2)</sup>

Such a high degree of organisation meant that the producers of the commodity must have been organised into a working system as well. For this we have frequent reference to the system of guilds in the Arthaśāstra. The guild system began in the early Buddhist period and continued through the Mauryan period. Fick in tracing the history of the guilds suggests that topography aided their development, in as much as fixed streets in a city were generally the place of residence of all tradesmen of a given craft.<sup>(3)</sup> Tradesmen's villages were also known. There is the example of the carpenters village, vaddhakagāma, outside Banares. There was a forest nearby which facilitated the supply of wood for the construction of the city. It was more economical and practical for all the craftsmen to live together near the forest.<sup>(4)</sup>

Thus the three requisites necessary for the rise of

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- (1) Strabo XV, I, 50.  
 (2) II, 21.  
 (3) Fick, SOIB, p. 279  
 (4) Alīnacitta Jātaka II, 18.

such a system were in existence. Firstly, the localisation of occupation was possible, secondly the hereditary character of professions was recognised, and lastly the idea of a guild-leader or jetṭhaka was a widely accepted one. (1) There are references in the Jātakas to the jetṭhaka or president of a particular craft. (2) Hereditary families concentrated on particular branches of trade, and they formed themselves into professional unions. (3) The extension of trade in the Mauryan period must have helped considerably in developing and stabilising the guilds, which at first were an intermediate step between a tribe and a caste. In later years they were dominated by strict rules, which resulted in their gradually becoming castes.

Another early incentive to forming guilds must have been competition. Economically it was better to work in a body than to work individually, as a corporation would provide added social status, and furthermore assistance could be sought from other members when necessary. By gradual stages guilds developed into the most important industrial bodies in their areas.

The guilds soon controlled industry to such an extent that working members of the guilds had to meet greater demands than they could cater for by their own and their families' labour, and they had to employ hired labour.

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- (1) Fick, SOIB, p. 280  
 (2) Jarudapāna. Jāt. II, p. 295.  
 (3) Fick, SOIB, p. 275.

This consisted of two categories, the karmakaras and the bhṛtakas, who were regarded as free labourers working for a regular wage, and the dāsas or slaves. (1) Aśoka refers to them in his edicts as bhatakas and dāsas. (2)

By the Mauryan period the guilds had probably developed into fairly large-scale organisations, recognised throughout the country, or certainly in the northern part of the empire with which our sources deal. It would seem that they were registered by local officials and had a recognised status, for the Arthaśāstra speaks of a prohibition against any guilds other than the local co-operative guilds entering the villages of the kingdom. (3) This suggests that a guild could not move from one area to another without official permission. Furthermore they must by now have developed a social hierarchy within their class of artisans, based on their occupations. A chapter in the Arthaśāstra describing the buildings within the city throws some light on the social status of various professions, according to their location in relation to the better areas of the city. (4) Individual artisans who were previously considered casteless could now join the guild and thus gradually acquire a caste status. (5)

Because of the guild organisation individual members possessed certain rights. For example they were protected against injury and theft. Strabo tells us that if a

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- (1) Artha, III, 13, 14.  
 (2) IX R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 15.  
 (3) II, 1.  
 (4) II, 4.  
 (5) Fick, SOIB, p. 286.

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(1)  
craftsman was hurt, the person responsible was put to death.  
The Arthaśāstra states that a person stealing articles  
belonging to an artisan should pay a fine of 100 panas, a very  
heavy fine in those days. (2) There were equally strict rules  
against deception by artisans. Artisans such as weavers,  
together with washermen, scavengers, medical practitioners and  
musicians, were considered as a single category in this matter. (3)  
A general warning was given against such people who might  
disturb the peace. Caution and care should be taken in  
trusting money to artisans, even when they belong to guilds.  
No doubt the fact of belonging to a guild must have acted as  
a check on fraudulent practices. If a particular artisan  
were caught in such an act it is unlikely that he would be  
permitted to continue as a member of the guild, and for an  
artisan to work independently appears to have been extremely  
difficult.

Wages were determined largely according to the  
quality of the work and the quantity produced. The wages of  
the weaver for instance depended on whether the threads were  
spun fine, coarse, or of middle quality, and in proportion to  
the quantity manufactured. (4) The system of fixed wages for a  
given amount of work was also known. Further special payment  
or reward was given for work done during holidays. Strict  
supervision and examination was enforced on the product

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- (1) Strabo XV, I, 54; and Artha, III, 19.  
(2) IV, 10.  
(3) IV, 1.  
(4) Artha, II, 13.

manufactured. Fines and penalties for inferior work and fraudulent work were very severe. Kauṭalya was of the opinion that wages were to be paid for the work completed. (1) Thus if a commission was half-finished, the artisan was to be paid only for the completed part. The whole payment would be made only when the work was completed either by the artisan or a substitute, otherwise the artisan would have to compensate the man who commissioned it. This system was applicable whether the work was being carried out by individual artisans or by the guild as a whole.

It would seem that artisans guilds were not the only ones in existence. The corporation of soldiers played an important part in the question of recruiting an army. (2) It is clear that these were not regular soldiers who had formed themselves into guilds (śreṇi), but were rather on the lines of the modern reserve force. The army, we are told, consisted of hereditary troops, hired troops, corporations of soldiers, troops belonging to an ally, and wild tribes. The term hereditary troops doubtless refers to the standing army, which was directly employed by the state on a permanent basis. Hired troops were temporarily employed when they were needed. The other types of soldiers, other than the corporation soldiers, were probably also employed only in time of need. Unlike the cultivators the artisans were probably allowed to carry arms,

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(1) III, 14  
 (2) Artha, IX, 2.

and therefore could be called upon to serve in the army during a war. Those that were fit to be thus called up were probably listed and, in addition to their guild, belonged to a military corporation.<sup>(1)</sup> That they were not as efficient as the trained soldiers is clear from a further paragraph in the same chapter. Here it is explained that the soldiers belonging to a corporation and not to the regular army, can be put into action when for instance the enemy's army consists largely of similar troops, suggesting thereby guerilla warfare rather than pitched battles.

The Arthaśāstra in discussing the work of administrative superintendents, relates it to the working of a number of guilds. Evidence of the products manufactured by these guilds is corroborated by classical sources and by archaeological remains. Weapons manufactured for the armoury are listed in great detail by the Arthaśāstra.<sup>(2)</sup> Arrian mentions that Indian infantrymen carried bows, javelins and swords,<sup>(3)</sup> and each cavalryman was armed with two lances.<sup>(3)</sup> Excavations at Hastināpura have revealed the regular use of metal for domestic and military purposes showing a technological advance over the earlier period.<sup>(4)</sup> Barbed and socketed arrow-heads of iron were found amongst the weapons.

Metals are known and catalogued in great detail. Special characteristics with regard to mining and manufacture are noted. This knowledge extends both to utilitarian metals

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(1) A similar system prevailed in England during the Tudor and Stuart periods.

(2) II, 18

(3) Indika XVI

(4) Lal. Anc. Ind. X, p. 16.

such as iron, copper and lead, and to precious metals like gold and silver. There are remains of copper antimony rods and nail-parers from Hastināpura and other copper and bronze objects from the Mauryan strata at Bhir Mound. The copper bolt found on the Aśokan pillar at Rāmpūrvā and the copper cast coins dated to the Mauryan period are further evidence for the use of this metal. The use of iron appears to have increased during the Mauryan period. Iron objects at the earlier level at Bhir Mound (Stratum III, c. fourth century B.C.) consisted of adzes, knives, and scrapers. The later level (Stratum II., third to second century B.C.) shows a wider use of iron, including weapons, tools and agricultural impléments, and household vessels.

Precious metals such as gold and silver and precious stones of many kinds were much in evidence during this period. Kauṭalya devotes two chapters to the work of the Superintendent of Gold and the duties of the state goldsmith. Another chapter is concerned entirely with the examining of gems that are brought to the royal treasury. Strabo describes an Indian festive procession where royal attendents carry an abundance of objects made of gold or of other objects inlaid with precious stones. Evidence of jewellery was found at the Hastināpura excavation. Gold and silver jewellery was

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- (1) Lal. Anc. Ind. X. p. 16.  
 (2) Marshall. T.I, p. 103.  
 (3) Panchanam Neogi. Copper in Ancient India. pp. 18-20.  
 (4) See App.C  
 (5) Marshall, T. I, pp. 104, 107.  
 (6) II, 13, 14.  
 (7) II, 11.  
 (8) Strabo, XV, I, 69.

also found in fair quantity at the site of Bhir Mound.<sup>(1)</sup>

It would seem that the goldsmiths and jewellers guilds were kept busy with royal orders and commissions from the wealthy citizens.

The craft of stone cutting and working in stone needs no literary evidence to confirm the excellence of its quality. The Aśokan pillars with their capitals are sufficient evidence. How this degree of excellence was reached is still something of a puzzle, since no example of stone sculpture which can be dated with certainty to a pre-Mauryan period survives. The extensive use of wood in pre-Mauryan times and the equally extensive use of stone in the post-Mauryan period suggests that the Mauryan period was a period of transition in this matter,<sup>(2)</sup> We are of the opinion that most of the craftsmen responsible for the stone work of the Aśokan period which remains to us today were trained in the North-West. The uniformity of workmanship certainly suggests a common centre. In a place like Taxila the craftsmen would also be in contact with Persian and later with Greek craftsmen who were already familiar with the medium of stone. Remains of Mathura and Chunar sandstone at Bhir Mound suggest a confirmation of this hypothesis.<sup>(3)</sup>

The guild of wood workers must also have been amongst the more active guilds. The Arthaśāstra suggests

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(1) Marshall, T. I, p. 103.  
 (2) Cf. Jāt. I, p. 470.  
 (3) Marshall, T. I, p. 103.

that cities were built largely of wood since the city superintendents had to pay special attention to precautions against fire. (1) Fire is listed as the first of the national calamities. (2) Although there are indications of brickwork as well, and in fact archaeologists recognise a particular sized brick as Mauryan, (3) wood must have been used fairly extensively. It was probably a cheaper building material than stone since the clearing of the forests covering the waste lands must have provided ample supplies of wood. (4) Pāṭaliputra certainly had a wooden palisade surrounding it.

Associated with woodwork are craftsmen working in ivory and bone. Remains of ornamental objects in these two materials were found at Bhir Mound. (5) Art-historians have maintained that much of the low relief work on the gateways at Sanchi was based on ivory prototypes. (6)

Guilds of textile workers must also have been very prominent in the Mauryan period. The Arthaśāstra lists the places where certain textiles are manufactured. (7) Cotton fabrics are made at Madhurā, Aparānta, Kaliṅga, Kāśī, Vaṅga, Vatsa and Mahiṣa. Cotton manufactured at Aparānta may well have been exported from Broach to the west. Other varieties of fabrics are also mentioned. Among them are the dukūla and the kṣauma, the latter appears to have been a type of linen.

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- (1) II, 36.  
 (2) IV, 3.  
 (3) Lal. Anc. Ind. X, p. 15.  
 (4) ARASI, 1912-13 pp. 53 ff.  
 (5) Marshall, T. I, p. 103.  
 (6) HCIP, II, p. 541.  
 (7) II, 11.

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The manufacture of woollen blankets and woollen fabrics was also known. Evidence of expensive textiles woven with gold is available from Classical sources. Strabo writes of important processions where people appear dressed in garments made of cloth embroidered and inter-woven with gold.<sup>(1)</sup>

Surprisingly enough, Kaṭalya does not mention the potter's craft, beyond a brief mention of those that trade in earthenware pots. Considering the frequency with which pots and potsherds are found in Mauryan sites, the potters' guilds must have been flourishing ones. Earthenware pots were certainly common enough not to warrant special mention. But since northern black polished ware was evidently a more exclusive ware one would expect Kaṭalya to have mentioned it. However since he does not claim to mention every craft in the book, but only those that are necessary to his general exposition, it is possible that the pottery makers were thus left out.

Trade regulations are carefully planned and made to fit into a well-organised system. The sale of merchandise is strictly supervised by the state. The superintendent of commerce, when valuing an article, takes into consideration<sup>(2)</sup> the rise and fall of prices and the means of transportation. The means of transportation, whether by land or by water, creates a difference in the price of the article, since transportation by water was cheaper. Merchants importing

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(1) Strabo. XV, I, 69.

(2) Artha, II, 16.

foreign merchandise can claim a remission of trade tax, so that they can derive a profit from the sale of goods from a foreign country. The trade tax was probably the same as the state dues. This consisted of one fifth of the toll dues, and the toll tax was one fifth of the value of the commodity. There was a control on prices as well, since it was the duty of the superintendent of commerce to prevent the merchant from making too great a profit such as would harm the people. The percentage of profit to the merchant was fixed because excess profits went to the treasury.<sup>(1)</sup> The amount consisted of five per cent on local commodities and ten per cent on foreign produce.<sup>(2)</sup> This beneficial control on prices was a boon during normal periods. However in times of need, when the treasury required replenishing, the merchant was no doubt encouraged to ask for a high price, since that would result in a larger amount for the treasury as well. The general control over prices and profits extended even to regulating the earnings of the middlemen.<sup>(3)</sup> It would seem that supply and demand was also regulated, both within a certain area and with regard to a particular commodity.<sup>(3)</sup> Since it was not possible to calculate overall production and consumption, this measure could take effect only in a very superficial way. Since the process of controlling and diverting the production of an object was a very slow one in those times, crises in

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(1) II, 22.  
 (2) II, 21.  
 (3) IV, 2.

over-production of a particular commodity must surely have occurred. The sale or mortgage of old commodities could only take place in the presence of the superintendent.<sup>(1)</sup> This rule was enforced largely to avoid deception, to prevent old ware being passed off for new. There was thus no ban on the mixing of old goods and new goods as Megasthenes states,<sup>(2)</sup> but for purposes of sale they were to be marked as one or the other.

The general tax levied on merchandise appears to have been one tenth.<sup>(3)</sup> As with the tax on land it appears to have varied with each commodity.<sup>(4)</sup> It ranged from one to have varied with each commodity. It ranged from one twenty-fifth or one twentieth, the tax on certain textiles, to one sixth, the tax on flowers, vegetables etc. Since all merchandise was taxed, it was a punishable offence to buy anything in the place where it was manufactured i.e., before it had been taxed and priced. Commodities manufactured in the country were stamped in the place of manufacture, those that came from foreign parts were stamped at the toll-gates. Since the toll was based on the value of the commodity, it was no doubt paid in money and not in kind.

Although the tax on foreign goods might be remitted so as to encourage foreign trade, foreign traders were not particularly welcome. The artisan or the merchant was responsible for the good behaviour of another member of his

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(1) IV, 2.  
 (2) Strabo, XV, 1, 50.  
 (3) I, 13.  
 (4) II, 22.

profession who came and resided in his home.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus a person known to the former would be vouched for, but a stranger would have no one to act as referee for him.

Any fraudulency with regard to weighing and measuring a commodity in order to fix the price was severely punished.<sup>(2)</sup> The degree of punishment for the degree of crime in this matter is stated in detail. Similarly the gaining of more than the specified profit is considered a punishable offence.

As regards the practice of usury, Megasthenes states that Indians neither put out money at usury, nor know how to borrow.<sup>(3)</sup> In view of the economic activity we have described above this seems hardly possible. From Buddhist literature it would appear that the commercial community of the time had a highly developed sense of business administration, judging by the way resources and fortunes were consolidated.<sup>(3a)</sup> It is unlikely that there was no system of private banking.

Kauṭalya deals with organised money-lending in the Arthaśāstra. It would seem that there was no ban on such activity, since money could be lent from the treasury on periodical interest.<sup>(4)</sup> An entire chapter is devoted to the subject and details are given of the amount of interest that can legitimately be charged in certain situations.<sup>(5)</sup> It is possible that the rate of interest was controlled by the state, thus eliminating in theory at

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(1) II, 36.  
(2) IV, 2.  
(3) Aelian, V, L, iv, 1. (3a). Dig. Nik. iii, p.188  
(4) II, 8.  
(5) III, 11.

least excessively high rates of interest. This may have given Megasthenes the impression that usury was not practised.

Classical sources speak of tax evasion being considered punishable with capital punishment<sup>(1)</sup>. The term used is ΚΧΕΠΤΙΥΤὸ ΤΈΛΟΣ . Timmer has argued that this may not mean evading the tax, but stealing it from the collector.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the Arthaśāstra there is no mention of capital punishment for such a crime.<sup>(3)</sup> The punishment is merely the confiscation of goods or the payment of a fine. Since the latter source places considerable emphasis on the crime of stealing from the collector, it would seem that this crime was known and practiced. It is probably more correct to treat the Greek phrase as a reference to this crime.

In consulting the Arthaśāstra for evidence of economic conditions during the Mauryan period, and the administration of trade and commerce, it must be remembered that the picture presented by Kauṭalya is one of the ideal state. We cannot accept that the Mauryan state was run along these lines in every detail. The Arthaśāstra suggested general policies and described various ways in which these policies could be implemented. Certainly, the general policy of the Arthaśāstra and that of the Mauryan state were very similar and the administrative system of the Mauryas was largely inspired by the ideas in the Arthaśāstra. It is however reasonable to expect that there were discrepancies. Economic organisation on such a detailed scale was a new

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(1) Strabo. XV, I, 50.

(2) MIM, p. 217

(3) II, 8.

feature in the politico-economic system of the country. The practical application of these ideas must certainly have resulted in a few lapses. It is hard to believe for instance, that merchants importing goods from a foreign country or a distant area, with all the attendant risks, would be willing to accept so low a profit as the official rate of one tenth which we have already discussed. It is more probable in this case that the officers may have been bribed and the matter of profits was privately settled between the superintendent and the merchant.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, trade routes during this period tended to follow the main highways and the navigable rivers. Sea trade was also conducted both with the west and with the north Burma coast. There is an interesting discussion in the Arthaśāstra on the efficiency of land and water routes. <sup>(1)</sup> The water route is certainly cheaper but it is not a permanent route nor can it be defended in the same way as can a land route. A route that follows the coastline is better than a mid-ocean route, since the former may touch the various ports along the route and thus perhaps enhance commerce. A navigable river is thought to be a fairly safe route. Of the land routes those going north towards the Himalayas are said to be better than the ones going south. This was presumably because the northern region was better known and was better served than the southern region, with roads that had been in existence longer.

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(1) VII, 12.

The opening up of the south by northern traders was a comparatively recent venture.

However Kauṭalya contradicts the above suggestion that the northern route is better because he evaluates the routes on the basis of the trade connections they provide. He decides that trade prospects in the south are more numerous and the commodities available are of better value than in the north. It is suggested that of the routes leading to the south, it is better to follow those leading through the mining areas as these are frequented by people. This would naturally mean avoiding long distances of solitary travel and it would again allow an opportunity of trading with the people and the habitations en route. A cart-track is preferred to a foot-path and a route which can be traversed by pack animals is naturally all to the good.

References in Buddhist literature to merchants undertaking long journeys are very frequent.<sup>(1)</sup> These cross-country journeys were full of terror both imaginary and otherwise. If the fear of robbers and wild animals was not enough, the imagination was always ready to provide a host of demons. Desert journeys were particularly trying. These were conducted only at night, when the stars could be used for following directions.<sup>(2)</sup> Owing to the hazardous nature of these travels they were normally undertaken in the form of a large caravan.

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(1) Jāt. II, p. 248; Jāt, III, p. 365.

(2) Jāt. I, p. 107.

The Jātakas also contain references to sea voyages with some interesting remarks on navigation. For instance the use of crows for purposes of piloting a vessel is a curious feature. These crows flew in the direction of the land and thus acted as a guide to navigators.<sup>(1)</sup> It has been suggested that this was a practice used by the early Babylonians and Phoenicians.<sup>(2)</sup> The development of maritime trade also meant that the potentiality of inland waterways was recognised and developed.

Ship-building was known to the Indians in the pre-Mauryan period. Arrian states that during Alexander's invasion, the Kathyioi had large dock-yards and supplied galleys and transport vessels to the invaders.<sup>(3)</sup> The peoples living along the banks of the Indus must have been acquainted with maritime traffic owing to the earlier trade with the Sabaeans.<sup>(4)</sup> Strabo writes that the Mauryas maintained ship-building as a state monopoly.<sup>(5)</sup> Ship-builders hired ships to merchants for use on rivers as well as on the seas. The state must have had a considerable control over the ship-building industry, since the Arthaśāstra devotes an entire chapter to the work of the superintendent of ships.<sup>(6)</sup> Sea-going vessels as well as ships on rivers and lakes were to be supervised by this officer. Pirate ships or those bound for

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- (1) Jāt. III, pp. 126-27, 267.  
 (2) Fick, SOIB, p. 269.  
 (3) Anabasis, VI, 15.  
 (4) Warmington. CREI, p. 64.  
 (5) Strabo. XV, 1, 46.  
 (6) II, 28.

enemy country or any ships disobeying the regulations were to be destroyed. Presumably this law was not taken too literally. Capturing such a ship would be enough. Merchandise coming by ship, and damaged owing to sea conditions, could either be exempted from toll, or the toll in this case might be reduced.<sup>(1)</sup> This was doubtless a particularly helpful provision for maritime trade. The sailing ships of those days being what they were, it was hardly possible to take sufficient precautions against damage, as for example from sea spray.

Much of the small scale trade must have consisted of the exchange of local products between neighbouring areas. Of the more adventurous and expensive trade we have some mention in the Arthaśāstra.<sup>(2)</sup> The northern areas exported blankets, skins and horses, while from the south came conch shells, diamonds, precious stones, pearls and gold. Particularly detailed information is given about the various precious stones that were imported from Ceylon and south India.<sup>(3)</sup> There is unfortunately no indication of the objects that were traded with the west during this period. This trade developed enormously during the next two centuries, when we do have information of the commodities that were traded. At this later period we gather from various sources that India sent to the west, pepper, cinnamon and various other spices, pearls, diamonds, carnelian, sard, agate, Indian cottons, peacocks,

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(1) Ibid.  
 (2) VII, 12.  
 (3) II, 11.

(1)  
 parrots and ivory-work. Among the merchandise imported  
 from the west, were horses, red coral, linen and glass. (2) We  
 may assume that much the same sort of merchandise was traded  
 in the earlier period under the Muaryas, but probably in  
 smaller quantities.

Even more important than the actual exchange of goods  
 is the fact that this trade carried with it a transmission of  
 ideas and practices. As the volume of trade increased, the  
 areas within which the trade was conducted became more  
 familiar, thus broadening on all sides the frontiers of thought  
 and knowledge.

Megasthenes classifies the soldiers as the fifth  
 class in his list. (3) He speaks of them as being numerically  
 the second largest group, smaller only than that of the  
 peasants. The troops are described as being very well paid;  
 during periods of peace they are said to be lazy and seem to  
 spend their time enjoying themselves. (4) Timmer is of the  
 opinion that Arrian's statement (5) that they were so well paid  
 that they supported others on their salary is an exaggeration.  
 The Arthaśāstra, however, seems to support Arrian's statement. (6)  
 We are told that the trained soldier was to be paid 500 panas  
 which in the range of salaries listed was certainly a very  
 comfortable income. (7)

We shall discuss the administration of the army  
 and similar forces at greater length in the next chapter.

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(1) Warmington. CRI. pp. 162, 167, 180, 210.  
 (2) Warmington. CRI, pp. 150, 263, 264.  
 (3) Diod. II. 41.  
 (4) MIM. p. 160.  
 (5) Indika XII.  
 (6) V.3.  
 (7) Certainly in later centuries, the  
 sepoys in the armies of the East  
 India Company are known to have  
 employed personal servants.

The sixth and seventh classes listed by Megasthenes being those of administrative officials and councillors are again better suited to the general discussion on administration in the next chapter.

The role of women in Mauryan society is of some significance to the nature of that society. It would seem that their position was very subordinate. This is particularly the case in the type of society envisaged by the Arthaśāstra. Brahmanical treatises were usually severe with women, who, in later works are regarded without equivocation as an inferior species. The Buddhists were certainly much more humane in their attitude towards women. The decision to allow nuns in the Buddhist order was one of tremendous significance, whereas their brahmanical counterparts would not even admit of education for women.

Horner, in a study of the status of women in the Buddhist period, <sup>(1)</sup> suggests that in Buddhist society, life was not so trying for a woman as in brahmanical society, since she was not regarded primarily as a child-bearer. The birth of a son was not necessary to Buddhist ritual as it was to Hindu ritual. Since Buddhist society accepted unmarried women, the women tended to be less concerned with finding husbands and consequently less subservient. Nevertheless marriage was still regarded as the most suitable occupation for a woman. Working women were still restricted in finding work. Such work was limited to performing in circuses and

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(1) <sup>Primitive</sup> Women in ~~the~~ Buddhist Period, p. 22 ff.

(1) <sup>Primitive</sup> Women in ~~the~~ Buddhist Period, p. 22 ff.

plays, to working as domestic slaves, either in private homes or in royal palaces, and finally to setting themselves up as prostitutes or courtesans. At a later stage when Hindu ideas on this matter began to infiltrate into Buddhism, the woman's importance even within the home declined, and the older brahmanical ideas returned.

Megasthenes and Arrian in speaking of the manners of Indians, mention the prevailing attitudes towards women and their place in Indian society. Megasthenes writes that Indians marry many wives. <sup>(1)</sup> There appears to have been a set bride-price consisting of a yoke of oxen which was exchanged for the bride. Probably most people who could afford it had a yoke of oxen for pulling carts and carriages. Those who did not possess the oxen must have paid the equivalent in value. The Arthaśāstra refers to the giving in marriage of a maiden for a couple of cows. <sup>(2)</sup> This practice is called arṣa-vivāha. It is one of the eight types of marriage listed, and is referred to as an ancestral custom. It would seem that the two cows were symbolic and the equivalent in value would be equally acceptable. Megasthenes seems to suggest that some women were married in order to bear children, and some men took wives to assist them in their work. The latter category would apply more to the cultivators than to any other class, since it is possible that women worked in the fields, but it is highly unlikely that they would be permitted to assist in any other kind of work, particularly in the towns. It is possible that

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(1) Strabo, XV, 1, 53-56.  
 (2) III, 2.

Megasthenes was referring only to the domestic sphere, where, in well-to-do families, some of the wives would maintain and supervise the household, while others would look after the children.

The unchastity of Indian women is commented upon. We are told that wives prostitute themselves unless they are compelled to be chaste. Arrian informs us that for the gift of an elephant even the most chaste of Indian women would be willing to stray from virtue. (1) Apparently it was regarded as a great compliment, since it meant that she was worth an elephant.

The women employed in the royal palace either worked (2) in the harem, or were responsible for looking after the king. (3) The latter category of women were bought from their parents. Evidence of the king's personal attendants being women is confirmed by the Arthaśāstra, where the king is advised to maintain an armed body-guard of women. (4) The king's hunting expeditions seem to have been very elaborate, judging by the description given by Megasthenes. Even on this occasion the king was encircled by armed women. These precautions may have originated in the idea that men, since they were not as subservient as women, were more liable to corruption and might turn against the king; whereas women, knowing their weak and inferior position in society, would be only too glad to maintain their position in the king's service and would therefore be meticulous in their care for him.

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(1) Indika, XVII.  
(2) Artha. I, 20.  
(3) Strabo. XV, i, 53-56.  
(4) I, 21.

One occupation from which women are not barred  
 (1) is that of weaving. In fact the Arthaśāstra suggests that women of all ages can be gainfully employed by the superintendent of weaving. But this occupation is suggested largely for deformed women, widows, aging prostitutes, or women compelled to work in default of paying fines. A married woman or an unmarried woman not belonging to any of these categories, if she had to seek such employment, would work at home. This chapter indirectly reveals social conventions with regard to women. For instance there are three main degrees in the segregation of women; the women who do not leave their houses (aniṣkāsinyāḥ) those whose husbands have gone abroad, and those who are crippled and have to work in order to maintain themselves. It is suggested that where possible a maid-servant should act as the go-between when the woman has to send for yarn or return the woven material. Where this is not possible then the superintendent is permitted to deal directly with the woman, but only in the dimmest light, and he must restrict his conversation strictly to the work in question.

The state did not ban prostitution but in fact  
 (2) derived a tax from it. Prostitutes were protected against being maltreated. They could if necessary be called upon to act as spies for the state.

The Arthaśāstra discusses the position of women in  
 (3) the chapters concerning marriage, and the relationship

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(1) II, 23;  
 (2) II, 27  
 (3) III, 2.

(1)  
 between husband and wife. The social role of women is still more flexible than in later centuries. The marriage of a widow outside the family of her in-laws is not unheard of; she has only to obtain the consent of her father-in-law. Divorce was permitted if both husband and wife wished it under certain circumstances, but this only applied to those marriages which were either voluntary unions or abductions, or contracted with a high bride-price. The types of marriage which were considered more respectable, were those held completely in accordance with social custom and these could not be dissolved.<sup>(1)</sup>

Here again we must remember that this section of the work was a theoretical discussion of possible situations. Whether, in practice, social convention permitted the above mentioned usages cannot be stated for certain. No doubt public opinion, then as now, must have influenced the day to day working of these laws.

Megasthenes has stated in his account that there were no slaves in India.<sup>(2)</sup> This remark has led to much debate,<sup>te,</sup> since the existence of slaves is mentioned in Indian sources, and in fact most of the labour power was supplied by slaves and hired labourers. It is possible that Megasthenes had the Greek conception of slavery in his mind, and, the Indian system being different, he did not recognise it. If for

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(1) III, 3.  
 (2) Diod. II, 39.

instance Mauryan slavery was organised according to the system in the Arthaśāstra then Megasthenes was right. The dāsa was not a δοῦλος, since he could own property and earn for himself. We shall discuss at some length the position of the slave in Indian society to discover the correctness of Megasthenes' remark.

Of the slaves and hired labourers employed to provide labour power, the latter were in a more elevated position than the slaves. They were paid wages in accordance with the amount of work they completed and were not owned by the employer. As we have noticed earlier, much hired labour was employed by the artisans. They were also used as agricultural and domestic labourers and are known to have worked on ships as well.<sup>(1)</sup> The social position of these labourers was extremely low, and was almost on a par with the outcastes. The Arthaśāstra concerns itself with details about their wages but does not suggest any action for the improvement of their condition. Wages were either fixed according to the work or there was a standard wage of one tenth of their produce.<sup>(2)</sup>

The system of hired labour is to be distinguished from forced labour or viṣṭi, which was in practice in Mauryan times. Megasthenes speaks of artisans working for the state for a certain number of days in lieu of tax.<sup>(3)</sup> A similar system existed for land cultivators. The

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(1) Bose. SRENI, p. 424  
 (2) III, 13.  
 (3) Strabo, XV, 1, 46.

Arthaśāstra knows of this system and warns against the tyrannical use of viṣṭi. The king is supposed to protect the cultivator from the oppressive infliction of forced labour by his subordinates.<sup>(1)</sup>

Arrian writes that "all Indians are free and not one of them is a slave. The Lacedaemonians and the Indians here so far agree. The Lacedaemonians however hold the helots as slaves and these helots do servile labour; but the Indians do not even use aliens as slaves, and much less a countryman of their own."<sup>(2)</sup> Strabo affirms that in India no man was a slave.<sup>(3)</sup> Diodorus quotes Megasthenes as saying that "the law ordains that no one among them shall under any circumstances be a slave, but that enjoying freedom they shall respect the equal right to it which all possess."<sup>(4)</sup> The passage following this, speaks of an equality of laws not excluding an inequality of possessions. Here there is a difference between MacCrindle's translation and that of Timmer. The former translates it as "for those, they thought who have learnt neither to domineer over nor to cringe to others will attain the life best adapted for all the vicissitudes of their lot: for it is but fair and reasonable to institute laws which bind all equally, but allow property to be unevenly distributed."<sup>(5)</sup> Timmer, on the basis of a slight emendation of the text, translates the same passage as, "for they who

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- (1) II, 1.  
 (2) Indika X.  
 (3) XV, 1, 54.  
 (4) Diod. II, 39.  
 (5) MacCrindle. AIMA, p. 40.

have learnt neither to stand over or under others, must have the best life in all conditions. It is foolish to make the laws the same for everybody and yet keep the status unequal!<sup>(1)</sup>

We are of the opinion that Timmer's interpretation carries more meaning in the context, particularly when she sees in this passage an attempted criticism of the Greek system. Megasthenes is suggesting that the Greeks cannot see that an equality of laws and slavery are incompatible. We agree with Timmer that this reference to slavery may not have been a statement on Indian conditions. It may well have been an attempt at propaganda against slavery in Greece.<sup>(2)</sup> Agitation against slavery was beginning with attacks on the system made by Diogenes and the Cynics. In this particular, Megasthenes either did not recognise the existence of slavery in India, or else used his account as a polemic on the debate regarding slavery in Greece. It is also possible that Arrian inserted the comparison with Sparta to the original statement of Megasthenes, to give more point to the statement in the minds of his Greek readers.

It has been suggested that since the Indian slave had more rights than the Greek slave, Megasthenes did not recognise him as such. For instance the Indian slave was not regarded as the property of his employer as was his Greek counterpart.<sup>(3)</sup> Evidence from Indian sources however does point to a clearly defined institution of slavery in India.

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(1) MIM. p. 274

(2) Ibid, pp. 274-76.

(3) Nilakantha Sastri. ANM, p. 112.

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Megasthenes, already acquainted with the system in Greece, would hardly have failed to have noticed it. On the basis of Timmer's view that his remarks on slavery were aimed as propaganda against the slave system in Greece, he would have been even more aware of the institution in India, and would in all probability have specially enquired about its workings. It is just possible that Megasthenes may have mentioned Indian slavery in his original text, but later editors may have omitted this passage or may have deleted it and added their own comment, believing it to be the more correct.

From Buddhist literature it appears that slaves were of three types, - those that were inherited from one's father, those that were bought or were given as a gift, and those that were born in the house. <sup>(1)</sup> It must certainly also have been the practice to make prisoners of war work as slaves. The 13th Rock Edict mentions the deportation of 150,000 people of Kalinga. <sup>(2)</sup> It is unlikely that so many were taken into slavery, though some must certainly have been enslaved. The majority were probably sent as settlers in newly-cleared areas, as Kosambi suggests, on the basis of the recommendation of such a policy in the Arthaśāstra. <sup>(4)</sup>

By the time of Manu this category of slaves had become a regular one. <sup>(5)</sup> Slavery as a result of punishment (dāṇḍadāsa) <sup>(6)</sup> is also known in the Jātakas and is referred to in the

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- (1) Vinaya Piṭaka. Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga Saṅghādisesa. I, 2, 1.
  - (2) XIII R.E. Kāl. CII, I, p. 43.
  - (3) ISIH, p. 196.
  - (4) II, 1.
  - (5) VIII, 415
  - (6) Kulavāka Jāt. I, 200.

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(1)  
Arthaśāstra.

The Arthaśāstra describes another group of slaves, from which it appears that slavery in India was not so severe as in Greece. It is said that in normal circumstances, an Ārya should not be subjected to slavery, but it is possible that due to some misfortune, family troubles, or the necessity for earning more money than usual, an Ārya may temporarily work as a slave. (2) He can buy back his freedom when his term of agreement is over, and resume his normal life. This reference is of importance since it establishes the fact that even though a slave had no freedom, nevertheless he had a social position and was regarded merely as another type of labour force. The lowest order in the social scale of Mauryan society was not the slave but the person belonging to the despised classes. Thus the social degradation of being a slave was not as strong in India as it was in Greece. To a casual Greek visitor of the period, slavery in India was of a better nature than it was in Greece, but he would at the same time fail to understand or recognise the condemnation of the despised classes by the rest of Indian society.

Domestic service in households was probably the most common work of the slaves. They were used as personal attendants on their owners. Some may have worked as agricultural labourers, others among the artisans. It is

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(1) III, 13.  
(2) III, 13.

also possible that a man owning many slaves may have hired them out for general purposes on occasions.

(1)  
(2) Both the Jātakas and the Arthaśāstra (3) suggest a generally humane attitude towards the slaves. The latter mentions various regulations for the protection of slaves. The children of a man who has sold himself as a slave shall not be slaves. A slave is permitted to own what he has earned and to inherit from his father and bequeath to his kinsmen. Proper treatment of female slaves is insisted upon. If a female slave has a child by her owner, both mother and child are immediately recognised as free. The king is expected to chastise those who do not give heed to the claims of their slaves. (4)

Such were the prescribed regulations which no doubt were followed on the whole. But there must also have been lapses. Some Jātaka stories refer to the misery of slaves, who had to suffer beatings, imprisonment and malnutrition, at times. (5) In his edicts, Aśoka frequently appealed to his subjects to treat their slaves and labourers with kindness. (6)

The main distinction between the slaves and the outcastes was, as Fick points out, that the former could not be considered impure since they were in constant and close attendance on their masters. (7) They lived with the family and not in segregated parts of the town as did the outcastes.

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(1) Bose, SRENI, p. 413.  
(2) e.g. Nānacchanda Jāt. II, 428.  
(3) III, 13.  
(4) IIm 1.  
(5) Jāt. I, p. 451; Jāt. I, p. 402.  
(6) Ix, XI, XIII R.E.; VII P.E.  
(7) SOIB, p. 312.

The despised classes or hīnajāti consisted of people in an assortment of occupations largely concerned with things that were considered unclean. There was complete social segregation between them and the rest of society, and they had no hope of being accepted in the main body of society.<sup>(1)</sup> The Candālas are an example of such outcastes. They were supposed to have originated as the result of a brahman-śūdra union and were therefore of very low caste.<sup>(2)</sup> The reference to Candāla-bhāsa which occurs in a Jātaka story suggests an aboriginal speech.<sup>(3)</sup> They were restricted in their occupations to being public executioners, cleaning the cremation grounds, hunting and performing as acrobats and jugglers.<sup>(4)</sup>

Leather workers were despised, and because of this the rathakāras were also considered degraded, since their work involved handling leather.<sup>(5)</sup> The veṇa caste were basket makers and flute makers and were probably also of aboriginal origin.<sup>(6)</sup> The nesāda caste lived by hunting and fishing, and probably came from areas lying on the edge of the cultivated land.<sup>(7)</sup> To the settled cultivators the occupation of the nesāda was inferior. The fact that their livelihood depended on their killing animals must have added to the already existing contempt for them. Members of the pukkusa caste were on a par with the candālas and lived by hunting and

(1) Bose, SRENI, p. 435.

(2) Manu. X. 12.

(3) Citta-Sambhūta Jāt. IV, p. 391.

(4) Bose. SRENI, p. 435.

(5) Bose SRENI, p. 455; Fick. SOIB, p. 325.

(6) Bose SRENI, p. 454; Fick. SOIB, p. 325.

(7) Bose SRENI, p. 447; Fick. SOIB, p. 322.

(1)  
 by cleaning and sweeping temples. Potters, weavers, barbers,  
 dancers, snake-charmers, and beggars were all grouped  
 together as despised castes. (2) It is of some interest to  
 notice that their caste names refer directly to their  
 profession or work.

As Bose points out, the despised classes accepted  
 this position of social ostracism because they were  
 numerically not strong enough in each area to take objection  
 to it. (2) They lived together with their families outside the  
 towns, or concentrated in a small area within, and were thus  
 not in an advantageous position in relation to the rest of the  
 town. They were not banded into guilds which could act as  
 organising bodies. The fact that they were deliberately kept  
 in strict ignorance made their position even weaker. (3)

References to the despised classes in the Jātakas  
 are borne out by the Arthaśāstra, particularly in connection  
 with the caṇḍālās. For instance it is stated in no uncer-  
 tain terms that "heretics and caṇḍālas shall live beyond the  
 burial grounds", i.e. well outside the boundary of the city. (4)

Archaeological evidence reveals that towns were  
 planned and houses were well-built. (5) The house plan was  
 generally a simple one, a central courtyard with rooms  
 surrounding it. The rooms on the ground floor were often

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- (1) Bose. SRENI, p. 445; Fick SOIB. p. 32P.  
 (2) Bose. SRENI, p. 483; ~~xxx~~  
 (3) Citta-Sambhūta Jāt. Iv, p. 390 ff.  
 (4) II, 4.  
 (5) Marshall. T. I, pp. 91-101.

smaller than those above, and this according to Marshall was because in wealthy households the slaves and servants would live on the ground floor and the family upstairs. The lay-out of Mauryan cities improved considerably in the later Mauryan period and the Sunga period when they were planned in a more regular and controlled pattern.<sup>(1)</sup> Municipal responsibilities such as the drainage system were evidently well-organised even at the earliest level.

It would appear from literary and archaeological evidence that the Mauryan period was one of an expanding economy. New possibilities of the development of various crafts on a large scale were being realised, particularly in the context of increasing trade and all its attendant commercial advantages. The benefits of an agrarian economy were also revealed for the first time on an extensive scale, and this type of economy assumed a degree of permanency. Together with this economic change social organisation developed along a pattern which was to remain comparatively unchanged for many centuries.

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(1) *Anc. Ind.* IX. Sharma. p. 168.  
*Anc. Ind.* X, XI. Lal. p. 5 ff.

## CHAPTER VI

### Administration

The establishment of the Mauryan state ushered in a new form of government, that of a centralised empire. The usual pattern of kingdoms known up to then in India, was a confederation of smaller kingdoms and republics. The pattern changed under the Nandas, when there was an attempt at a centralised empire, and this form developed into the centralised control of the Mauryan government over areas which gradually lost their independence and were included within an extensive political and economic system planned by this government. Kingdoms and autonomous states situated on the borders of the empire naturally maintained a looser relationship with the Mauryas. Areas lying within the empire were not confederated, but were regarded as subordinate to Mauryan rule. Thus we cannot accept the statement of Dikshitar that the Mauryan state was roughly a composite of federal states<sup>(1)</sup>. The relationship between the Mauryas and the state of Kalinga, for instance speaks against this view. If the idea of federation was a current one during the Mauryan period, it might have provided the solution to the conflict with Kalinga. But Aśoka desired complete control over the state and thus had to go to war with it.

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(1) MP, p. 78.

However, since this was the first occasion when a centralised empire had been established on such a vast scale in India, it is possible that some tribes, though within the empire, or on its border, still maintained their political organisation. The Arthaśāstra mentions certain tribal republics such as the Kāmbhojas who were governed by a corporation of warriors, and others such as the Licchavis, the Vṛjjis and the Pañcalās, which, though tribal republics, were governed by a titular rājā.<sup>(1)</sup> But these tribes were in no way federated to the Mauryan state, since there was no question of their being equal or nearly equal units. The fact that they were permitted to continue with their political organisation was based largely on the practical consideration of this system facilitating administration. As long as these tribes did not disrupt the organisation of the Mauryan empire they were permitted their political privileges. The free accessibility of these tribes to Mauryan agents, as is obvious from the Arthaśāstra, suggests that they were regarded as adjuncts to the empire, and they are not given the importance that might be expected had they been confederate areas.

The Mauryan empire also indicates, as Nilakantha Sastri has pointed out, the triumph of monarchy as a political system over tribal republics.<sup>(2)</sup> This is demonstrated not only in the attitude adopted by Kauṭalya towards the tribal republics or saṅghas, but in fact in the entire conception

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(1) Book XI

(2) ANM, p. 172.

of the Arthaśāstra itself. The treatise emphasises the control of the central authority. Every detail of the organisation of the kingdom is fitted into the administrative plan and is aimed at resulting in the final control resting with the king. The king is expected to protect and maintain society, and the maintenance of the status quo facilitates administration. This in turn leads to a consistent inflow of revenue. The supremacy of the king's authority is asserted by the fact that he not only defends social usage according to the traditional concept of kingship, but can also make his own laws.<sup>(1)</sup> It is stated that where there is a conflict between traditional law (sāstra) and the king's law (dharmanyāya), the latter shall prevail. This was indeed a tremendous increase in the power of the king. Certain checks were imposed on this power, which we shall discuss at a later stage, but nevertheless the king's authority was enhanced by such statements.

Timmer has suggested that the Arthaśāstra shows elements of decentralisation, yet in Megasthenes' account of Indian administration the emphasis is on centralisation.<sup>(2)</sup> We are of the opinion that Timmer has confused the extension of administrative services with the decentralisation of power. Owing to the increase of territory included within the Mauryan empire, as compared with previous kingdoms, it was necessary to increase both the numbers and the responsibilities of the administrative officials. Thus a delegation of responsibility

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(1) III, 1.  
 (2) MIM, p. 213.

certainly took place. But at the same time, as we have stated above, the power of the king increased tremendously in comparison with the increased responsibility of the officials. In the economic sphere for instance the control of revenue from various new sources, such as trade taxes, meant a proportional increase of the authority of the king over trade. In order to obtain this revenue it is possible that many new offices were established or existing officials were given the responsibility of conducting the administration of trade. The officials derived authority from the king, and, despite this increased responsibility, were merely intermediaries between the citizen and the king. The king through his officials was able to maintain a more firm control, and thereby increase his own power.

It was because of this increased power of the king that the Mauryan centralised monarchy, became a paternal despotism under Aśoka. The previously held idea of the king being a protector remote from the affairs of his subjects gave way to the belief that he had complete control over all spheres of social and political life. This paternal attitude is expressed in the remark, "All men are my children",<sup>(1)</sup> which almost becomes the motto of Aśoka in defining his attitude to his subjects. He is concerned with the welfare of his people and rightly regards it as an important responsibility. The Arthaśāstra too lays great stress on this welfare.<sup>(2)</sup> Aśoka's concern is such that he dictates to his subjects that course

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(1) I.S.E. Dhauli, CII, I, p. 92.  
 (2) II, 1; IV, 3.

which is morally approved and that which is not, albeit in a fatherly way. He expresses a wish to be in personal contact with his subjects. <sup>(1)</sup> This in part accounts for his undertaking extensive tours throughout his kingdom. These tours, when not in the nature of religious pilgrimages, were made possible largely through the existence of an efficient administrative system. Improved roads and communications also played an important part in assisting this new development in administration. New communications also meant an opening up of new areas, and a greater freedom of movement and travel.

According to all Indian thought on the subject the chief function of the king was to maintain social order. The four castes and the four orders of religious life had to be made to adhere to their respective duties and occupations. <sup>(2)</sup> The authority of the king was linked with divine approval. At the level of daily functioning this connection was expressed by the important position of the brahmans, and more particularly of the purohita, the high priest of the palace. This importance can be seen, for instance, from the fact that the purohita is present together with the prime minister when the king is examining any of his other ministers. <sup>(3)</sup> Thus the role of the purohita is not restricted to a religious function in relationship to the king but extends to the political sphere as well. The dependence of the king on the brahmans is more

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(1) VI, P.E. CII, I, p. 128.  
 (2) Artha, I, 4.  
 (3) Ibid, I, 10.

clearly indicated in another chapter where it is stated that the three factors which bring unqualified success to the king are, the support of the brahmans, the good advice of the ministerial council, and action in accordance with the <sup>(1)</sup>  
śāstras.

By his adoption of Buddhism, Aśoka lowered the prestige of the purohita, and possibly excluded him from interfering in political matters. This, and certain other measures taken by him, such as the ban on animal sacrifices, must have alienated brahman sympathies.

Nilakantha Sastri states that the use of the title Devānampriya was another indication that the king sought the support of sacerdotal power. <sup>(2)</sup> We would suggest that it was more than an indication of the wish for priestly support. It was an attempt to emphasise the connection between kingship and divine power. In the case of Aśoka it served the added purpose of assisting in his propaganda. Such remarks as his claim that Jambudvīpa was fit for the gods since the propagation of the policy of Dhamma, <sup>(3)</sup> would in the minds of the simple be linked with his own title, thereby convincing them that he was indeed the beloved of the gods. Judging by his self-satisfaction with regard to the good he had brought to his kingdom, as expressed in pillar edicts and elsewhere, <sup>(4)</sup> we may suggest that, in his later years at least, he believed in the literal application of this title.

(1) Ibid, I, 9.

(2) ANM, p. 175.

(3) Minor R.E. Brahm. CII, I, p. 175.

(4) V R.E.; II P.E.

The Arthaśāstra stresses the idea that the king must be accessible to his officials and to his subjects at all times, and warns the king not to make himself inaccessible to his people, which would cause confusion and disaffection and would make him a prey to his enemies.<sup>(1)</sup> This advice, it would seem, was followed by the Mauryas. No doubt the pressure of work in governing the empire made it imperative. Megasthenes writes that the king is available for consultation even when he is being massaged.<sup>(2)</sup> Aśoka states in one of his edicts that his reporters have access to him even while he is eating or is relaxing in the harem or the parks, and that if any matter arising in the ministerial council meeting needs attention, it should be reported to him immediately.<sup>(3)</sup>

Kauṭalya insists that the king can be successful only if he adopts three general practices. He must give equal attention to all matters, he must always remain active and ready to take action, and lastly he must never slacken in the discharge of his duties.<sup>(4)</sup> Obviously such an ideal could only be realised in a kingdom ably administered by an extensive network of officials.

Legislation in that period consisted largely of a confirmation of social usage. Decisions on individual issues were taken by reference to social custom. The king had the freedom to make these decisions. As we have stated above, the

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(1) I, 19  
 (2) Strabo, XV, 1, 53-56.  
 (3) VI R.E. Gir. Cii, I, p. 11.  
 (4) I, 19.

Arthaśāstra advises the king to take into consideration the opinion of his councillors, but the final choice rests with the king. The council of ministers or mantri-pariṣad may have acted as a political check on the king. But it could only be effective where public opinion was against the policy of the king. The council had no consistent political position within the framework of the government, as have modern bodies of a similar nature. No doubt its powers varied from time to time according to the strength of the king, and the calibre of its members. We have an example of ministerial power in the event of Aśoka's accession. His gaining the throne was facilitated by the fact that the minister Rādhāgupta supported him.

Aśoka refers to the council in two of his edicts. On the first occasion, the council acts in a subordinate way, since it is merely expected to order the yuktas to register certain new administrative measures adopted by Aśoka. From this instance it would appear that the council was responsible for the enactment of the policy decided by the king. On the second occasion the council appears to have far more authority. It can in the absence of the king discuss the king's policy and suggest amendments to it, or it may consider any emergent matter, the discussion of which the king may have left to the council. However, even in this case the opinion of the council has to be reported to the king immediately, no matter

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- (1) See Ch. II, p. 54.  
 (2) III, R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 4  
 (3) VI R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 11.

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where he may be. The final decision rests with the king and the council is regarded as an advisory body. It was probably in the interest of the king to consult the council on most matters, particularly those in the nature of an emergency. This idea is stressed by the Arthaśāstra as well.<sup>(1)</sup>

According to Jayaswal, the true interpretation of the 6th Rock Edict is that Aśoka wishes the council to inform him when the former body rejects his orders.<sup>(2)</sup> Jayaswal is here trying to prove that the ministerial council had over-riding powers and could reject the policy of the king. Altekar has expressed it less strongly, but he is also of the opinion that the council could reject the king's policy and therefore had considerable power.<sup>(3)</sup> Jayaswal's reading, as Barua has pointed out, is based on an incorrect interpretation of the word nijhati.<sup>(4)</sup> This word is not derived from nikṣapti, which conveys the meaning of rejection, but is derived from nidhyapti and suggests an agreement as a result of sound deliberation. There is certainly no hint in the edict of Aśoka waiting anxiously for the acceptance of his policy by the council. If anything the tone is imperious. Furthermore, as Ghoshal has pointed out, if the council was so powerful Aśoka would not publicise his weakness in an edict.<sup>(5)</sup>

The king's control over the council was increased

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- (1) I, 12.  
(2) HP. pp. 275-80, 294-305.  
(3) SGAI, p. 313-15.  
(4) AI. p. 213  
(5) SIHC, p. 406 ff.

by the fact that the members of the council were personally selected by the king. The tendency would be for the king to select only those people who were in favour of his own policy. The Arthaśāstra gives a list of the qualities that such a minister should possess, and stresses those of birth, integrity and intelligence. <sup>(1)</sup> It further suggests that these qualities should be ascertained from a variety of sources. This is a very idealistic view on the selection of ministers and it is hardly likely that it was ever fully put into practice. A further chapter explains various ways in which a king can test the loyalty and character of these ministers. Here he is assisted by the chief minister and the purohita. <sup>(2)</sup>

There was no fixed number for the members of the council. It varied according to need. The Mauryans probably had a fairly large council. <sup>(3)</sup> The Arthaśāstra lists the Chief Minister or the Mahāmantri, and also distinguishes between the ministers and the assembly of ministers (mantriṇo mantriṇīpariṣadāmca). It would seem that of the ministerial council or mantriṇīpariṣad a small group of perhaps three or four councillors, together with the Chief Minister, was selected to act as an inner council or a close advisory body. This may have been a permanent group or it may have been selected for consultation on particular issues. The Arthaśāstra does suggest that if the king wishes to be advised

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(1) I, 9.  
 (2) I, 10.  
 (3) I, 15.

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on any matter, he can consult privately with three or four (1) ministers, or even collectively with such a small group. Such consultations facilitate frankness of opinion, since ministers would be more liable to state their views openly when consulted privately by the king than in the midst of a large assembly. Furthermore such consultations permit of greater secrecy with regard to the matter discussed, and (2) Kauṭalya urges the importance of secrecy in these matters.

Megasthenes states that the advisors to the king are selected from a particular caste, which he lists as the (3) seventh caste. This statement is correct only in so far as the councillors no doubt belonged to the brahman caste or were high caste kṣatriyas. It is unlikely that members of any other caste would be chosen as ministers.

The central administration was conducted through a number of offices largely relating to the control of revenue, each under a particular officer. The treasurer (sannidhātā) was responsible for the storage of the royal treasure and of the state income in cash and kind, the latter chiefly in the form of grain, gems, etc. The storage of these was his (4) particular charge.

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- (1) I. 15.  
(2) I. 15.  
(3) Diod. II, 41.  
(4) Artha. II, 5. Shamasastri strangely translates the word as chamberlain. (p. 55). The relevant chapter of the Arthaśāstra shows that the sannidhata had none of the functions of a chamberlain, but only those of a treasurer.

This office worked in conjunction with that of the chief collector (samāhartā) who was responsible for the collection of revenue from various parts of the kingdom. (1) Sources of revenue as listed in the Arthaśāstra include that of cities, land, mines, forests, roads, tolls, fines, licences, manufactured products and merchandise of various kinds, and precious stones. The chief collector was also concerned with matters of income and expenditure and supervised the accounts submitted by the Accountant General. The latter kept accounts pertaining both to the kingdom and to the royal household. (2) He was assisted by a body of clerks (kārmikas). The Arthaśāstra states that all the ministers shall together report the accounts of each department. This suggests a system of joint responsibility, though no doubt in the case of fraud the individual minister or department was punished. Embezzlement of finances by government servants is recognised as a possibility to assist the administrator in recognising a defaulter. (3) Heavy fines are suggested as a punishment for such an offence. The fiscal year was from Āṣāḍha to Āṣāḍha (July), and 354 working days were reckoned in each year. Work done during the intercalary month was separately accounted for. (4) Items of income were mainly those listed above as providing revenue. The possible discovery of a treasure trove was another source of income.

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- (1) II, 6.  
 (2) II, 7.  
 (3) II, 9.  
 (4) II, 7.

Expenditure was largely on salaries and public works. The maintenance of the royal court and the royal family required the use of part of the national revenue in addition to the revenue from the crown lands. Salaries of officials were also paid with the money that came into the royal treasury. (1) One-fourth of the total revenue was kept for salaries. Some of these salaries are listed. The minister, the Purohita and the army commander received 48,000 panas. The chief collector and the treasurer were paid 24,000 panas. Members of the ministerial council received 12,000 panas. The staff of accountants and writers were paid 500 panas. Unfortunately we are not told the value of the pana, nor whether these salaries were yearly or monthly. We can however see the proportion of the wages paid to various officials.

Expenditure on public works included the cost of building and maintaining roads, wells and rest-houses, of building irrigation works such as the dam on the Sudarśana lake, and under Aśoka the planting of medicinal herbs and trees etc. The cost of maintaining a large army must also have been a serious draw on the revenue. The outlay on state mines and manufactures and the wages of state-employed artisans would come from the treasury. It is not certain whether grants to religious bodies were made from the same source or from the revenue obtained from the crown lands. It is unlikely that there was any clear distinction between the two. It does not exist in the Arthaśāstra. Thus

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(1) V. 3.

private benefactions made by the king would be paid from the treasury. Thus it is possible that Aśoka's endowing the Buddhist order with funds from the treasury antagonised both the civil administration and other religious bodies. (1)

The Arthaśāstra devotes an entire section to the duties of various superintendents. (2) These officials acted in their local capacity as supervising revenue from particular departments as well as the maintenance and administration of the department. They were assisted by various officers and committees, and made their reports to the central administration. Thus they were among the officials linking the centre with local administration. Those mentioned in the Arthaśāstra are the superintendents of gold and goldsmiths, the store-house, commerce, forest produce, armoury, weights and measures, tolls, weaving, agriculture, liquor, slaughter-house, prostitutes, ships, cows, horses, elephants, chariots, infantry, passports and city superintendents.

Provincial administration was under the immediate control of a prince or a member of the royal family. The terms used in the edicts are kumāra and āryaputra. Hultzsch has suggested that kumāra was used as the title of the sons of the king, and the term āryaputra was used for other close relatives in administrative posts, e.g. a nephew or a brother-in-law. (3) The kumāras and the āryaputras were usually

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(1) Przyluski. LEA. p. 296 ff.  
(2) II, 13-36.  
(3) CII, 1, p. xl.

viceroy or governors of the provinces in the empire.

The Mauryan empire during the reign of Aśoka was divided into four major provinces, since four provincial capitals are mentioned in the edicts. Taxila was the provincial capital in the north, Ujjain in the west, Tosali in the east, and Suvarṇāgiri in the south. (1) These provinces were administrative divisions and were placed under viceroys, who as we have seen were members of the royal family. We have references to Aśoka's viceroyalty at Ujjain and Taxila during the reign of Bindusāra. (2) Similarly Kunāla was viceroy at Taxila during the reign of Aśoka. (3) Fa-hsien mentions that Gandhāra was under the viceroyalty of a son of Aśoka. (4)

Princes of the royal family could also be appointed as vice-regents (uparāja), on the accession of a king. Thus the Mahāvamsa relates that Aśoka appointed his younger brother Tissa as vice-regent when he was crowned. (5) It is possible however that the author of the chronicle wrongly attributed the custom of Sinhalese monarchy to Mauryan India.

The appointing of princes as viceroys served the practical purpose of training them as administrators. Where the relationship between the king and the prince was good, there was the added advantage that the prince as viceroy would conform

(1) I, II S.E. CII, I. pp. 92, 111; Minor R.E. Brah. CII. I, p. 175.

(2) See Ch. II. p. 46 .

(3) Przyluski. LEA, p. 281 ff.

(4) Giles. TF. p. 12.

(5) V. 33.

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to the king's policy. There would be less likelihood of an insurrection under a prince loyal to the king. But the disadvantages were also known and warned against by the theorists. A period of viceroyalty could be used to advantage by a prince to establish his own position in opposition to the king. The Arthaśāstra warns that a prince can be a source of danger, and to give him control over a province can lead to irresponsible action on his part.<sup>(1)</sup> As provincial viceroys there must have been considerable competition between princes who were brothers, leading eventually to wars of succession, where they could use the provincial forces against each other.<sup>(2)</sup> This must certainly have happened in the struggle for the throne among the sons of Bindusāra. It is possible that Aśoka's successful viceroyalty further convinced him of his ability to succeed Bindusāra.

Governors administering smaller areas within the unit of the province, were probably selected from among the local people. At Girnār we have the example of Tuṣāspa, a local personality of foreign extraction who is referred to as the governor.<sup>(3)</sup> In the case of tribal peoples local kings were probably confirmed as heads of administration. This would tend to cause less disruption in organisation when an area came under Mauryan control, apart from the fact that a foreign administrator might be resented far more than a local

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(1) I, 17.

(2) This happened with great frequency during the Mughal period.

(3) Sircar. SI, p. 169.

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ruler. In such cases local autonomy might have been retained on a lower level of administration.

In provincial administration the council of ministers had more power than their counterparts at the centre. They acted even in practice as a check on the actions of the prince and were, if occasion demanded, in direct contact with the king. This is apparent from two events before and during the reign of Aśoka. We are told that the revolt in Taxila was against the local ministers and high officers, and not against the viceroy<sup>(1)</sup>. The arrival of Aśoka as the royal representative quietened the situation. It would seem that the ministers had assumed more power than their situation demanded. The second event was the blinding of Kunāla at the orders of Aśoka<sup>(2)</sup>. This suggests that direct orders from the king to the ministers, without the viceroy knowing about them were a regular occurrence, since the ministers were not surprised at the prince being kept in ignornace of them.

The viceroy however did have the power to appoint some of his officials. For instance those mahāmattas who made tours of inspection every five years would be appointed some by the king as representatives of the king and others by the local viceroy<sup>(3)</sup>.

The exact designation of the mahāmattas in Mauryan administration remains uncertain. A great variety of officers go by the name of mahāmattas in the various sources.

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- (1) See Ch. II. p. 47.  
(2) See Ch. II. p. 114.  
(3) I S.E. Jaug. CII, I, p. 112.

We are of the opinion that it was a term used for senior officials in any type of work. Senart has explained the term as a generic designation of high officials. (1) Thomas has analysed the compound as mahatī mātrā yasya, denoting thereby a person of high standing. (2) In Buddhist literature the particular work of the mahāmatta is often specified in his title. Thus we have the judicial mahāmatta (vohārikamahāmatta), the military mahāmatta (senānāyaka/mahāmatta), and the chief minister (sabbatthaka/mahāmatta). (3) Another frequently mentioned officer is the doṇamāpaka mahāmatta, an assessing officer, literally, "one who measures with a dry measure." (4)

The Arthaśāstra uses the term in the sense of a minister. (5) This does not contradict the use of the term in Buddhist literature, since the Arthaśāstra is using it in a narrower form, referring only to the ministers and not to the other officials who were also ranked among the mahāmattas.

Thomas is of the opinion that they were not ministers or councillors, but governors, since they are generally local or provincial authorities. (6) This is too limited an interpretation of the term. Aśoka in his edicts uses the term to include many types of officials, and we have references to the mahāmattas as a ministerial or advisory council. (7) Buddhist literature mentions similar mahāmattas in the advisory council of Bimbisāra. (8)

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(1) ZDMG. XXXVII, p. 267 ff.  
 (2) JRAS, 1914, p. 386.  
 (3) Mahāragga, I, 40, 39. Fick. SOIB. p. 147 n.1; p. 80, n.1; Jāt II pp. 30, 70.  
 (4) Fick, SOIB, p. 151.  
 (5) I, 10; II, 5.  
 (6) JRAS, 1914, p. 386 ff.  
 (7) VI R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 11.  
 (8) Vinaya Piṭaka. VII, 3. 5.

Among the various mahāmattas mentioned in the edicts, we have those concerned with general administration addressed in the Brahmagiri Minor Rock Edict. (1) Judicial officers of the city are referred to in the 1st Separate Edict at Dhauri and Jaugada. (2) The same term, mahāmattas, is used for officers who are to be sent on tours of inspection to inspect the work of magistrates and judicial officers. Obviously these officials would be senior to the latter. They were to be sent both by the centre and the provincial viceroy. In the Queen's Edict, the mahāmattas are ordered to register whatever gifts the Queen Karuvāki should make. (3) The ithījhikha mahāmattas (4) controlled the harem and other departments involving women. There are frequent references to a new type of mahāmatta, the dhamma-mahāmatta. This was a service inaugurated by Aśoka in his thirteenth regnal year. (5)

The mahāmattas were thus a highly responsible service of officials and doubtless were greatly respected since they held senior positions and controlled various aspects of administration and justice. We are of the opinion that Megasthenes, when referring to his seventh caste of Councillors and Assessors, was referring to the mahāmattas. Diodorus quotes Megasthenes as saying that "the seventh class consists of the Councillors and Assessors, of those who

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(1) ~~(1)~~ CII, I. p. 175.  
 (2) I, S.E.Dhauri and Jaug. CII, I, pp. 92, 111.  
 (3) V R.E; XII R. 158.  
 (4) XII R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 20.  
 (5) V R.E; XII R.E.; VII P.E.

deliberate on public affairs. It is the smallest class as regards number, but the most respected on account of the high character and wisdom of its members; for from their ranks the advisors of the king are taken, and the treasurers of the state, and the arbiters who settle disputes. The generals of the army also, and the chief magistrates usually belong to this class."<sup>(1)</sup>

Strabo quotes as follows, "The seventh class consists of the councillors and assessors of the king. To them belong the highest posts of government, the tribunals of justice, and the general administration of public affairs."<sup>(2)</sup> Arrian writes, "The seventh caste consists of the councillors of state, who advise the king, or the magistrates of self-governed cities in the management of public affairs. In point of numbers this is a small class, but it is distinguished by superior wisdom and justice, and hence enjoys the prerogative of choosing governors, chiefs of provinces, deputy-governors, superintendents of the treasury, generals of the army, admirals of the navy, controllers and commissioners who superintend agriculture."<sup>(3)</sup>

On an examination of these statements it appears that they tally closely with the description of the service of mahamattas available from other sources. It would certainly be most advisable for the king to choose his ministerial council from among the mahāmattas, since their

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(1) Diod. II, 41.  
 (2) Strabo, XV, 1, 48.  
 (2) Indika, XII.

experience of administration would be of great help. For the arbiters who settle disputes, we have the equivalent in the judicial mahāmattas referred to in the edicts. The mahāmattas who are the generals of the army are probably the same as the senānāyaka mahāmattas referred to in the Vinaya Piṭaka. Arrian's remark about the seventh caste working as magistrates of self-governed cities may be a somewhat confused account of the posting of mahāmattas as administrators amongst the tribal republics, which, though nowhere specifically stated, was certainly a possible action on the part of the Mauryas. Of the mahāmattas the only branch neglected by Classical sources was that of the dhamma-mahāmattas, but since this was not initiated till the reign of Aśoka, it would not be mentioned in Megasthenes' account. It would seem that the mahāmattas, certainly those in senior posts, were an exclusive group. This naturally led to Megasthenes regarding them as a class.

The jurisdiction of cities was conducted by mahāmattas specially appointed for this purpose, to whom the 1st Separate Edict at Dhauli and Jaugada is addressed. <sup>(1)</sup> The edict is devoted to emphasising the importance of just behaviour and impartial judgements. Aśoka cautions against weaknesses such as anger, laziness, fatigue, want of patience etc.; any of which may prejudice a judgement. As a

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(1) I S.E. Dhauli and Jaug. CII, I, pp. 92, 111.

further defence against poor justice, the king has decided to send a mahāmatta every five years to inspect the judiciary in the cities. In addition to the royal inspector, there was to be a provincial inspection every three years, by a mahāmatta appointed by the prince. These judicial mahāmattas were concerned with problems arising from the administration of the cities, connected with the artisans, merchants and other townspeople, many of which problems are discussed in the Arthaśāstra.<sup>(1)</sup> Civil cases dealing with marriage and inheritance must also have been brought before these officers.

Jurisdiction in the rural areas was conducted by the rājūkas. They were assessment officers as well, but we shall restrict our present consideration to their judicial functions. An entire pillar edict is devoted to this aspect of the work of the rājūkas.<sup>(2)</sup> The edict is dated to the twenty-sixth regnal year which suggests that Aśoka's delegation of greater power to these officials took place late in his reign. It is possible that, previous to this, jurisdiction in the rural areas was in the hands of the higher officials and was not accessible to the entire population. The subjects of this jurisdiction were probably largely problems of agriculture and land disputes.

In the same Pillar Edict there occurs a sentence concerning procedure and punishment which raises the question of whether Aśoka discontinued the usual Hindu practice

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(1) Book IV.  
 (2) IV P.E. CII, I, p. 122. For a further consideration of the work of the rājūkas, see p. 390 ff.

of grading punishments according to class, which would certainly have been a most daring step. The sentence reads as follows,

"...ichitaviye hi esā kiṃti viyohālasamatā ca siya  
āṇḍasamatā cā....."

Hultzsch translates it as,

"For the following is to be desired (viz), that there should be both impartiality in judicial proceedings and impartiality in punishments...."<sup>(1)</sup>

Bloch translates it as,

"Il est en effet désirable qu'il y ait uniformité dans la procedure et les peines."<sup>(2)</sup>

We prefer the latter translation because the former suggests an interpretation of the subject which we do not accept. The translation of the word samatā by "impartiality" suggests in this context more than a lack of prejudice on the part of the judge. It also suggests that punishments should not be given with a partial attitude towards the social position of the offender. Such a rule would contradict legal procedure as laid down in traditional texts, which was no doubt observed. The Arthaśāstra for instance is very clear on this point. It states, "Taking into consideration the (social position of) persons, the nature of the offence, the cause whether grave or slight (that led to the perpetration of the offence),

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(1) IV P.E. CII, I, p. 125.

(2) LIA, p. 165.

the antecedent and present circumstances, the time and the place; and without failing to notice equitable distinctions among offenders, whether belonging to the royal family or the common people, shall the commissioner determine the propriety of imposing the first, middlemost or highest ameracements." (1)

Similarly penalties for leading a brahman astray are far more severe than those for any other caste. (2)

For Aśoka to have abolished discriminations of caste and position with regard to punishments would certainly have been in keeping with the principles of Dhamma, but at the same time Aśoka must have realised that such a radical step would cause untold upheavals in the society of the period. Furthermore such a step would antagonise not only the brahmins but also the kṣatriyas, the combined forces of which would have been difficult to keep under control. Although Aśoka attacked the brahmanical position through indirect measures such as the abolition of animal sacrifice, it appears that he was shrewd enough not to openly oppose a powerful factor in Indian society. In his edicts he was careful to placate the brahman element by insisting that the utmost respect must be shown to brahmins.

We prefer the interpretation of Bloch which suggests that a uniform legal procedure should be adopted throughout areas under Mauryan administration, and similarly that a uniform penal code should be used in such areas. This would assist

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(1) IV, 10; Shamasastri's trans. p. 255.  
 (2) IV, 13.

the rājūkas<sup>iv</sup> in their decisions and would make each legal case more comprehensible to the higher authority, not present during proceedings, since such a uniformity would lead to legal cases being treated in a system of regular categories.

Bloch has suggested that by the addition of an anusvāra to the key-word in the sentence, samatā, it would read as sammātā (Sanskrit, samyaktā),<sup>(1)</sup> which would then mean correctness instead of uniformity. The sentence would then read,

"that there should be correctness both in judicial proceedings and in punishments."

This emphasises what has already been stated earlier in the edict to the rājūkas. This interpretation is feasible, but we are of the opinion that from the context of the edict and the other administrative functions of the rājūkas Aśoka implied a uniformity in proceedings and punishments. Moreover it is surprising that if sammātā is the correct reading, none of the versions of the edict contains the missing anusvāra.

According to Megasthenes the amount of crime committed in Mauryan India was small, and he describes the Indians as an honest people. He states that theft was of very rare occurrence.<sup>(2)</sup> This may well have been true in comparison with Greece or Asia Minor. Pāṭaliputra, being the capital city, must certainly have been well policed, and its authorities merciless in putting down crime. The Arthaśāstra:

(1) LIA, p. 164, n. 10.

(2) Strabo XV, 1, 53-56.

certainly envisages the possibility of various types of crime. Among other chapters in the book, three chapters deal with the detection and suppression of criminals. (1) It would seem that robber bands operated in the country-side since there are references to them in Buddhist literature. (2)

Punishment was largely in the form of fines. (3) Those who could not pay were permitted to sell themselves into bondage in order to do so. (4) Punishments of mutilation of the limbs could sometimes be charged to the payment of a fine. (5) Capital punishment was known and practised. Despite the fact that Aśoka was a Buddhist he did not abolish the death penalty. He did however make a concession whereby those condemned to death were granted a three-day respite. (6) During this period it was possible to make a final appeal to the judges. This could be in terms either of a retrial, or, as Hultzsch suggests, of the payment of a ransom. (6) This system is not unknown to the Arthaśāstra. (7) If neither of these was possible, then relatives or friends could attend to the needs of the condemned man. F. Kern maintains that the fetters referred to here are spiritual ones, and not those of physical imprisonment. (8) We believe this to be a false interpretation,

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(1) IV, 4, 5, 6.  
 (2) Jāt. IV, p. 430.  
 (3) Artha. III, 11; III, 17-20; V. 1.  
 (4) III, 13.  
 (5) IV, 10.  
 (6) IV P.E. CII, I, p. 123.  
 (7) II, 36.  
 (8) A. p. 64.

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since the context of the edict makes it amply clear that it refers to legal and judicial proceedings and whatever punishment might ensue from them. It is clear from the passage regarding the three-day respite that the idea of capital punishment was unpleasant to Aśoka. We may regard this as an example of an occasion where his prudent statecraft triumphed over his ideals.

Provinces were subdivided into districts for purposes of administration, and groups of officials worked in each district. It would seem that the group consisted of three major officials, the prādeśika, the rājūka and the yukta. These three were in turn assisted by many others.<sup>(1)</sup>

Senart was of the opinion that the prādeśika was the local governor or chief.<sup>(2)</sup> He described these officers as "the ancestors of the Thakurs, Raos, Rawals of the present day."<sup>(3)</sup> Smith interprets the term as meaning district officers.

Thomas suggests that they were royal officials and not territorial nobles.<sup>(4)</sup> He explains that the word is connected with the kindred term "pradeṣṭṛ" which is used in various sources as the designation of the official.<sup>(5)</sup> Kern translates the term as a provincial governor.<sup>(6)</sup>

We are of the opinion that the functions of the prādeśika were similar to those of the pradeṣṭṛ in the

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- (1) III R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 4.
  - (2) ZDMG. XXVII, p. 106 ff.
  - (3) A. p. 163-64.
  - (4) JRAS; 1914. pp. 383-386.
  - (5) Tantrākhyāyika p. 109. 1. 2. (Dr. Hertel's Ed.) Mahābhārata II, 5, 38.  
See Hopkins. JAOS. XIII, p. 129 n.
  - (6) JRAS. 1880, p. 393.

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Arthaśāstra. These officers were in charge of the overall administration of each of the districts of a particular province, each district being under one pradeṣṭṛ. Much of their work was of the nature of tours of inspection. They had to inspect the work of both the district officials and the village officials, and had to make reports to the chief collector or samāharṭṛ.<sup>(1)</sup>

In their judicial capacity three pradeṣṭṛs could<sup>(2)</sup> form a judicial bench for trying offenders against the law. The text speaks of either three pradeṣṭṛs or three ministers fulfilling this function. This was presumably an administrative measure since in some areas the former were more easily available than the latter, and vice versa. It is clear from this passage that the pradeṣṭṛs were of high official status, since they are included with the ministers. Apparently only the serious cases were brought before them, the milder ones being dealt with by the rājūkas or the city magistrates as the case might be. In a chapter dealing with the protection of government departments, the pradeṣṭṛ appointed by the samāharṭṛ is instructed to check the work of the superintendents and the subordinates.<sup>(3)</sup> This again points to the elevated position of this officer. Thus the duty of the prādeśika was one of supervising the collection of revenue and of maintaining law and order both in the rural areas and in the towns within

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- (1) Artha, II, 35.  
(2) IV, 1.  
(3) IV, 9.

his district.

We are of the opinion that the rājūka was subordinate to the prādeśika, although other writers have suggested the reverse. Jayaswal has attempted to prove that they were ministers of the central government. (1) He bases this idea on the fact that Aśoka states that the rājūka was in charge of hundreds of thousands of people. (2) In addition Jayaswal maintains that the word is derived from rāju a known Pali word-form in the sense of ruler or king. (3) The latter is an argument based on false etymology, as the lengthening of the first syllable in rājūka is due to the fact that double consonants could not be written in the brāhmī script at that time. The description of the officer as being in charge of many hundreds of thousands of people does not necessarily imply that he was a minister of the central government. It can as we shall see, refer to a responsible position in local administration.

Among the duties of the prādeśika is included that of making a complete tour every five years, presumably of his area of administration. He is accompanied by the yukta and the rājūka. (4) The officials are mentioned in the following order, yukta, rājūka, prādeśika. Normally the first or the last mentioned would be the senior. The yukta we know to have been a subordinate official. It is unlikely that the seniormost

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(1) HP. p. 195 n. 287, 301-2; JBORS. 1908. pp. 36-40, 1918, pp. 41-42.

(2) IV P.E. CII, I, p. 122. pp. 41-42.

(2) IV P.E. CII, I, p. 122.

(3) See p. 392 for other views on this subject.

(4) III R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 4.

official would be mentioned in the middle of the list. If we also consider the work of the prādeśika as described in the Arthaśāstra, it becomes clear that he was the senior of the three.

Smith refers to the rājūka as a governor on the basis of the information contained in the 4th Pillar Edict, where it is stated that the rājūkas are occupied with many hundred thousands of men. <sup>(1)</sup> The edict continues with advice to the rājūkas on their relationship with the people over whom they are thus empowered. This is concerned largely with the giving of rewards and punishments. As we have explained earlier, the rājūkas worked in a judicial capacity as well as being revenue administrators. The fact that their administrative work was of equal or greater importance is clear from the statement that they were occupied with many hundred thousand people, since in their judicial work alone they would be occupied with a far smaller number. Since they are referred to collectively in this edict the total number of people over whom they had administrative control would naturally run into many hundred thousands. Further in the edict they are commanded to obey the agents of the king who are acquainted with the wishes of the king. If they were very senior officials, as Jayaswal, for instance, believes, the king would not have stated so categorically and publicly that they

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(1) A. p. 163; CII, I, p. 122.

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were to obey his agents.

The sphere of work of the rājūkas was restricted to the rural areas, since they were appointed to work for the welfare of country people, janapada hitasukhāye.<sup>(2)</sup> Through their duties they were to discharge both their administrative office and also teach people to practice the Dhamma.

The fact that in his twenty-sixth regnal year, Aśoka ordered that judicial decisions were to be made by the rājūkas would suggest that in previous years these decisions were made by a more senior official. The new policy gave the rājūkas greater power and more freedom of decision. By not having to refer every judicial decision to a senior official, the effectiveness and pace of administration was improved. With regard to the death sentence an appeal could be made to the rājūkas. Presumably in border-line cases they may have referred the entire matter to the prādeśikas or officials senior to them.

The judicial nature of the work of the rājūkas becomes more clear, and their importance in provincial administration becomes more apparent when we consider their administrative work. There is agreement among various sources that the rājūka belonged to the department of

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- (1) The use of the word pulisāni for agents suggests that they were not high ranking inspectors or emissaries of the king, but possibly public relations officers who informed the king of public opinion, and received from him orders regarding policy on this subject.
- (2) IV P.E. CII, I, p. 122.

administration responsible for surveying and assessing land.

Bühler has suggested the identification of the rājūka with the rajjugāhaka mentioned in the Jātakas. (1)

The rajjuka or rajjugāhaka was the rope-holding officer who measured the lands of the tax paying cultivators. (2) The tax on the land thus measured was assessed by the rajjuka according to the size and the quality of the land. This would constitute the land tax. Assessment on the share of produce may have been made by another official. The Jātakas as we have seen before, mention the donamāpakamahāmatta and thus the donamāpaka officials may have been responsible for the latter tax.

The rājūka is also known to the Arthaśāstra. (3)

The cora-rajjuka is described as a rural officer who is concerned with the sources of revenue, a reference to the assessment officer. As Nilakantha Sastri suggests, the rājūkas are probably meant in Megasthenes' reference to the market officers, the ἀγορανόμοι. (4) Both Sastri and Timmer (5)

believe that this reference to market officers is really to agricultural officers and that the mistake was due to an incorrect transcription by Strabo who wrote ἀγορανόμοι instead of ἀγρονόμοι. (6) Megasthenes describes their work as follows, "Some superintend the rivers, measure the land, as is done in Egypt, and inspect the sluices, from which water

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(1) ZDMG. XLVII, 1893, p. 466 ff.  
(2) Jāt. IV, p. 169.  
(3) II, 6; IV, 13.  
(4) ANM, p. 224.  
(5) ANM, p. 120 n. 1; MIM, p. 200.  
(6) Strabo, XV, 1, 50.

is let out from the main canal/s into their branches so that every one may have an equal supply of it. The same persons have charge also of the huntsmen, and are entrusted with the power of rewarding and punishing them according to their deserts. They collect the taxes and superintend the occupations connected with the land, as those of the wood-cutters, the carpenters, the blacksmiths and the miners. They construct roads, and, at every ten stadia, set up a pillar to show the by-roads and distances."

It is evident why Aśoka devotes an entire edict to the work of the rājūkas. Clearly they were the backbone of the rural administration. This was an extremely important and responsible position. The fact that they were given increased judicial powers concerning the settlement of disputes during the reign of Aśoka was a logical step. The conflicts brought to them would be largely concerned with agricultural problems, assessment, remission of taxes, land disputes, water disputes, grazing disputes between herdsmen and cultivators, and quarrels amongst village artisans. If each of these disputes had to be taken to the prādeśikas for judgement it would act as a break on the pace of administration, especially as the rājūka himself would have to present the case, since he was the officer directly responsible for the administrative measure concerning the particular issue. Thus a far more satisfactory step was to increase the power of the rājūka.

Another factor that may have influenced this decision

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 is one that we have referred to already. In the latter part of Aśoka's reign, when he was incapable of maintaining the same degree of personal control as in his early years, he may have decided on a policy of decentralisation in some departments. The office of the rājūka was thus given more power.

The check on the rājūka misappropriating this power was already in existence in the form of the prādeśīkas who, as we have said earlier, were expected to lay great stress on inspection and surveillance. More specifically in his twelfth regnal year, Aśoka had ordered that a quinquennial inspection should be undertaken by the group of three officials, the prādeśīka, rājūka and yukta.<sup>(2)</sup> The purpose of this tour was no doubt that each rājūka would present his work, both administrative and judicial, to the prādeśīka, and the latter's report would be recorded by the yukta. The presence of the rājūka at the inspection, raised it to an altogether more valuable level. The purely judicial side of the rājūkas' work may also have been inspected by the special mahāmatta sent to inspect the city judicial administration, every three years by the viceroy and every five years by the king. The report was made available by the yuktas to the council of ministers.

The yuktas mentioned in the 3rd Rock Edict appear to have been subordinate officials. Early writers have attempted to translate the word in various ways. Senart

(1) See Ch. III. p. 207.

(2) III R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 4.

suggested that it meant "the faithful"<sup>(1)</sup>. Buhler suggested  
 "the dutiful".<sup>(2)</sup> But as Senart admits this ignores the  
 occurrence of the three ca's in the phrase, yuta ca rājūka ca  
prādesike ca.<sup>(3)</sup> He bases his interpretation on the Kalsi  
 version.<sup>(4)</sup> The presence of the three conjunctions makes it  
 clear that the first word represents another class of  
 officials, the yuk~~z~~tas. Furthermore, as Thomas states, if  
 the anusamyāna is a tour, as is generally accepted, then  
 neither the faithful nor the dutiful can accompany the rājūkas  
 and the prādeśikas.<sup>(5)</sup> We accept Thomas' interpretation of  
 the term as "the secretariat staff."

The duties of the yuktas were secretarial work and  
 accounting. They accompanied the rājūkas and the prādeśikas  
 in order to register decisions taken by the senior officers and  
 on the basis of these to draw up reports which were then sub-  
 mitted to the ministers and the ministerial council. The  
yukta as an accountant is referred to in the Arthaśāstra,  
 where it is said that superintendents of all departments are  
 expected to work with the yuktas and other officers, in order  
 to check the embezzlement of funds.<sup>(6)</sup> The fact of their being  
 accountants would be an added reason for them to accompany the  
rājūkas and the prādeśikas on their quinquennial tours.

There was an intermediate level of administration

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(1) I.A. 1891. p. 246 n. 50.  
 (2) ZDMG. XXXVII, p. 106.  
 (3) ~~n. p.~~ Senart I.A. 1891, 246, n. 50.  
 III R.E. Gir. CII, I. p. 4.  
 (4) Bloch. LIA. p 96.  
 (5) JRAS. 1914, p. 387 ff.  
 (6) II, 9.

between the district level and that of the village. The unit here was formed by a group of five or ten villages. The two important officials concerned with the administration of this unit were the gopas and the sthānikas, the work of both of whom is described in the Arthaśāstra. The gopa worked as an accountant to the unit. (1) His duties included the setting up of village boundaries, the numbering of cultivated and uncultivated plots of land, of gardens forests and temples, registering irrigation works, cremation grounds, pilgrimage sites, pasture lands, roads, gifts, sales charities and remission of agricultural taxes. He also kept a census of the population of each village according to their tax-paying capacity, the professions of the villages and their age. Income and expenditure for purposes of assessing tax were also recorded. A record was kept of the livestock in each village.

The tax was collected by the sthānika, who worked directly under the prādeśika. (2) The sthānika worked together with the gopa and was subject to periodical inspections by the prādeśika. It would seem that the sthānika was the equivalent of the modern assistant-collector, and the prādeśika was the district collector, both grades of officials working under the final authority of the samāhartṛ or the chief-collector.

Individual villages must have had their own set of

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(1) II, 35.  
 (2) Ibid.

officials who were directly responsible to the gopas. The village headman was no doubt chosen from among the village elders. He may have supervised the tax-collection of the village and other obvious matters such as discipline and defence. In smaller villages it is likely that the headman was the sole functionary. In larger villages he may have been assisted by other officials necessary to administration, such as an accountant and a scribe. These semi-official functionaries may have been paid by a remission of taxes. Some of the full time officials employed by the king were paid with land grants. <sup>(1)</sup> However they did not own the land, as they had no right to sell or mortgage it, but were entitled only to its produce.

Other officials functioned at various stages of the organisation. We have already mentioned the king's agents or pulisāni who probably belonged to a subordinate rank similar to that of the yuktas. <sup>(2)</sup> As we have suggested, they served the same function as public relations officers. They were acquainted with public opinion which they reported to the king, and the king in turn used them to ensure that his policy was being carried out even in the more remote part of the kingdom. Owing to the nature of their work they were not all of the same grade. <sup>(3)</sup> Aśoka mentions that they were appointed to three grades. Those closest to the king, who may have contributed to decisions on policy, must have belonged to the highest grade.

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(1) Artha. II, 1.  
 (2) IV P.E. CII, I, p. 122.  
 (3) VII P.E. CII, I, p. 130.

Associated with the pulisāni were the paṭivedakas<sup>(1)</sup> or special reporters, also mentioned in the edicts. They had direct access to the king at any moment and it would seem therefore that the king placed great reliance on their evaluation of public opinion. Both the pulisāni and the paṭivedikas must also have served as a link between the central administration and the provincial administration.

The paṭivedikas may be compared with the spies mentioned in the Arthaśāstra (cāra and gūḍha-puruṣa).<sup>(2)</sup> The Aśokan organisation does not appear to be as complex as that envisaged in the Arthaśāstra. In the Arthaśāstra the espionage system is of the utmost importance. Spies are sent all over the country disguised as ordinary citizens in every walk of life. Even ministers are watched by spies. The Aśokan system however does not appear to have been so secretive since he admits in an edict that he employs both pulisāni and paṭivedikas. These may have been travelling inspectors (those of a high grade), who were known to the population and the administration, who went from place to place examining the governmental organisation and making reports to the king.

Such officials were known to the administration of other empires, the Achaemenids sent an officer every year to make a careful inspection of each province. He was known as the king's eye or sometimes the king's ear or the king's messenger.<sup>(3)</sup> This was an additional control exercised by the

(1) VI R.E. VII, I, p. 11

(2) I, 12; IV, 9.

(3) Olmstead. History of the Persian Empire. p. 59.  
Ghirshman. Iran, p. 144.

king on his administration and his subjects.

Charlemagne had evolved an even more efficient system of a similar control. Two officials known as the Missi were sent each year on tours of inspection. <sup>(1)</sup> One was the secular representative and the other was the representative of the church. They usually travelled in pairs, thus acting as a check on each other's work. They had the power to dismiss lower officials if any were found to be inefficient. They were responsible for having the king's decrees read out at public meetings, and wherever necessary these degrees were translated from Latin to the vernacular. It is quite possible that reading the edicts aloud to the public was the work of the pulisāni in Aśoka's administration. Of the missi, the clerical representative investigated the work of monks and nuns, and the secular official examined the judicial and financial records of the administration.

The employment of inspectors and representatives independent of the administration enabled the ruler to keep in touch with developments throughout the empire. In the case of Charlemagne it acted as a check on the growing feudal power of local lords. In the case of Aśoka it curbed the ambition of provincial rulers.

The frequency of inspections and the existence of spies must have carried with it the flavour of a totalitarian state. Since there was no elected representative body to

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(1) Winstoh. Charlemagne, ~~the Great~~. p. 210.

assist the king in governing, he could have recourse only to such means of eliciting public opinion. Where used with caution and in a responsible manner, they may have served their purpose well. For Aśoka these officers served the additional purpose of a vast propaganda machine, to publicise his policy. The policy of Dhamma for instance would be explained by them to the population and their reaction ascertained. This reaction may well have been the basis for some of the edicts.

The sixth class mentioned by Megasthenes is that of the officers who supervise and enquire into various affairs and present reports to the king, or a superior officer such as the local magistrate. The extract quoted by Diodorus uses the term <sup>(1)</sup> ἐπιδρακονοὶ for this class. Strabo speaks of the same group and stresses the fact of their inspecting the army and the courtesans as well, and making secret reports to the king. <sup>(2)</sup> He uses the term ἑσπέραι for them. Arrian in his account uses the same term and speaks of them reporting to the king, or in self-governing areas to the magistrates. <sup>(3)</sup>

Timmer, with the support of most earlier students, <sup>(4)</sup> argues that this was a class of spies. She bases this argument on the fact that there is a great emphasis on their making secret reports to the king or the magistrates, and that they are classed as a separate group of officials from the seventh group, that of the councillors.

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(1) Diod. II, 41.  
 (2) Strabo. XV, l. 48.  
 (3) Indika, XII.  
 (4) MIM, p. 170.

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We are of the opinion that this is perhaps an exaggerated interpretation of the terms used by the Greek writers, in the light of the text. *'ενίσκοπος* is translated as "the one who watches over: overseer: guardian." (1)

*'εφοπος* is translated as "overseer: guardian: ruler". In addition the term is used for officials in corporations. More particularly it was also the title of the magistrates at Heraclea. (2) Thus the literal meaning of the two terms is more that of an overseer or a superintendent than a spy. The fact that they were asked to make secret reports to the King does not imply that they belonged to the espionage service. The mention of these reports may be better interpreted as the fact that they had direct access to the king, and that their important reports could reach him without having to go through the official channels of a detailed bureaucratic organisation. Furthermore it seems hardly feasible that spies would be distinguishable as a class. The whole purpose of having spies is that their numbers and activities should remain unknown.

We prefer to regard the *'ενίσκοποι* and the *'εφοποι* as a class of officials junior to the councillors, or the seventh class mentioned by Megasthenes. They would thus be the same as the adhyakṣas, the superintendents of various departments mentioned in the Arthaśāstra. (3) The

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- (1) Liddell and Scott. p. 657.  
(2) Ibid, p. 747.  
(3) Book, II.

Sanskrit adhyakṣa is etymologically similar to the terms used by Diodorus and Arrian. These officials were responsible for the efficient working of a particular department under their charge. They supervised its administration and it would not be unusual that in the course of their work they would be expected to make reports either to the king or to the higher officials.

The institution of spies as described in the Arthaśāstra is not similar to the sixth class mentioned in Classical sources. The use of spies in various disguises for gathering information is known to the Arthaśāstra, and is suggested as a normal practice in statecraft.<sup>(1)</sup> But spies are nowhere treated as a separate class. They are a group within the administrative system and are recruited from various strata of society, from orphaned children to brahman widows and śūdra women, including a variety of state employees.<sup>(2)</sup>

Spies are not described as working as inspectors or overseers. Their purpose is to merge themselves within the group that they are sent to spy upon, and identify themselves completely with members of the profession which will give them closest access to the matter which concerns them. Thus it is suggested that spies should work in the guise of fraudulent disciples, recluses, householders, merchants, ascetics, students, mendicant women and prostitutes.<sup>(3)</sup> Such an array of spies

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(1) II, 35, IV, 4.  
 (2) I, 12.  
 (3) I, 11.

could work in many sections of society.

Secrecy is naturally emphasised in this work. Not only are the spies unknown to the general public, but they should remain unknown to each other as well. It is stated that the officers in the institute of espionage should not know the working spies, but should give directions in writing. (1) The espionage system was not used only in the detection of crime and opinion in the home country. Spies were also sent to foreign countries, just as spies from foreign countries were known to be active in the home country. It was part of the work of the institute of espionage to trace the foreign spies.

City administration had its own hierarchy of officials. The Arthaśāstra devotes an entire chapter to the duties of the city superintendent, or nāgaraka. (2) His chief concern was the maintenance of law and order in the city. In order to do this every stranger to the city had to be reported and registered. At night a strict curfew was enforced, forbidding movement to all but those who had special permission. The cleanliness of the city was also the concern of the nāgaraka. Because of the prevalence of wooden buildings in some cities, the danger of fire was a constant fear. The nāgaraka had to supervise fire precautions to the extent of insisting that all blacksmiths and others who used fire in their trade lived together in one part of the city. In times of famine, it seems that the city superintendent was also in

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(1) (X) I, 12.  
 (2) II, 36.

charge of the distribution of grain from the granaries. <sup>(1)</sup>

The nāgaraka was assisted by two subordinate officials <sup>(2)</sup> the gopa and the sthānika. Their functions were similar to those of their namesakes in rural administration. The gopa kept the accounts of ten, twenty or forty households. This was a detailed procedure since he was supposed to know the income and expenditure of each household. He also kept a detailed register of each person recording the caste, gotra, name and occupation. The sthānika kept the accounts of various sections of the city and presumably collected general taxes where they were due. Matters of any importance were reported first to the gopa or sthānika and they in turn informed the nāgaraka, who presumably sent the information whenever necessary to the provincial governor or the king.

The Aśokan inscriptions mention the nagalaviyohālaka <sup>(3)</sup> mahāmattas and refer to them largely in their judicial capacity. This is not a reference to the nāgaraka since these mahāmattas appear to conduct judicial proceedings whereas the nāgaraka, in terms of judicial administration, is only concerned with the release of prisoners on certain auspicious occasions such as the birth of a prince. It would seem that the nagalaviyohālaka mahāmattas were judicial officers who worked under the general administration of the nāgaraka. The latter may have intervened in their work during the proceedings of special cases,

- (1) Mahāsthān and Sohgaaurā Inscriptions. Sircar. SI. pp. 82, 85.  
 (2) Artha, II, 36.  
 (3) I S. E. Dhauli and Jaug. CII, I, pp. 92, 111

and in determining which prisoners were to be released on certain occasions. The nagalaviyohālaka mahāmattas may have been similar to the paura-vyavahāarakas briefly mentioned in the Arthaśāstra as among the more important officials in the administration. <sup>(1)</sup> Unfortunately we are not given detailed information on the work of the paura-vyavahāraka. A further reference to the nagalaviyohālaka-mahāmattas again instructs these officers to concern themselves with the welfare of prisoners, and the term is translated by Bloch as "magistrates". <sup>(2)</sup>

In describing city administration, Megasthenes outlines a more elaborate system. <sup>(3)</sup> According to him the officials are divided into six committees each with five members. The first committee was concerned with matters relating to industrial arts. The second occupied itself with the entertainment of foreigners. Its work consisted of providing lodgings and keeping a watch on foreigners through people who were ostensibly to assist them. They were escorted on their way when they left the country or if they died their property was forwarded to their relatives. They were given medical attention when sick or were buried if they died. The third committee kept a register of births and deaths both by way of a census, and also for purposes of taxation. The fourth committee was in charge of matters of

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- (1) I, 12.  
 (2) LIA, p. 139.  
 (3) Strabo XV, 1, 50.

trade and commerce such as inspecting weights and measures, organising public sales, and ensuring that each merchant dealt with a single commodity, since more than one required a double tax. The fifth committee supervised the public sale of manufactured articles. The sixth committee collected the tax on the articles sold, this being one tenth of the purchase price. The author states that those who attempted to evade this tax by fraud were punished with death.

Indian sources do not mention the existence of these committees. Timmer suggests that they may have been a temporary measure in Pāṭaliputra, during the period when Megasthenes was there, or that Megasthenes may have grouped the administration in this order according to Greek examples<sup>(1)</sup>. The Arthaśāstra does not suggest city administration along these lines. Nevertheless each of the committees mentioned by Megasthenes has its equivalent official in the list given in the Arthaśāstra. It is possible that for certain sections of the administration of a city, or more particularly of Pāṭaliputra, committees were found to be more efficient than an individual official. A city as large as Pāṭaliputra, must have been divided into a certain number of sectors, each with an identical administrative organisation. It is quite likely that officials of one kind met in a group and delivered their reports to the central organisation and received orders in the same way. For example all the gopas of the various sectors would meet in a body to discuss policy, etc. In this

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(1) MIM, p. 230.

sense they could be regarded as a separate committee. We must keep in mind that the Arthaśāstra is not a description of Mauryan administration, but rather a text-book on administration. Without doubt the Mauryas must have modified parts of it in practice, or even deviated from it where necessary. Thus it is possible that Megasthenes' account may well be a description of administration in the city of Pāṭaliputra.

The use of committees of five members is not completely foreign to administration in India. Although in Indian sources there is generally one person at the head, nevertheless, such committees based on the idea of the panchāyat are mentioned in the Jātakas,<sup>(1)</sup> and the Mahābhārata.<sup>(2)</sup> An even more interesting parallel to the description of Megasthenes can be observed in the administration of the village of Uttaramerur in the Cola period.<sup>(3)</sup>

Timmer has suggested that Megasthenes perhaps saw groups of officers of various ranks, working in one department, and mistakenly believed them to be a committee of equals.<sup>(4)</sup> The Committees mentioned by him correspond with the offices of various superintendents mentioned in the Arthaśāstra. These officials, the adhyakṣas, were assisted by subordinate officers. Possibly each office consisted of the superintendent and four assisting officers thus leading Megasthenes to believe that it was a committee. This is only one of many possible

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(1) Mahābodhi Jāt. V, p. 228.  
 (2) II, 5.  
 (3) N. Sastri. The Colas. pp. 283-84.  
 (4) MIM, p. 199

explanations.

The first committee supervised the industrial arts. This may have been a group of officers who were in charge of the artisans in the city. The second committee has no exact equivalent in the Arthaśāstra. Considering the close watch that was kept on foreigners, as is clear from the duties of the nāgaraka, it seems obvious that there would be a group of officials specially concerned with them. There is more reason for such a body of officials in the capital at Pāṭaliputra since it was likely to be visited by many people from outside. As we have suggested earlier, foreigners may not necessarily mean only non-Indians. Visitors from the more distant parts of the empire would certainly be included in this category. If indeed such a careful register was kept of all the inhabitants of the city as the Arthaśāstra suggests, then it is likely that any non-resident of the town was classified as a foreigner. Those that were escorted on their way when leaving the country, would be the more important foreigners. The fact that foreigners were closely watched by means of specially appointed assistants who looked after them, agrees in spirit with the emphasis placed by the Arthaśāstra on the use of spies in various guises for obtaining information. The statement that the committee forwarded the property of foreigners to their relatives if they died in Pāṭaliputra seems somewhat idealistic. Presumably this only applied in cases where the

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(1) II, 36.

relatives were in areas within Mauryan jurisdiction. The mention of the committee burying the bodies of those that die, points in this instance to non-Hindu foreigners, otherwise cremations would be the accepted form of disposal of the body.

The third committee registering births and deaths and keeping census reports tallies very closely with the work of the gopas, mentioned earlier. The fourth committee appears to have had responsibilities similar to the various superintendents connected with trade and commerce mentioned in the Arthaśāstra, such as, for example, the superintendent of weights and measures and the superintendent of tolls. <sup>(1)</sup> The fifth committee covers almost the same work as that done by the superintendent of commerce. <sup>(2)</sup> The sixth committee, responsible for the collection of the tax of one tenth, is probably a reference to the office of the sthānika, who was responsible for the collection of various taxes. <sup>(3)</sup>

Other officers concerned with the administration of the city appear to have been overlooked or were forgotten by the time Megasthenes recorded his memoirs. Thus the nāgaraka or city superintendent must certainly have been an important official at Pāṭaliputra, but Megasthenes makes no mention of him. It is possible that parts of the original account of Megasthenes on city administration have been lost, and that the full account may have mentioned the nāgaraka and other

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- (1) II, 19.  
 (2) II, 16.  
 (3) II, 36.

officials. The Arthaśāstra constantly emphasises the importance of central control and certainly Mauryan administration from what we have discussed so far was in favour of this centralisation. It is unlikely that Megasthenes, an otherwise intelligent observer, would have missed this emphasis. It is not outside the bounds of possibility that this was another instance of the author investing India with institutions based on his own political idealism.

Among the other officials mentioned by Aśoka in the edicts are the aṃta-mahāmattas.<sup>(1)</sup> These were the officers who worked among the frontier peoples and the less civilised tribes. Because they are ranked as mahāmattas it is likely that they were in charge of the administration of these areas. They were directly concerned with carrying out Aśoka's policy towards the frontier people.<sup>(2)</sup> This policy was largely an effort to gain the confidence of the borderers, so that, with mutual trust, their loyalty might also be depended upon by Aśoka. He expects the aṃta-mahāmattas to work towards creating this confidence and asserts again that they, the borderers, are like his children, and his relationship towards them is like that of a father. This administrative policy is linked closely with the propagation of Dhamma amongst the borderers, which was included as one of the duties of the aṃta-mahāmattas.<sup>(3)</sup>

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- (1) ~~xx~~ II S.E., I P.E.  
 (2) II S.E. Dhauri. CII, I, p. 98;  
 (3) I P.E. CII, I, p. 120.

Elsewhere in his edicts, Aśoka has mentioned the establishing of medicinal treatment for men and animals in neighbouring countries, which he claims was done at his instigation; the same applied to the southern borderers as well.<sup>(1)</sup> It is possible that the amta-mahāmattas acted as liaison officers in matters of this kind where bordering people were concerned. The Greek kingdoms may have received envoys, since their relationship does not appear to have been quite as close to Aśoka as that of the southern borderers. Together with acquainting the borderers with the principles of the Dhamma, the amta-mahāmattas must also have been responsible for preventing rebellions against Mauryan authority among the frontier peoples. These mahāmattas were aided in their work<sup>(2)</sup> by special officers which the king appointed for this purpose. Hultzsch suggests that these may have been the same as the mahāmattas referred to in the 1st Separate Edict, who were<sup>(3)</sup> expected to make tours of inspection. We are of the opinion that if they had been the same, Aśoka would have referred to them as mahāmattas and not as avutike. We would suggest that they were subordinate officials, probably of the rank of yuktas or a little senior to them. The Jaugada version of the edict used the term ayutike for these officials. Buhler has traced the prākṛit ayuti to the Sanskrit ayuktin, meaning an

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- (1) II R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 2.  
 (2) II S.E. Dhauri, CII, I, p. 98.  
 (3) CII, I, p. 100, n.7.

(1) official. Thus the similarity of the designations, yukta and ayutika suggests a similar category of officials.

It may also be possible to suggest a connection between the aṃta-mahāmattas and the aṃta-pālās of the Arthaśāstra. (2) These were the superintendents of tolls. No doubt each province had its own aṃta-pālas, and possibly in some provinces a toll had to be paid even in exchanging goods in the various districts of the province. But certainly toll-houses must have existed along the borders of the empire. It is quite likely that the duties of the aṃta-mahāmattas included the collection of revenue from the toll-dues. They would thus supervise the work of the toll collectors and the superintendent of tolls would be responsible to them.

Owing to the suppressed condition of women in the society of his time, it is possible that Aśoka may have felt the need to appoint a special group of mahāmattas who would be concerned mainly with the welfare of women. He may have been prompted to this action at the insistent request of members of his harem. It is possible that these officials were concerned more particularly with matters pertaining to the harem rather than general welfare, since it is unlikely that state interference in the lives of the women-folk would have been accepted by the society of the time.

The term used for these officers, ithījhakha-mahāmattas, means the mahāmattas who were in charge of the

(1) ZDMG, XLI, p. 28.

(2) II, 21.

(1) women. This interpretation is conclusive from the form of the word in the Shahbāzgarhi and Mānsehrā version of the same edict. In the former the word occurs as istridhiyakṣa-  
 (2) mahāmatta, and in the latter as istriyakṣamahāmatta.<sup>(3)</sup>

(4) Hultzsch suggests a connection between the ithīhaka-mahāmattas and the gaṇikādhyakṣa or superintendent of prostitutes in the Arthaśāstra.<sup>(5)</sup> We feel that it is unlikely that officers of the rank of mahāmattas would have been appointed merely to supervise the city prostitutes. Certainly the work of these mahāmattas would include the supervision of prostitutes, but it would also concern itself with other work connected with women.

That the royal harems were large enough to warrant a special class of officers is clear from the inscriptions of Aśoka. The king mentions that dhamma-mahāmattas<sup>a</sup> are busy working, among other places, in his own harems, and in those of his brothers and sisters, and whatever other relatives the king has, both in the city of Pēṭaliputra and outside.<sup>(6)</sup> A further edict mentions that pativedikas<sup>(7)</sup> have access to the king even when he is in the harem. The organisation of the harems must have required this special body of officers.

The 7th Pillar Edict speaks of the dhamma-mahāmattas

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- (1) XII R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 20.  
 (2) XII R.E.Shah. CII, I, p. 64.  
 (3) XII R.E.Mān. CII, I, p. 80.  
 (4) CII, I, p. 22 n. 4.  
 (5) II, 27.  
 (6) V R.E.Dhauḷi CII, I, p. 87.  
 (7) VI R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 11.

and many other chief officers, whose duty it is to record  
charitable gifts made by the members of the harem. <sup>(1)</sup> We are  
of the opinion that these chief officers were the  
ithījhakhamahāmattas. Similarly the ithījhakhāmahāmattas  
would keep detailed records of donations made by the Queen  
Karuvāki. <sup>(2)</sup> Whereas the dhamma-mahāmattas were responsible for  
preaching the Dhamma in the harem and encouraging the members  
to make donations, the ithījhakhamahāmattas were concerned  
with administrative matters in the harem.

On the question of harems, Bhandarkar has suggested  
that, as well as his main palace harem, Aśoka maintained  
harems outside Pāṭaliputra, where possibly the women were of  
lower caste. <sup>(3)</sup> We believe that this is an exaggerated  
estimate of Aśoka's indulgence in harem life. We are of the  
opinion that the reference to harems both in Pāṭaliputra  
and in other towns is not only to the harems of Aśoka, but  
includes those of his brothers and other relatives, as the  
continuation of the relevant sentence in the edict suggests,  
"hida ca bāhilesu ca nagalesu savṛsesu savṛsesu olodhanesu  
me e vā pi bhātinam me bhaginīnam vā amnesu vā nātisu  
savata viyāpaṭā.... <sup>(4)</sup>

On other occasions when women were in need of help,  
as for instance if they were involved in a law-suit, it is  
possible that they may have appealed to the office of the

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- (1) VII P.E. CII, I, p. 131.  
(2) Queen's Edict. CII, I, p. 158.  
(3) A. p. 12.  
(4) V h.E. Dhauḷi, CII, I, p. 87.

ithījhakhamahāmattas.<sup>(1)</sup>

The more subordinate officers were probably concerned with the type of work mentioned in the Arthaśāstra, the employment of women in the craft of weaving, or the regulation of prostitutes, etc. The mahāmattas themselves probably worked in the harems, since they were senior enough to approach the members of the royal households.

Every official of the Mauryan administration had to propagate the Dhamma in the course of his work, whether it was the prādeśika going on tour, or the rājūka in his judicial capacity. In speaking of the Dhamma stress was laid on general observances such as consideration towards slaves, servants, brahmans, śramanas, parents, aged people, animals and even abstinence from the killing of animals,<sup>(2)</sup> liberality to friends and relatives,<sup>(3)</sup> and the welfare of prisoners.

But Aśoka did not rest at the general propagation of Dhamma by his officers. In his thirteenth regnal year he started a new body of officers called the dhamma-mahāmattas, whose special concern was the spreading of the Dhamma and explaining the policy wherever necessary. As a service this group of officers was quite new to Indian administration. We have already discussed their role in detail in a previous chapter.<sup>(4)</sup> Originally they seem to have been appointed as propagandists of the Dhamma, working rather as welfare officials<sup>(5)</sup>

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- (1) Bhandarkar. A. p. 56-57.  
 (2) XI R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 18.  
 (3) V R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 10.  
 (4) See Ch. III, p. 163.  
 (5) V R.E.Kāl. CII, I, p. 32.

Gradually their power increased until they could interfere in the working of various religious sects and also in institutions so personal as the harem, even though this was with the approval of the king. As we have suggested earlier, they appear to have become similar in their attitudes to a religious order. Smith's comment that they were censors specially appointed to teach and enforce the Law of Piety (Dhamma), can be applied to them in the later stages of Aśoka's reign. (1)

Most matters of importance in the daily administration of the country were attended to by the general administrative officers. Irrigation for instance was probably handled by the office of rājukas, or the *ἄγρονόμοι* of Megasthenes who inspected the rivers and sluices and attended to the division of water among the cultivators. (2) Other evidence of the interest taken by Mauryan administrators in matters related to irrigation is supplied by the Rudradāman inscription, which states that a dam was built on the Sudarśana lake during the reign of Candragupta, to facilitate water supply to the neighbouring countryside. (3)

The importance of forests was recognised during this period, and the Arthaśāstra mentions a superintendent of forest produce, a special officer to supervise the care of the forests. (4)

Forests were preserved since they were a source of revenue, provided by the tax on forest produce and on hunters

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- (1) A. p. 98.  
 (2) Strabo XV, 1, 50.  
 (3) Sircar SI, p. 169.  
 (4) II, 17.

who maintained a livelihood from the animals in the forest. Moreover wood from the forests was essential for building purposes. Thus the clearance of forests had to be regulated. The Arthaśāstra suggests the employment of guards in forests to prevent unnecessary clearing and damage.<sup>(1)</sup> This was also to ensure that on each occasion that land was cleared and brought under cultivation, the administration would be informed, so that the land could then be registered and the cultivator would have to pay the required taxes. Aśoka issues an order in one of his edicts that forests are not to be burnt uselessly or for purposes of hunting, and it would appear from all sources that a strict watch was kept on the forests.<sup>(2)</sup>

The administration of the armed forces is described in detail both by Kauṭalya and by Megasthenes. The Arthaśāstra classifies troops in the main into three categories, hereditary troops, hired troops, and soldiers belonging to corporations.<sup>(3)</sup> Hereditary troops were of primary importance. These constituted the standing army of the king and were probably the troops referred to by Megasthenes in describing his fifth caste, that of the soldiers.<sup>(4)</sup> Since they formed the core of the fighting force they were given special treatment. Hired troops, it would seem, were irregulars who had been trained as soldiers but in periods of peace were disbanded. It is possible that they worked as hired labourers when not serving

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- (1) Ibid.  
 (2) V P.E. CII, I, p. 126.  
 (3) II, 33.  
 (4) Diod. II, 41.

as soldiers, since the term used for them is bhṛta and that for a hired labourer is bhṛtaka.<sup>(1)</sup> In a battle they would take part as regular soldiers. The last category, the troops that came from śrenis or corporations, were not used in pitched battles, but rather in guerilla warfare as we have already suggested. The use of wild tribes which Kaṭalya further advocates, would again be rather for the general harassment of the army, than for regular warfare.

The maintenance of the army was the concern of the Commander-in-Chief and the superintendent of the infantry.<sup>(2)</sup> Other sections of the army, the cavalry, the elephant corps, the armoury, etc, were each under their own officer.<sup>(3)</sup>

The extension of the empire under the first two Mauryas meant that the army had to be given priority in many matters, in order that it might be continually ready for major campaigns. Hence it was regarded as constituting a special class. The hereditary troops were no doubt linked with the kṣatriya element in society which gave them added prestige. The armed strength of the Mauryas and of the Nandas before them is always described as being immense in Classical sources. For instance Pliny writes that Candragupta's forces consisted of 9,000 elephants, 30,000 cavalry, and 600,000 infantry.<sup>(4)</sup> Plutarch describes the force as 80,000 horse, 200,000 foot,

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(1) Artha, II, 33.  
 (2) Ibid.  
 (3) II, 18, 30-33.  
 (4) Hist. Nat. VI, 21, 22.

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8,000 war chariots and 6,000 fighting elephants. These figures must certainly have been the total of the regular troops as well as the various reserves. We must keep in mind that Plutarch was describing this force by way of explaining the armed opposition that Alexander would have met if he had continued his campaign beyond the Beas. It is therefore possible that some exaggeration may have crept into these figures.

When describing the administration of the armed forces Megasthenes speaks of there being six committees with five (2) members on each, similar to those administering Pāṭaliputra. This exact parallel in numbers is unusual and may be the result of a mistake in one of the two records. The Arthaśāstra does mention superintendents of various sections of the army as we have seen, and possibly Megasthenes may have had these in mind when describing military administration.

The first committee co-operates with the admiral of the fleet, and presumably it is therefore concerned with naval warfare. Ships and boats must certainly have been used during battles in cases where there was a possibility of river transport or a river attack. The Arthaśāstra however does not mention the use of ships in war, but refers to the suppression (3) of pirates. The second committee would be equivalent to the modern commissariat. It supervises the bullock-trains which are used for transporting equipment, food for men and animals and other military requisites. Although the Arthaśāstra does

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(1) Life of Alexander, LXII.  
(2) Strabo, XV, 1, 50.  
(3) II, 28.

not speak in detail of the commissariat it is assumed that every army is accompanied by such a section. It is mentioned for instance in the chapter on the encampment of the army.<sup>(1)</sup> The servants of the regular soldiers, grooms and other assistants are included in this section.

The remaining four committees are concerned with the four branches of the army regularly listed in Indian sources, the infantry, the cavalry, the chariots and the elephants. Each of these is discussed in detail in the Arthaśāstra, from the point of view both of their organisation and of their use in battle.<sup>(2)</sup> Megasthenes states that the soldier was expected to return his arms to the magazine. This was probably true, since the armoury as described by Kauṭalya is a very full place, which is periodically inspected, suggesting that all the arms were probably kept in one place.<sup>(3)</sup> Horses and elephants too were the property of the king and private ownership of these was not permitted. Megasthenes, like most Greek writers in India, appears to have been very impressed with elephants, and his accounts of the catching and breeding of elephants are amazingly correct.<sup>(4)</sup> All this information suggests that soldiers were paid their salaries in cash and not with land grants, since they did not own their weapons and animals. The Arthaśāstra bears this out, by stating what the salaries of military officers and of soldiers were.<sup>(5)</sup> Moreover there is

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- (1) X, 1.  
 (2) II, 30, 31, 33; X, 1-6.  
 (3) II, 18.  
 (4) Strabo, XV, 1, 41-43.  
 (5) V, 3.

also a reference to certain villages which are exempt from  
taxation because they provide soldiers.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is curious that in describing military administration, Megasthenes once again omits mentioning the central authority, in this case the commander-in-chief. Such an office is particularly important and essential in the case of the armed forces and must certainly have existed. Apart from which we have the evidence of the Arthaśāstra which mentions such an officer, and stresses the fact that the man who holds this office must be skilled in handling the four branches of the army.

A further aspect of Mauryan administration is mentioned briefly in passing in the Classical sources. Diodorus in his account refers to kingless states. He mentions that Dionysus established a kingdom in India and after many generations of his descendants had ruled, the kingdom was dissolved and democratic government was set up in the cities.<sup>(2)</sup> The same is said about the kingdom built by Heracles.<sup>(3)</sup> In the latter case some of the cities retained kings, others adopted a democratic form of government. Further in the account it is stated that the sixth caste, that of the overseers, sent in their reports to the magistrates in cities where there was no king.<sup>(4)</sup>

Arrian mentions the same fact about Heracles' kingdom as Diodorus.<sup>(5)</sup> He states that there were 153 kings in India

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- (1) II, 35.  
 (2) Diod. II, 38.  
 (3) Diod. II, 39.  
 (4) Diod. II, 41.  
 (5) Indika, VIII

over a period of 6042 years. Within this span of years a republic was thrice established. The figure given for the first occasion is now lost to us. The remaining two were for 300 years and 120 years.<sup>(1)</sup> The same author mentions, as we have noticed earlier, that peasants bring their taxes to the king and to the cities which are autonomous.<sup>(2)</sup> That the members of the sixth class bring reports to magistrates in self-governing cities is repeated by Arrian.<sup>(3)</sup> He mentions the same procedure with regard to the seventh class of councillors as well, unlike Diodorus, who does not repeat it for the seventh class.<sup>(4)</sup> Strabo refers to a system of government by councillors in the country beyond the Hypanis. It is an aristocratic form of government consisting of 500 councillors, each of whom furnishes the state with an elephant.<sup>(5)</sup>

Timmer is of the opinion that Megasthenes was aware of the system in which cities had a semi-independent status within an empire, as was the case in the Seleucid empire.<sup>(6)</sup> This independence was naturally limited to the control of internal affairs. Later law books have advised that conquered territories may be placed in the charge of the king's relatives.<sup>(7)</sup> Megasthenes states that these autonomous cities were a part of Candragupta Maurya's empire, yet Aśoka makes no mention of such cities. A further suggestion of Timmer's is that Megasthenes may have been thinking of the

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(1) Indika IX.  
 (2) Ibid.  
 (3) Indika XII  
 (4) Ibid  
 (5) Strabo, XV, 1, 36.  
 (6) MIM, p. 233, ff.  
 (7) Manu. VII, 3.

autonomous tribes known to have formed part of the empire, as for instance the Āṭavikas referred to in the Arthaśāstra, and he automatically ascribed to them the organisation of other independent cities. She recognises the fact that Megasthenes' kingless states are called πόλις, city, and not ἔθνος, people. This implies a system of government and not a wild tribal people living on plunder.

Evidence from another source which may throw some light on the matter can be obtained from a series of inscribed coins. Among the coins found at Taxila, a number of oblong copper coins contained the legend negama.<sup>(1)</sup> Bühler suggested that the word indicated "mercantile money token issued by traders."<sup>(2)</sup> Cunningham interpreted it as "trade token" or "coin of commerce."<sup>(3)</sup> Allan believed that it meant the traders or a market merchant guild of a particular quarter of the city. Although this suggests that there was some local autonomy in certain matters, these cities cannot be regarded as free cities, since the autonomy applies only to merchant guilds or large scale business organisations, and that too it would seem mainly in the matter of commerce. It does not imply the political autonomy of the entire city. It is possible though that there may have been some arrangement with these guilds whereby the cultivators of certain products used by the guilds in manufacture or the artisans paid their taxes directly to the guilds.

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(1) Allan. CIC, p. cxxv ff.

(2) Indl Studies, III, p. 49 (2nd Ed.)

(3) ASR, XIV, p. 20.

We feel that this reference to independent cities may well have arisen from a misreading of the original text by Diodorus and Arrian, or from an inability on the part of Megasthenes to state clearly what the actual situation was. We know that, in the Buddhist period, tribes with an oligarchical system of government existed in the Ganges valley. (1) Furthermore some tribes of the Indus valley are described in Classical sources as being governed by a republican form of government. (2) Some of these tribes led an independent semi-civilised existence. With the conquest of this region by the Mauryas these tribes would be incorporated within the empire. It is possible that during the reign of Candragupta Maurya, since the conquest was recent, Mauryan administration may have dealt leniently with them, allowing them to continue many of their older institutions, although the overall administration would be controlled by the authorities at Pāṭaliputra. This system may have created the illusion of these tribes or of their cities being semi-independent. As the administration was expanded and began to gain greater control over the detailed administration of outlying provinces, as no doubt happened in the following years, these cities would increasingly lose their remaining independence, until, with the reign of Aśoka, they were completely amalgamated within the empire.

The traditions and memories of periods of monarchical

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- (1) Sumaṅgala Vilāsaṇi, II, p. 519; Majjhima Commentary, I, p. 394.
- (2) Arrian. Anabasis VI, 6, 14; MacCrindle. Invasion of India by Alexander the Great. Note P. p. 350-51.

government with intervening periods of republicanism, may be explained by the fact that recollections of early periods, when kings were no doubt elected, were still present. The oligarchical system may have had its origin in the Vedic system of government with the help of a samiti and sabhā; Above all it must be remembered that the Greek authors were familiar with the Greek city states and for them the independent city was not an unusual political phenomenon. It is possible that Diodorus may have inserted the reference to the independent cities as a matter of course from his knowledge of Greek political institutions, without being consciously aware that a similar institution may not have existed in India during the Mauryan period.

Misunderstanding of the original text of Megasthenes may also be a reason for references to independent cities. This is particularly possible in the passages where we are told that the overseers sent reports to magistrates in the cities where there were no kings. . Megasthenes may have been referring to those cities where neither the king nor any important representative of the king was in residence. Thus, in Pāṭaliputra, or in any of the provincial capitals under the control of a viceroy who was usually a member of the royal family, the superintendents would be in a position to send their reports directly to the king or the king's representative. In other cities, where no such representative had been stationed, the reports would naturally be sent to the highest

administrative body, that of the magistrates. Megasthenes may have meant that they were self-governing as opposed to the other cities which were governed by the king's representative.

The description of such cities as self-governing may have been added by the later authors, by way of elucidation, although incorrect. In writing his Indica, Arrian may have consulted the work of Diodorus on the subject, particularly as Diodorus was quoting from Megasthenes. Arrian's introduction of the self-governing cities into his description of the seventh class, for example, <sup>(1)</sup> may well have been his own addition, appearing to him to follow quite logically from what Diodorus had said. Thus we may regard these references to independent cities, either as referring to cities subordinate to the empire but having an independent administration, or else as resulting from partial misreadings of the original text.

Thus we see from our survey of the administration of the period that the king could well control even the most remote parts of the kingdom. An efficient bureaucracy was essential to this. This control extended even to the details of everyday life. As a system it was new to India. To quote Nilakanta Sastri, "a government which undertook such delicate tasks as the medical inspection of or the regulation of the rates charged by courtesans, of the punishment of householders who turned ascetics without making adequate provision for their descendants, and of the control of the

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(1) Indika, XII.

visits to villages of peripatic parties of musicians, dancers and acrobats, so as not to interfere with the productive activity of the villages, must have displayed an energy in administration altogether new in India".<sup>(1)</sup> Even if the administrators did not supervise these details in practice, the mention of them as their responsibilities suggests the degree of organisation demanded from the officials.

Efficient as this system of attention to details may have been, it must have also produced at times too much interference or regulation in the lives of the people by the officials. Together with the officials worked the dhamma-mahāmattas and this may have been too oppressive a combination for the average citizen to accept without feeling restricted.

Of the general characteristics of this administration, it may be said that it was partly imperial and partly local in its day to day functioning. Certainly policy was dictated by the centre and the tendency of centralisation in the administration was very strong. It is clear from the edicts that principles of policy were decided and explained by Aśoka, and the local officers had merely to carry them out. For obvious reasons this system works extremely well where the ruler himself is efficient. But a weak central authority is bound to produce unfortunate results in the provinces. This inherent weakness of the administration of the early Mauryas was partially responsible for the decline of the dynasty under the later Mauryas.

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(1) ANM, p. 180

## CHAPTER VII

The Later Mauryas and the Decline of the Mauryan  
Empire

The years after the death of Aśoka saw the end of the Mauryan dynasty as a political force in India. Mauryan rulers continued to rule for another half a century until, in the earlier part of the second century B.C., the dynasty collapsed completely and gave way to the Śuṅgas. Within this half century there was a distintegration of the empire, and the vast territory held by Aśoka dwindled to the nucleus of the kingdom with which Candragupta had started his career, more or less confined to the province of Magadha. In contrast with the fulness of evidence available on the reign of Aśoka, there is a mere glimmer of evidence on the later Mauryas. This too is of such a confused and uncertain nature, that the reconstruction of the last fifty years of the Mauryan dynasty varies from historian to historian, each of whom can at best suggest only hypothetical reconstructions. The causes of the rapid distintegration of the Mauryan empire we shall analyse at length later in this chapter. We shall begin by attempting to reconstruct the chronology of the various successors of Aśoka. Dynastic lists of the later Mauryas are available from many sources. We shall at first compare these and whatever evidence is available

on individual rulers.

Purānic sources give extensive king-lists of the later Mauryas, but these lists vary among the Purānas. We shall here give the lists of each in turn.

(1)  
Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purānas:

	Regnal Years
Aśoka was followed by his son,	
Kunāla, who was followed by,	
Bandhupālita, who was followed by his <u>dāyada</u> ,	8
Indrapālita      "      "      "      "	10
Devavarma,      "      "      "      "	7
Śatadhanus      "      "      "      "	8
Brhadratha	7

The last mentioned ended the dynasty since he was assassinated by Puṣyamitra, the founder of the Śunga dynasty.

(3)  
Matsya Purāna:

	Regnal Years
Aśoka was followed by his son	
Daśaratha was followed by	8
Samprati      "      "      "	9
Śatadhanvana      "      "	8
Brhadratha	7

Since the killing of Brhadratha by Puṣyamitra is mentioned by all the Purānas we shall henceforth not refer to it on each occasion.

(1) Pargiter, DKA, p. 29

(2) Pargiter translates the word as "heir" (DKA, p. 70);

Nilakanta Sastri translates it as "brother" (ANM, p. 244)

(3) Pargiter, DKA, p. 28.

(1)  
Viṣṇu Purāṇa:

~~Nagari Ksatri~~

Aśoka was followed by

Suyāśas " " "

Daśaratha " " "

Samgata " " "

Śāliśuka " " "

Somavarman " " "

Śatadhanvan " " "

Brhadratha

Pargiter suggests another king list based on what he calls (2)  
 the eVāyu Purāṇa, which differs from the lists already given.

Regnal Years

Aśoka was followed by his son

Kulāla, " " " " "

Bandhupālita " " " grandson 8

Daśona " " " son 7

Daśaratha " " " son 8

Samprati " " " 9

Śāliśuka " " " 13

Devadharman " " " son 7

Śatadhanvan " " " 8

Brhadratha

If all these king lists were to be collected into one list we should obtain the following result.

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(1) Ch. XXIV.  
 (2) Pargiter DKA, p. 29

## Regnal Years

Aśoka was followed by

Kunāla	"	"	"	8
Bandhupālita	was followed by			8
Indrapālita	"	"	"	10
Daśona	"	"	"	7
Daśaratha	"	"	"	8
Samprati	"	"	"	9
Śāliśuka	"	"	"	13
Devavarman	"	"	"	7
Śatadhanvan	"	"	"	8
Brhadratha				7

This list however is not acceptable. The one statement on which all the Purāṇas are in agreement, is that the dynasty lasted 137 years. The first three Mauryas account for the first 86 years of the dynasty, i.e. 321 B.C. to 231 B.C. minus the four year interregnum. This leaves us with 51 years to be distributed between the later Mauryas. The above list is invalidated since it adds up to a total of 85 years, as for that matter are all the other lists since each of them totals either more or less than 51 years. Thus we see that there are many variations and omissions in the Purāṇic king lists and no single one can be accepted as completely authentic.

Other sources have also given lists of the later Mauryas. Among them the Aśokāvadāna gives the following list. (1)

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(1) Przyluski. LEA, p. 301 and n. 3.

Aśoka was followed by (the son of Kunāla)

Sampadi " " "

Vr̥haspati " " "

Vr̥ṣasena " " "

Puṣyadharman " "

Puṣymitra

(1)

Jaina tradition has left us two names.

Aśoka was followed by his grandson, the son of Kunāla, Samprati.

Tārānātha the Tibetan historian, basing himself on  
Buddhist sources, gives the following list, (2)

Aśoka was followed by his grandson,

Vigatāśoka was followed by the son of Kunāla,

Vīrasena.

The Rājatarāṅgiṇī of Kalhana introduces a completely  
new name as the successor of Aśoka, Jalauka the king of Kashmir.  
He was followed by Dāmodara. (3)

From Classical sources the only evidence we have is  
that of Polybius, who writes that, in 206 B.C., Antiochus the  
Great of Syria renewed his friendship with Sophagasenas. (4)  
Sophagasenas is described as "the Indian king." Polybius then  
adds the following remarks, "Here he procured more elephants  
so that his total force of them now amounted to 150, and  
after a further distribution of corn to his troops, set out  
himself with his army, leaving Androsthenes of Cyzicus to

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- (1) Pariśiṣṭaparvan. Bom. Gaz. I, i, 1896 pp. 14-15.  
(2) GBI, VIII, p. 50, IX, p. 50.  
(3) I, 108-153.  
(4) Histories, XI, 39.

collect the treasure which the king had agreed to pay". Sophegasenos is clearly the Greek version of the Indian name Subhāgasena. The identification of this king we shall discuss later in this chapter.

The story of the assassination of Br̥hadratha by Puṣyamitra is repeated by Bāṇa in the Harṣacarita. He writes, (1) that the wicked general Puṣpamitra killed his master the Mauryan Br̥hadratha, who had little sense, and to whom the general pretended to show the whole army in a review.

Another possible successor to Aśoka whose existence is attested by historical evidence was his son Tīvara, who is referred to together with his mother Kāruvāki in the Queen's Edict. (2) But this is the sole reference to the prince, since he is not mentioned in literary sources, unless under another name. (3) If our earlier hypothesis is correct, that Queen Kāruvāki was the same as Tissarakhitā of Buddhist legend, the former being her personal name and the latter her official name adopted after she became Chief Queen, then the disappearance of Tīvara is understandable. The Mahāvamsa suggests that she was an ambitious woman who had considerable control over the actions of the ageing Aśoka. The fact that she succeeded in having a special edict issued concerning donations made by her and her son, supports this idea. Tīvara may have been born to Aśoka in his old age, and would therefore have been a

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(1) VI,  
 (2) Queen's Edict, CII, I, p. 158.  
 (3) See Ch. II, p. 117

spoilt and favourite child.

If Tissarakhita was resentful of Aśoka's interest in Buddhism and regarded it as a rival to his interest in her, as the legend regarding her injuring the Bodhi-tree suggests, then it would not be beyond the bounds of possibility that she nagged at the king to make Tivara his heir. As an over ambitious mother she may have had the young prince in her power. He would therefore be resented by the other princes, his step-brothers, some of whom, such as Kunāla, were considerably older than he. Being so much younger he would naturally be brushed aside by the older princes on the death of Aśoka. If it is true that Kunāla succeeded Aśoka, and if there be any truth in the legend that Tissarakhita had (1) Kunāla blinded, then it is not to be wondered at that both Tissarakhita and her son disappear from the scene after the death of Aśoka.

Kunāla is frequently mentioned as the successor of Aśoka. The eVāyu Purāṇa refers to Kulāla which is clearly a variant of Kunāla. He is also mentioned in the Aśokāvadāna, in the Jaina tradition, and in the chronology of Tārānātha. On the basis of these lists it appears that Kunāla did succeed to the throne after Aśoka. Buddhist legend mentions the story of his being sent to suppress a revolt at Taxila, which we have discussed earlier and have rejected as historically untrue. (2) Kunāla also plays a significant role in another

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(1) See Ch. II, p. 114  
 (2) See Ch. II, p. 49

Buddhist legend, where Tissarakhita is responsible for having him blinded, the authenticity of which legend we have also doubted. Nevertheless it would seem that Kunāla was a son of Aśoka, viceroy at Taxila of the north-west province, and a possible if not probable successor to Aśoka.

The Matsya Purāṇa states that Aśoka was followed by his grandson Daśaratha. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa speaks of Suyāśas succeeding Aśoka and Daśaratha coming after Suyāśas. This is the only occasion on which Suyāśas is mentioned in any of the sources. De la Vallée Poussin has suggested that Suyāśas was another name for Kunāla.<sup>(1)</sup> This may well be so. Kunāla was named after the bird with beautiful eyes owing to the beauty of his own eyes.<sup>(2)</sup> It is possible that he took the official name Suyāśas "of great glory", on becoming king, a custom prevalent in many dynasties. There is certainly a connection between the name given him in the Divyāvadāna, Dharmavivardhana and Suyāśas.<sup>(3)</sup> But the identification is very tentative, and we have suggested later in this chapter that Suyāśas<sup>A</sup> was a different person altogether.

If the story about his being blinded is true, then this would be added reason for his wishing to change his name. However if he was blinded then the fact of his coming to the throne would be in doubt. Law books have suggested and customary usage has maintained that a person having lost any

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(1) ITM, p. 164.  
 (2) Przulski, LEA, p. 281.  
 (3) See p. 451

vital faculty should be excluded from kingship. It is unlikely that the Mauryan court would have permitted a blind prince to rule. Whether the Buddhist legends are historically true or not, the fact that Kunāla among all the princes is the central figure in both the stories proves that he was an important prince and may well have been the heir-apparent. The story of his being blinded can of course have a metaphorical meaning, i.e., his being blind to Buddhism. To Buddhist monks anyone turning away from Buddhism would be shutting his eyes to the right path. For a son of Aśoka to turn away was tantamount to his being blinded. It is possible that for political reasons Kunāla, succeeding Aśoka, had perforce to refrain from taking too great an interest in Buddhism.

Daśaratha, apart from being mentioned in the Matsya Purāṇa, is also known to us from the caves in the Nagarjuni Hills, which he dedicated to the Ājīvikas. Three inscriptions to this effect ordered by Daśaratha Devānampiya, state that the cave was dedicated immediately on his accession. That they were inscribed soon after the reign of Aśoka is clear from the script, which is Aśokan brāhmī, and the general tone of the inscriptions, which are similar to Aśokan inscriptions. The wish that the abode may exist as long as the sun and the moon endure is reminiscent of the 7th Pillar Edict, where Aśoka wishes men and women to conform to the principles of Dhamma, for as long as the sun and the moon endure.

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(1) Sircar, SI, p. 79.

(2) VII P.E. CII, I, p. 131

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The dedication of the caves, the inscriptions, and the use of the title Devānampiya suggest that Daśaratha was close in spirit to his grandfather Aśoka. It has been argued that the phrase dasalathena devānampiyena anantaliyam abhisitena contains a reference to Aśoka in the devānampiyena. This argument is based on the fact that Aśoka always used the title Devānampīya before Piyadassi and not after the latter as in this case. On the basis of this de la Vallée Poussin translates the phrase as, "the cave was given by Daśaratha soon after he was crowned by Aśoka."<sup>(1)</sup> Fleet suggested that Aśoka abdicated in his old age, and nominated Daśaratha as his successor.<sup>(2)</sup>

We do not accept this interpretation. It is quite possible that Daśaratha adopted the title Devanampiya as used by his grandfather. The title can be placed either before the name or after it. Thus a monarch can be given his name and dynastic number, and then his titles may follow. Furthermore Devānampiya could be used as a title by any king.<sup>(3)</sup> If we accept that Devānampiya was Daśaratha's title then its form in the inscription is grammatically correct since it must qualify and agree with the name of the king.

De la Vallée Poussin has remarked on Daśaratha expressing sympathy with a sect antagonistic to Buddhism

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- (1) ITM. p. 165.  
(2) JRAS. 1908, p. 484, ff.  
(3) See Appendix.  
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(1)  
 immediately on becoming king. Dutt has also commented on this, saying that the anti-Buddhist spirit of Daśaratha may be inferred from his gifts to the Ajīvikas and the silence of the Buddhist texts about his reign. (2) If we did not have the precedent of Aśoka in these matters, this might have been a very plausible theory. But since Aśoka himself dedicated caves to the Ajīvikas, remaining at the same time an ardent Buddhist, the fact of Daśaratha having donated caves to the Ajīvikas does not necessarily make him antagonistic to the other sects. At most it can be said that he held the Ajīvikas in special favour (not to the exclusion of other sects), since the caves were donated immediately on his succession.

As we have noticed it has been suggested that Daśaratha succeeded Aśoka, directly. This is certainly possible as Daśaratha was not too young in 231 B.C. Aśoka, as we have noted in an earlier chapter, must have been at least thirty years of age when he came to the throne. Thus he was sixty-seven when he died, if not more. This allows for the possibility of a twenty year old grandson when he died. If the boy was influenced by his grandfather or in any way was close to him, Aśoka may have decided to overlook the claims of his son, in favour of his grandson. If this did happen it must have caused much indignation on the part of the sons of Aśoka.

Samprati, also mentioned in the Matsya Purāṇa, is referred to in both Buddhist and Jaina literature as the son

(1) ITM, p. 166.

(2) EMB, II, p. 255.

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of Kunāla. Here there is some confusion since the Purāṇa describes him as the son of Daśaratha. According to Jaina (1) tradition he was a grandson of Aśoka and a patron of Jainism. He was converted to Jainism by Suhastin and gave the religion both his active support as a ruler, and encouragement in other ways. He is mentioned as ruling both from Pāṭaliputra and from Ujjain. Unfortunately we have no inscriptional or other evidence to support these accounts.

Buddhist literature has connected Samprati with a curious legend about the last days of Aśoka. (2) The king Aśoka, decided to outdo the bounty of the king Sudatta and donated 100 crores of gold pieces to the Buddhist Saṃgha. This amount was taken from the treasury. When only 4 crores remained to be paid, Samprati, the heir-apparent objected on the advice of the minister Rādhāgupta. Aśoka therefore began to donate his personal possessions till such a time as he was left with only half a mango. Finally when the king died, the 4 crores were paid by the ministers and the kingdom which was held in forfeit was thus retrieved and Samprati was placed on the throne. Fa-hsien states in his account that near Rājagṛha there was an Aśokan column bearing an inscription to commemorate the fact of Aśoka having bestowed the inhabited part of the world on the priesthood, and then bought it back from (3) them with money, on three occasions. No trace of such a

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(1) Pariśiṣṭaparvan. Bom. Gaz. I, i, 1896, pp. 14-15.

(2) Przyłuński. LEA. p. 296 ff.; Divyāvadāna. XXIX p. 432 ff.

(3) Giles, TF, p. 48.

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pillar has yet been found. It is possible that the story was related to Fa-hsien by local Buddhists and it may have been confused with the inscription on the pillar in his mind at a later date.

The Kashmir Chronicle, Kalhana's Rājatarāṅgiṅī, mentions Aśoka's successor as Jalauka. We are told that Aśoka wished to exterminate the mlecchas and therefore he prayed for a son. (1) Jalauka was born as a result. The prince was an ardent Śaivite, a worshipper of Vijayēśvara and Bhūteśa. His instructor is described as "the vanquisher of crowds of Bauddha controversialists who at that time were powerful and flushed (with success)". (2) This would suggest a period fairly close to the reign of Aśoka. Jalauka expelled the mlecchas who oppressed the land and he conquered the earth up to the encircling oceans. (3) In administrative matters he increased the number of state officials from 7 to 18. The seven listed are the dharmadhyakṣa, dhanādhyakṣa, kośādhyakṣa, sammulipati, dūta, purohita, and daivākṣa. (4) A legend is also related concerning Jalauka and his relations with Buddhism. He was met one day by a hungry sorceress who wished to eat his flesh. He immediately offered himself, whereupon she showered praises upon him and revealed that he was in fact a Mahāśākya, and requested him to build the vihāra of Kirtyāśrama, which request Jalauka complied with. Jalauka then began to worship the divine sorceress, though he continued at the same time to be a

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- (1) I, 107.  
(2) I, 112, 113 (Stein trans.)  
(3) I, 115.  
(4) I, 118-120.

(1)  
 Śaivite. Jalauka was succeeded by Dāmodara II, who is said to have either descended from Aśoka's race or belonged to some other family.  
 (2)

The neglect of Jalauka in Buddhist sources may be explained by the fact that he was pro-Hindu and anti-Buddhist, if his instructor had any influence over him. Nevertheless this is an unsatisfactory explanation, since the story of the divine sorceress would certainly have been made much of by Buddhist monks. The identity of Jalauka remains uncertain. He appears to have been an energetic ruler of wide authority. Certainly his kingdom comprised Kashmir and Gandhāra, and later in his reign considerable parts of northern India.

Owing to the confused account of early kings in the Rājataranṅinī, it is possible that he was not a son of Aśoka, and may have been a Kuṣāṇa king whose name has been misread. But we are inclined to believe that he was a Mauryan and that the name Jalauka may possibly be a confused rendering of the name Kunāla. Jalauka is certainly foreign to any of the king lists of the Mauryas, and since it occurs only in the Kashmir Chronicle, it can be only a local variant. Phonetically the two names are dissimilar, but the confusion may have occurred in the writing of the names where possibly the syllables became interchanged. In the brāhmī script of the Aśokan period, the

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(1) I, 131-148. Stein has identified the vihāra of Kirtyāś-rama with that of Ki-tche mentioned by Ou-kong. (JA. 1895. VI p. 354). The site of this ancient vihāra is traditionally associated with the son of Aśoka.  
 (2) I, 153.

name Kunāla would be written thus, कुना and the name Jalauka thus, जलुक It is possible that after the invasion of the Bactrian Greeks and the Kuṣānas, with their foreign names, a name like Jalauka became accepted without much questioning. <sup>(1)</sup>

It is curious that among the seven important state officials mentioned, the first on the list is the dharmādhyakṣa. It is general in Indian theoretical sources that priority be given to the revenue officials and treasury officials. To list a "superintendent of justice", a judge, first is certainly unusual procedure. The author may have meant a judicial officer by this term. It may also be suggested that the mention of a dharmādhyakṣa was based on a tradition recalling the dhamma-mahāmattas. The special mention of administrative improvements would tally closely with administrative policy in Mauryan times.

The emphasis on Jalauka expelling the mlecchas is significant. It would seem that the mlecchas referred to the Bactrian Greeks and other foreigners on the north-west. Perhaps the later Yavana invasion during the Śuṅga period, may have started as sporadic attacks during the time of Kunāla i.e., in the years following Aśoka's death. It is of interest that in the 7th Pillar Edict, when summing up as it were the achievements of Dhamma, Aśoka speaks with great satisfaction about the results within his empire. Here not a single reference is made to relations with neighbouring

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(1) Furthermore Jalauka means "a fish" in Sanskrit.

countries, whereas the early edicts, proclaim in no uncertain terms that converts to the Dhamma include the neighbouring countries of the north-west.<sup>(1)</sup> It is possible that ten years later the hostility of the Greeks along the north-west border was beginning to be felt.

By 206 B.C., twenty five years after the death of Aśoka, there was a closer contact between the Indians of the north-west and the neighbouring Greeks. Whether this contact was the result of a friendly relationship or a hostile one, is a debatable point. Antiochus is said to have renewed his alliance with Sophagasenas the Indian king.<sup>(2)</sup> Tarn has suggested that in referring to this alliance Polybius was thinking of the treaty between Candragupta Maurya and Seleucus Nicator in 303 B.C.<sup>(3)</sup> But this renewal of friendship may have referred in general terms to the friendly relations between Aśoka and Antiochus II of Syria.<sup>(4)</sup> Polybius nowhere suggests that Sophagasenos was a Mauryan king. He would hardly have taken the trouble of verifying to which dynasty Sophagasenos belonged. For him the description of an Indian king was enough. Thus this alliance may have referred to the general good relations between Indian kings of the north-west and the Seleucids.

Of the actual treaty with Sophagasenos or Subhāgasena, it would appear that this was not an alliance between equals.

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- (1) XIII, R.E.Kālsi, CII, I, p. 43.  
 (2) GBI, pp. 130, 154.  
 (3) See Ch. I, p. 26.  
 (4) See Ch. II, p. 84.

Subhagasena was certainly in an inferior position. Had Antiochus merely acquired more elephants and supplies for his troops, it may have been a case of Subhāgasena helping Antiochus with reinforcements after his war against the Bactrian Greeks under Euthydemus. But since the account states clearly that Antiochus left Androsthenes of Cyzicus with Subhāgasena, in order that he may collect the treasure which Subhāgasena had agreed to pay, it becomes increasingly evident that the elephants, the supplies and the treasure were all part of a tribute which Subhāgasena had to give. If we compare this treaty with the treaty of 303 B.C. it is obvious that Subhāgasena was in some way subordinate to Antiochus. It would seem that the Indian king was unfortunate enough to be caught up in the strife between Antiochus and Euthydemus. With the rise and expansion of Bactria, it was only natural that the politically unstable kingdoms of north-west India would be crushed.

As we have seen there is no reference to Subhāgasena or a closely similar name in any of the king-lists. The nearest possibility is Vīrasena mentioned by Tārānātha as ruling in Gandhāra. <sup>(1)</sup> The sena ending in both names may suggest a relationship, but at the same time the name Vīrasena is also absent from the Mauryan king-lists. Thomas has suggested that the two were related. <sup>(2)</sup> Nilakantha Sastri accepts this <sup>(3)</sup> relationship and the possibility of both being Mauryas. We

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(1) GBI, Ch. IX, p. 50.  
 (2) CHI, p. 512.  
 (3) ANM, p. 246.

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have explained above why we do not accept Subhāgāsena as a Maurya. As for Vīrasena the evidence of Tārānātha is very dubious. We have noticed in an earlier chapter how confused (1) is his account of the accession of Aśoka and the early Mauryas. A reading of his account of the later Mauryas reveals equally great confusion. We are told that Aśoka was succeeded by his grandson Vigatāsoka, the son of the blinded Kunāla. The name Vigatāsoka has obviously come to Tārānātha via the Divyāvadāna (2) where he is mentioned as the younger brother of Aśoka.

The succession continues with Vīrasena the son of Vigatāsoka who is an honoured Buddhist. Vīrasena is followed by his son Nanda who reigned twenty nine years, and who is in turn followed by his son Mahāpadma who reigned at Kusumapura. Candanapāla followed Mahāpadma. The author then appears to concentrate on dynasties known to have ruled in Bengal, which he describes as being ruled by Haricandra, followed by seven other Candras, all supporters of Buddhism. The last of these, Namacandra, was deprived of his throne by Puṣyamitra. At this point the mleccha invasion took place and Puṣyamitra died five years later. The mlecchas are described in such a way as to suggest the Muslim invasion rather than the Greek. Very much later in his chronology there appears a Candragupta who is succeeded by Bindusāra. At first he was the ruler of the area of Gauḍa alone, but his great lord Canaka caused the destruction of sixteen towns and therefore Bindusāra soon became king of all the land

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(1) See Ch. II, p. 56  
(2) XXV, p. 370.

between the eastern and the western seas. He reigned for thirty-five years and was succeeded by his heir Śricandra who was in turn followed by Dharmacandra, ruling only in the east. (1)

It is indeed difficult to obtain historical facts from this account which is undoubtedly very confused. With regard to the Mauryan dynasty alone we obtain two king lists. First we are told that Aśoka was followed by Vigatāsoka. Later we are told that the son of Bindusāra was Śricandra, who was followed by Dharmacandra. We know that neither of the two latter names were connected with the Mauryas. It is therefore possible that Vīrasena was not connected either. It is more than likely that Tārānātha was basing this information regarding Vīrasena on the fact that Puṣyamitra's wife's brother was a Vīrasena, who was appointed by Puṣyamitra as commander of a frontier fortress in the Narmada region. (2) We may thus dismiss the possibility of Vīrasena being a Mauryan king.

There are however two points of considerable interest mentioned in Tārānātha's account. He states that Aśoka was succeeded by his grandson, and here he appears to be following the Divyāvadāna accounts. Secondly, whereas Bindusāra was king of the land between the eastern and western seas, his grandson was king only in the east, suggesting thereby that there was a rapid dwindling of the empire.

Of the other names of the Mauryan kings mentioned in various sources, there is confirmation of Śāliśuka, listed as the

(1) GBI, CHs. VIII-XVIII, pp. 48-90.

(2) Kālidasa. Mālvikāgnimitra. Introduction p. 6 (Tawney trans)

fourth successor to Aśoka in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. The Gargīsamhitā, an astrological work, speaks of him as an unjust and wicked king, an oppressor of his people.<sup>(1)</sup> But the most important point is that it is said that after his reign the Greeks will invade India and reach Pāṭaliputra. However, as Narain has pointed out, this does not necessarily imply that the invasion took place immediately after the reign of Sāliśuka.<sup>(2)</sup> Since the authors of the Purāṇa were concerned only with narrating the major events, the invasion referred to may well have been the one that occurred almost half a century later during the Śuṅga period. Mankad has suggested that the invasion took place during the reign of Sāliśuka, owing in part to the defeat of his brother Vijaya who had been appointed governor of Sāketa, and who was easily conquered by the Yavanas,<sup>(3)</sup> after which the Yavanas swept on to Pāṭaliputra. Thus the Mauryan empire ended with Sāliśuka. This, as we shall see later, conflicts with other more reliable evidence and is therefore not acceptable to us.

The Aśokāvadāna king-list is also confused. Vṛhaspati Vṛṣasena, Puṣyadharman, and Puṣyamitra are said to succeed Saṃpadi in turn. Clearly Puṣyamitra, the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty has no place in a Mauryan dynastic list. The names of the other three do not correspond to any given in the other lists. At most it might be said that Vṛhaspati is an

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- (1) Yuga Purāṇa. 89-100 (Mankad ed.)  
 (2) IG, p. 84-85.  
 (3) Yuga-Purāṇa. p. 9-10.

incorrect version of Bṛhadratha, but even this is unnecessarily stretching the point. It is more than likely that the Buddhist monks lost interest in the dynasty when its kings ceased to be patrons of Buddhism, and consequently their dynastic lists became confused.

There are three main legends in Buddhist literature connected with the last years of Aśoka, all of which occur in the Aśokavadāna. The first concerns the revolt of the people of Taxila which Kunāla was sent to suppress.<sup>(1)</sup> The second involves Kunāla as well. This is the story of his being blinded at the instigation of his step-mother Tiṣyarakṣita.<sup>(2)</sup> The third legend is that of Aśoka being left with only half a mango to bestow on the Samgha at the end of his reign.<sup>(3)</sup>

We cannot prove whether the events described in the two latter legends actually took place or not, since there is no evidence to emphatically confirm or disprove them. But some indication of the state of things during the last years of Aśoka's reign is available from the situations described in these legends. They do suggest that towards the end of his reign Aśoka did not have the same control over affairs as he had had earlier. We must keep in mind the fact that he was at least 65 to 70 years of age when he died, and, with a strongly centralised government as the Mauryan government was, it is not to be wondered at that he began to lose control. But what is to be deplored is the hint of court intrigue that is

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(1) See Ch. II, p. 49 ; Przyluski. LEA, p. 281 ff.  
 (2) See Ch. II, p. 114 ; Przyluski. LEA, p. 281 ff.  
 (3) Ch. II, p. 117 ; Przyluski, LEA, p. 296.

evident from these legends.

Apart from the Aśokāvadāna there is another source containing versions of these legends, which throws a different light on the same events. This source has been generally ignored by historians, but we feel it is very significant, particularly with regard to events after the death of Aśoka. Przulski has translated relevant portions of the Tripiṭaka of Tokyo and this he refers to as the Kunālasūtra<sup>(1)</sup>. He maintains that it was composed originally in the region of Gandhāra and Kashmir, and has been neglected presumably because it has been thought to be too localised a version. It is for this very reason that we consider it significant. It relates the legends from a local perspective without the necessity of having to fit a tradition used by other Buddhist chroniclers. The authors of the Kunālasūtra did not write because they felt that Aśoka's character had to be sketched in a particular way, but because they wished to record the legends as they existed in local tradition.

According to this text the arrival of Kunāla in Taxila is not due to a revolt in the city. We are told that the king of Gandhāra died and that the people wished to place themselves under the protection of Aśoka. Kunāla was sent to govern them and was so successful that Aśoka decided to divide the empire, placing the region from the Indus as far as the Chinese frontier under Kunāla. This area would include Khotan,

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(1) LEA, p. 106 ff.

Kashmir<sup>१</sup> and Gandhāra.

It is possible that the borders of Gandhāra asked for stronger Mauryan protection when the Bactrian Greeks began to harass them. The Bactrian revolt against the Seleucids had taken place during Aśoka's lifetime under Diodotus I and Diodotus II.<sup>(1)</sup> The period of the later Mauryas saw the rise of Euthydemus I in Bactria, who successfully opposed Antiochus III and no doubt saw that it was an opportune moment to invade the northern part of the now fast disintegrating Mauryan empire.<sup>(2)</sup> In the interests of political strategy and military strength, Aśoka had to safeguard the north-west frontier. This appears to be confirmed by the Rājatarangiṇī which speaks of Jalauka expelling the mleccha from Gandhāra. The success of Kunāla's administration of the north-west area may have suggested to Aśoka the possibility of dividing the empire on his death. The fear of such an event may have led to Tiṣyarakṣitā attempting to harm Kunāla in some way.

The Kunālasūtra repeats the legend of the blinding of Kunāla and further relates another legend of how his eye-sight was restored to him by a bhikkhu called Ghoṣa. Needless to say Kunāla on receiving back his eye-sight is converted to Buddhism, although the same text earlier describes him as a great supporter of Buddhism. Such inconsistencies tend to suggest considerable fabrication as regards this legend.

A point of some interest is the mention of Yaśas as the

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(1) Narain. IG, pp. 13-15.  
(2) Ibid, pp. 19-20.

wicked prime minister of Aśoka. In the Aśokāvadāna Yaśas is among the more pious Buddhist elders, but in the Kunālasūtra he becomes a secular Buddhist personage, to whom are attributed many disagreeable actions, and who is opposed to the saintly Buddhist elder Sumanas. In the Aśokāvadāna we are told that it was the ministers of perverse views who advised the heir-apparent to curtail, and finally stop the gifts which Aśoka gave as charity to the bhikkhus from the royal treasury. (1) It would appear that Yaśas was one of these ministers. The fact that he managed to persuade the heir, Saṃpadi, to withhold funds from Aśoka, suggests that he had considerable influence over him. The only other occasion when a name recalling that of Yaśas appears in connection with the successors to Aśoka, is in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, where Suyāśas is mentioned as the successor to Aśoka, followed by his son Daśaratha. (2) There is no reference anywhere else to Suyāśas being the son of Aśoka. It is possible that Suyāśas was in fact an important minister of Aśoka, who was responsible for bringing Daśaratha to the throne when Aśoka died, and through some confusion in Purāṇic recording came to be described as the son of Aśoka.

On the basis of a Divyāvadāna legend it is argued that Aśoka abdicated and became a monk. (3) It is related that Rādhāgupta, the minister of Bindusāra who supported Aśoka's

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(1) Przyluski. LEA, p. 301.  
 (2) Ch. XXIV.  
 (3) XXIX, p. 432 ff.

attempts at becoming king, forced Aśoka to abdicate when he had become unpopular with his subjects at the end of his reign. This legend is highly suspect since it is unlikely that Rādhāgupta could remain such a powerful minister through two long reigns, those of Bindusāra and Aśoka, totalling over sixty years. It is unlikely that an event of such great importance would have been overlooked by Buddhist chroniclers in other sources, since apart from its being good material for moralising on, it would also have provided welcome opportunities for imaginative legends.

In the Aśokāvadāna legend of the half-mango the heir-apparent is referred to as Samprati the son of Kunāla. Yet the Matsya and Viṣṇu Purāṇas speak of Daśaratha as the successor to Aśoka and his inscriptions in the Nagarjuni Hills, are, as we have noticed earlier, suggestive of a period close to that of Aśoka. We are of the opinion that the empire of Aśoka was partitioned either just prior to his death or at his death. The western part, including the north-western province, Gandhāra and Kashmir was governed by Kunāla, the eastern part was left to Aśoka's grandson Daśaratha.<sup>(1)</sup> It is possible that Kunāla gradually extended his portion to include the western province.

The fact that the Divyāvadāna speaks of Samprati being the heir to the throne after Aśoka can be explained on the basis of Samprati coming to the throne at Pāṭaliputra

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(1) V. Smith put forward a similar view but according to him the empire was divided between Daśaratha and Samprati. EHI, p. 203.

after Daśaratha, and since he was also the grandson of Aśoka the mistake is not impossible. Furthermore if Samprati happened to be more sympathetic to Buddhism than Daśaratha, it would be all the more reason for him to be recorded as the successor to Aśoka.

The identity of Daśaratha remains hidden. He was a young man of about twenty years when he came to the throne, supported by the ministers who may have seen in him a more attractive candidate, owing to his youth, than Kunāla. Samprati is mentioned in the Matsya Purāna as the son of Daśaratha.<sup>(1)</sup> This is a mistake since by other accounts Samprati and Daśaratha were first cousins. If however it can be proved that Suyaśas was in fact another name for Kunāla and not the name of a minister then it would seem that Daśaratha was the brother of Samprati.

According to the Purānas Daśaratha reigned for eight years. This would suggest that he died without an heir old enough to come to the throne without necessitating a regency of some sort. The same sources speak of Kunāla ruling for eight years. He must have died at about the same time as Daśaratha, so that Samprati now ruling in the west may have successfully regained the throne at Pāṭaliputra, thus uniting the empire again. The event occurred in circa 223 B.C.

However the empire had probably already begun to disintegrate. Jaina sources mention that Samprati ruled from Ujjain and Pāṭaliputra.<sup>(2)</sup> This would suggest that the capital

(1) Pargiter. DKA, p. 28.

(2) Parisiṣṭaparvan. Bombay Gazetteer. I, i, 1896.

of the western part of the empire was moved from the north to Ujjain. The decade following was to see the conflict between Antiochus III of Syria and Euthydemus of Bactria, with Bactria emerging as a strong power, ready to threaten India. It is quite likely that a number of principalities in the trans-Indus region broke away from the empire while Samprati was occupied in establishing himself at Pāṭaliputra. Gradually the concentration of attention moved to Magadha and the main line of the Mauryan dynasty lived out its years at Pāṭaliputra, unable to prevent or control the breaking-up of the empire in the more distant regions.

After a reign of nine years, Samprati was followed by Śāliśuka who ruled for thirteen years. If the Gārgiśaṃhitā is to be credited, his reign further reduced the power of the Mauryas.

Meanwhile the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas mention three names which are again isolated, in so far as they are not mentioned in any other source. <sup>(1)</sup> These are Bandhupālita, Indrapālita and Daśona. The identification of these three is extremely difficult, since no other names even vaguely resembling them are to be found in the Mauryan king lists. Even the Purāṇas are not certain as to the relationship of one to the other of these. Indrapālita for instance is referred to as the dāyada of Bandhupālita. A recent student of the subject, Smith, has explained that Bandhupālita should not be

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(1) Pargiter, DKA, p. 29

taken as a name, but as a phrase meaning 'protected by the kinsmen', suggesting thereby something along the lines of a regency during the reign of one of these kings. (1) We can only suggest that these were members of the royal family who set themselves up as kings in a part of the Mauryan kingdom, other than Pāṭaliputra, possibly at Ujjain, perhaps as a subordinate line to the main Mauryas.

The successor to Śāliśuka is mentioned as Somavarman in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. This tallies fairly closely with the Devavarman of the Vāyu Purāṇa, who is said to have followed Daśona and ruled for seven years. It is possible that at this point the Vāyu Purāṇa breaks off from local tradition and resumes the list with the kings at Pāṭaliputra.

There is agreement amongst all three Purāṇas, Vāyu Matsya and Viṣṇu, over the last two kings of the Mauryan dynasty. These were Śatadhanvan or Śatadhanus, who is said to have ruled for eight years, and Bṛhadratha, who ruled for seven years and was assassinated by Puṣyamitra.

Our reconstruction of the later Mauryas is as follows: On the death of Aśoka, the empire was divided into western and eastern halves. The former was ruled by Kunāla, Samprati (for a short while), and then possibly by Bandh<sup>u</sup>pālita, Indrapālita and Daśona. This part of the empire was threatened by the Bactrian Greeks in the north-west and by the rising power of the Āndhras in the northern Deccan. (2)

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(1) JAOS Vol. 77. No. 4 Oct.-Dec. 1957, p. 276 ff.  
 (2) Smith, EHI, p. 217 ff; 233 ff.

The succession of the main line of Mauryas in the east was as follows,

Daśaratha	ruled for 8 years until 224 B.C.
Samprati	" " 9 " " 215 B.C.
Sāliśuka	" " 13 " " 201 B.C.
Devavarman	" " 7 " " 194 B.C.
Śatadhanvan	" " 8 " " 186 B.C.
Br̥hadratha	" " 7 " " 179 B.C.

Thus we have a total of 52 years which, combined with the 86 of the first three Mauryas, gives us 138 years for the Mauryan dynasty. In fact the dynasty lasted for more than 137 years, since the Purānas do not include the four year interregnum period between the reign of Bindusāra and Aśoka. On the basis of our chronology Aśoka died in 232/31 B.C.<sup>(1)</sup> Therefore Br̥hadratha died in circa 179 B.C. Since the years mentioned for the various reigns are not exact we may allow a discrepancy of a year or two.

As a dynasty the Mauryas came to an end with the death of Br̥hadratha. But the name was used, or the claim was made of belonging to the dynasty, for many centuries afterwards by rulers of a minor order. Thus Hsuan Tsang speaks of Pūrnavarman the ruler of Magadha, who claimed to be the last descendant of Aśoka.<sup>(2)</sup> He was responsible for resuscitating the Bodhi-tree, which had suffered at the hands of the wicked

(1) See Ch. II, p. 120

(2) Watters, II, p. 115.

Śaśāṅka. Since the latter event is said to have occurred in recent times we may take it that Pūrṇavarman ruled in the seventh century A.D., as a vassal of Harṣa.

The Kanasva inscription of A.D. 738 mentions a king called Dhavala who is described as belonging to the Mauryan dynasty. <sup>(1)</sup> Bhandarkar identifies him with Davalappadeva the overlord of Dhanika mentioned in the Dabok inscription of A.D. 725. <sup>(2)</sup> Rayachaudhuri has suggested that he may have been a descendent of a princely viceroy of Ujjain. <sup>(3)</sup> It is however equally possible that there was no connection between Dhavala and the Mauryas and that he adopted Mauryan descent, because the Mauryas were a renowned dynasty in local tradition.

Pūrṇavarman's descent from Aśoka is also somewhat dubious.

<sup>(4)</sup> Much the same can be said of Bühler's suggestion that the chiefs in Konkan and Khandesh, referred to as Mauryas in Cālukya and Yādava inscriptions, <sup>(5)</sup> were of Mauryan descent. The adoption of the name Maurya cannot be accepted as proof of direct descent. Certainly the Marāṭha name More is phonetically very close to Maurya. This does not imply that it had connections with the main line of Mauryas; it may have descended from some off-shoot of the family. It is equally possible that it had an independent origin and popular usage has tended to associate it with Maurya, a tendency which the members of the More families would not object to. The prestige

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(1) Bombay Gaz. I, part 2, p. 284. Kanasva is in Kotah state in Rajasthan.  
(2) Ep. Ind. XII, p. 11.  
(3) PHAI. p. 292, n. 2.  
(4) Ep. Ind. III, p. 136.  
(5) Bombay Gaz. I, part 2, p. 282-4.

of the Mauryas may have increased with the popularity of  
 Viśākhadatta's play "Mudrārākṣasa"<sup>(1)</sup>, which in turn may have led  
 to many petty kings claiming Mauryan descent. It is significant  
 that there is a gap of 800 to 900 years before these claims to  
 Mauryan descent are asserted. It would have been impossible  
 for any of these kings to produce an authentic geneological  
 tree.

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An examination of the history of the Mauryan dynasty,  
 leads inevitably to the further examination of the reasons why  
 it declined. There is something almost dramatic in the way in  
 which the dynasty petered out after the death of Aśoka. In  
 most other examples of imperial decline, the downward movement  
 sets in well before the political decline. Not so with the  
 Mauryas, where, as we have seen in the first part of this  
 chapter, the descent was completed within half a century.

One of the more obvious reasons for the decline was the  
 weak succession of kings after Aśoka. Most immediately the  
 empire was considerably weakened by the partition into two, the  
 eastern part under Daśaratha and the western part under Kunāla.  
 Had the partition not taken place, it is possible that the Greek  
 invasions of the north-west might have been held back for a  
 while, giving the Mauryas a chance to re-establish some degree  
 of their previous power.

The partition of the empire must have disrupted the

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(1) Generally thought to be a sixth century dramatist.

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various services as well. The political and administrative organisation had been planned by the first three Mauryas in such a way that it necessitated a strict supervision from the centre, spreading out in a network throughout the empire. With the partition of the empire the eastern half was at an advantage, as Pāṭaliputra and the organisation at Pāṭaliputra continued much as before although on a smaller scale. The western half had to rapidly expand the provincial government of Taxila and the north-west province into a near-imperial organisation. In this process of change it was unable to give full attention to the Greek attacks.

The quality of the kings who followed Aśoka was strikingly in contrast to his own. The pattern of Aśoka's policy was not a conventional one in Indian politics up to that time. This was in part due to the new imperialism of the Mauryas and in part to Aśoka's ideology, which dominated his government. It naturally created a problem for his successors as to whether they should conform to the conventional pattern or continue with his policy. Again a united empire as under Aśoka might have continued the policy of the king, with interesting results on the future politics of India. It appears from his inscription that Daśaratha may have been in favour of Aśokan policy. But possibly the youth of Daśaratha and the partition of the empire weakened his position. From the considerable variation of names in Mauryan king lists in the various sources, it would seem that there was a general tendency

for male relatives and members of the royal family either to claim the throne or else to proclaim themselves independent rulers in the provinces. Attempts to explain this variation of names have been made on the basis of their being secondary names of the same kings.<sup>(1)</sup> But this is not a convincing explanation. Most of the birudas do not have any connection semantically or phonetically with the best known name of the person. In fact the many short reigns within the fifty years would suggest that some of the kings may have been deposed.

Much has been written on Aśokan policy being directly responsible for the decline of the Mauryan empire. This accusation is based on two chief arguments. The first maintains that the revolt of Pusyamitra was a result of the brahmanical reaction against the pro-Buddhist policy of Aśoka and the pro-Jaina policy of his successors. Haraprasad Sastri states this view in no uncertain terms.<sup>(2)</sup> The question has been examined in some detail by Raychaudhuri and we here summarise the arguments of both scholars, adding our own comments where necessary.<sup>(3)</sup>

Haraprasad Sastri maintains that the ban on animal sacrifices was a direct attack on the brahmins since much of their power and prestige lay in the fact that they alone could perform sacrifices and thus act as intermediaries between the people and the gods. Raychaudhuri states that this ban did not necessarily imply hostility towards the brahmins, since

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(1) e.g. De la Vallée Poussin, ITM, pp. 164-65.  
 (2) JASB, 1910, pp. 259-62.  
 (3) PHAI. pp. 294-301.

Brahmanical literature itself stresses ahimsā, and mentions (1) the futility of laying great store on sacrifices alone. In one edict, Aśoka specifically states that no animals are to be sacrificed in the particular place, where the edict is inscribed. (2) In the other edicts the ban is on the killing of certain animals even those regarded as edible, and not only on those used in sacrifices.

A second point raised by Haraprasad Sastri is that this action was particularly resented by the brahmins since it was promulgated by a śūdra king. The śūdra origin of the Mauryas is based on a statement in the Purāṇas, in speaking of the Nanda dynasty, that all kings after Mahāpadma will be of śūdra origin. As Raychaudhuri points out, this can only refer to the successors of Mahāpadma, the other Nanda kings, otherwise if it referred to succeeding dynasties, even the Śuṅgas and Kanvas would have to be included as śūdras, and we know that the Śuṅgas were of brahmin origin. Buddhist literature refers to the ksatriya origin of the Mauryas. (3) A Mysore inscription refers to the ksatriya origin of ~~the~~ Candragupta. (4)

A further argument of Sastri's is based on the phrase from the Minor Rock Edict at Brahmagiri, etc;

".....se imāyam velāyam jambudīpassi amissā devā samānā mānussehi se dāni missā kaṭā....."

Sastri interprets it as meaning that the brahmins who were regarded as bhūdevas or gods on earth had been exposed by Aśoka

- (1) Candogya Upaniṣad. III, 17, 4; Mundaka Upaniṣad, I, 2, 7.  
 (2) I R.E. Gir. CII, I, p. 1.  
 (3) Przyluski. LEA, pp. 285-86; Divyāvadāna pp. 370-309.  
 (4) Rice. Mysore and Coorg from the inscriptions, p. 10.

as being false gods. This remark is based on the interpretation of Senart.<sup>(1)</sup> Other scholars have shown that the word missa may well mean "mixed" as the Maski inscription further makes clear.<sup>(2)</sup> As Bhandarkar<sup>(3)</sup> has shown and as we have discussed in a previous chapter,<sup>(4)</sup> the phrase refers in fact to the gods mixing on earth with the people, and does not refer to false gods.

According to Sastri the dhamma-mahāmattas destroyed the prestige of the brahman. As Raychaudhuri points out this could hardly have been so, since some of them were concerned specifically with looking after the rights and welfare of the brahmans.<sup>(5)</sup> Furthermore the dhamma-mahāmattas were concerned with social welfare generally, and covered a much wider field of work than the brahmans.

As regards the dhamma-mahāmattas we do not accept Sastri's contention that they undermined the prestige of the brahmans, but we believe that they may have become unpopular with the people in the later years of Aśoka's reign, and this prevented if anything, Aśoka's wish to be in contact with public opinion. They were appointed in the king's thirteenth regnal year and began as officers who supervised the propagation of the Dhamma.<sup>(6)</sup> Gradually they assumed greater powers of interference in the daily life of the people, since Aśoka

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(1) JA. 1916, I, p. 439.

(2) S. Lévi. JA. 1911, I, p. 123.

(3) IA. 1912, p. 170.

(4) See Ch. III p. 159

(5) VII P.E. CII, I, p. 130.

(6) V R.E.Gir. CII, I, p. 8.

states that they have also to supervise the practice of the Dhamma. We have the impression that they tended to form an order of their own, with official sanction, and the right of entry everywhere. Since they were the special creation of the king, they were no doubt feared by the populace, and by way of appeasement were granted many privileges. Their powers of supervision and interference extended over both the ordinary householder and the royal family<sup>(1)</sup>. The stirring up of hesitant people suggests more than mere persuasion and propagation of Dhamma. It is possible that those citizens who proclaimed themselves followers of the Dhamma in loud voices received preferential treatment compared to those who practised it in a quiet way. Officials, even those with the best of intentions, can never be expected to be superhuman, not even āhamma-mahāmattas. It is likely that in the course of their routine duties, they assumed greater powers than Aśoka had intended or knew of. The creed of these mahāmattas was the Dhamma and in the more distant areas they were the interpreters of the Dhamma. This is a situation not unknown to other cultures, for the church has known it in its priests and political systems have known it in their commissars.

The question of dandāsamatā and vyavahārasamatā, the uniformity of legal procedure and punishment, is raised by Haraprasad Sastri in support of his argument that privileges usually given to brahmins regarding penalties were stopped as

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(1) VII P.E. CII, I, p. 130.

a result of these two measures adopted by Aśoka.

Raychaudhuri refutes this argument on the basis of the terms meaning a uniformity of law and punishment. We are in support of the view of Raychaudhuri in this instance and have already examined the matter in detail.<sup>(1)</sup> Raychaudhuri further quotes from brahmanical literature to prove that the privileges of the brahmins in the matter of immunity from capital punishment were not so evident as Sastri would have us believe.<sup>(2)</sup> Aśoka's frequent requests in his edicts for due respect towards brahmins and Śramaṇas hardly points to his being anti-brahmanical in outlook.<sup>(3)</sup> Considering that he himself was a convinced Buddhist, it is very creditable to him that he was so concerned with the welfare of other religious sects.

Sastri's final argument is possibly even weaker than his previous ones. He maintains that Aśoka was strong enough to hold his own against the brahmins, but on his death a conflict arose between his successors and the brahmins which lasted until the assumption of power by Puṣyamitra, and the latter was the expression of a great brāhman revolution. Neither of these statements are borne out by existing evidence, as Raychaudhuri has shown. We know from the Rājataranginī that one at least of Aśoka's descendents was quite anti-Buddhist and very pro-brahman.<sup>(4)</sup> Jalauka is described as an ardent Śaivite. The idea of Puṣyamitra being violently anti-Buddhist has often

(1) See Ch. VI, p. 383

(2) Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. III, 9, 26; Mahābhārata. Ādi Par. 107. Śānti Par. 23, 26; Pañcaviṃśa Brahmana. Vedic Index, II, p. 84.

(3) III, VIII, IX, XI, R.E.; VII P.E.

(4) Rājataranginī. I, 148.

been stated, but archaelological evidence suggests the contrary. Buddhist literature relates that Puṣyaimitra wishing to gain notoriety decided that even a wicked action could be excused provided it made him well-known. Then questioning people as to why Aśoka gained fame, he was told that it was due to the fact that Aśoka built 84,000 stūpas for Buddhism. Whereupon Puṣyamitra decided that he would gain fame by destroying these 84,000 stūpas.<sup>(1)</sup> Yet archaeological evidence proves that the

stūpa at Sanchi was enlarged and encased in its present covering stūpa at Sanchi was enlarged and encased in its present covering<sup>(2)</sup> it during the Sunga period.<sup>(2)</sup> Certainly the Aśokan pillar near it<sup>(3)</sup> occurred at a much later date. It is more than likely that

the Aśokāvadāna legend is a Buddhist version of Puṣyamitra's attack on the Mauryas, and reflects the fact that, with the declining influence of Buddhism at the imperial court, Buddhist monuments and institutions would naturally receive less royal attention. Moreover the source quoted in this instance being propagandist literature would naturally exaggerate the wickendness of anti-Buddhists.

Since the Mauryan empire had shrunk considerably and the kings of the later period were hardly in a position to defend themselves, it did not need a revolution to depose Brhadratha. We are told that he was assassinated by Puṣyamitra whilst reviewing the army. This does not suggest a great revolution. In fact it points very strongly to a

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(1) Prxyluski. LEA, pp. 301-302.  
 (2) Anc. Ind. IX. p. 160.  
 (3) Marshall - Guide to Sanchi, p. 90.

palace coup d'état. The organisation of the state was by now at such a low ebb that subordinate officials were willing to accept anyone who could promise them a more efficient organisation. We feel that if it had been a great brahmanical revolution, Puṣyamitra would have had the assistance of other neighbouring kings, as for example the descendents of Subhāgasena from the north-west.

Ghoshal claims that the propagation of Buddhism in the Mauryan period disturbed the brahmanical social and religious order, which so weakened the organisation of the empire that it could not defend itself against the Greek invasions. (1) Certainly Buddhism disturbed the brahmanical social and religious order. Nor was this confined only to Buddhism. Some aspects of Aśokan policy such as the discouragement of maṅgalas and similar ceremonies must have had the same effect. But this disturbance was not of a magnitude sufficient to politically weaken the Mauryan state. It may have started new trends of thought, but social behaviour continued much as before. As we have seen from our examination of the social life of the time, there was little in society, contradictory to brahmanical teaching, which can be said to have been inspired by Buddhist teaching.

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Raychaudhuri has criticised Aśoka on the basis of his having pursued a policy of non-violence with such vigour and determination that it resulted in a completely effete

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(1) SIHC, p. 258.  
(2) PHAI. pp. 286-88.

nation from a military point of view, and one that was not therefore able to withstand the Greek invasion. He maintains that Aśoka's policy was directly responsible for the rapid disintegration of the empire after Aśoka. This policy of non-violence not only caused the military decline of the empire, but also led to a lack of control on the part of the king. The latter was the indirect cause of the officials becoming oppressive in the provinces, leading to the revolts referred to in Buddhist literature. In short, the pacifist policy of Aśoka tended to disorganise the administration of the empire. We are of the opinion that such a criticism of Aśoka is not justified, since it is based largely on what we regard as misinterpretation of the evidence.

The unconventional nature of the government of Aśoka did not lie in his taking to heart the doctrine of ahimsā. Rather it lay in the fact that he was personally convinced that a greater degree of non-violence and mutual respect would be to the benefit of society, and furthermore that his personal conviction was so great that even as king he did not refrain from preaching and requesting people to observe such behaviour. As far as possible he determined his administrative policy in accordance with such principles.

We have already discussed the question of the revolts in the provinces. <sup>(1)</sup> Raychaudhuri states that provincial <sup>(2)</sup> governments were oppressive. This statement is based on the two stories in the Divyāvadāna regarding the revolt of the

(1) See Ch. II, p. 47D.  
 (2) PHAI. p. 303.

people of Taxila against the ministers.<sup>(1)</sup> Of these we have already stated that we accept the authenticity of the account relating to the revolt during the reign of Bindusāra when Aśoka was sent to quell it, but do not accept the truth of a similar revolt during the reign of Aśoka, when Kunāla was similarly dispatched.<sup>(2)</sup> Of the account of the second revolt we believe, for reasons already stated,<sup>(3)</sup> that the Kunālasūtra version is more authentic. Thus the only example of ministerial oppression under Aśoka is not acceptable, and therefore the contention of Raychaudhuri is not sufficiently convincing to prove the existence of such oppression in the provinces by the imperial administrators. Raychaudhuri suggests that the advice to the mahāmattas in the 1st Separate Edict is to ensure against such oppression,<sup>(4)</sup> since the king demands justice and humane treatment from them to all the people in their charge. We are of the opinion that the real significance of this edict lies in the fact that it is addressed only to the mahāmattas of Dhauri and Jaugada, both cities in Kalinga, and not to other officers in other parts of the empire. Owing to his remorse at the suffering caused by the conquest of Kalinga, it is but natural that Aśoka would pay particular attention to the welfare of its people. Moreover, the two separate edicts would serve as excellent propaganda to create in the minds of

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(1) Divyāvadāna. XXVI, pp. 371, XXVII, p. 107 ff.

(2) See Ch. II, p. 49

(3) See p. 449

(4) PHAI. p. 303.

Kaliṅgans the feeling that, although recently conquered by the Mauryan emperor, they were nevertheless his special concern. In addressing these mahāmattas his tone is imperious. There is not the least hint of an emperor who is not in control of the administration.

Too much has been made of Aśoka's pacifism without a detailed examination of what this policy did in fact mean. He disliked the killing of animals whether for purposes of sacrifice or food, and he continually states in his edicts that animals should not be killed and where this is not possible at least kindness to animals should be observed.<sup>(1)</sup> However in the palace animals were still killed for food, although the number was considerably reduced.<sup>(2)</sup> We have no evidence of his having abstained from this practice altogether, though he states that he wishes to do so. The list of animals which are declared inviolable does not include the chief edible animals. It would seem that where possible abstention from eating meat was observed, but on the whole the practice still continued.

Had he indeed been so naive a pacifist as Raychaudhuri would have us believe, he would surely have abolished the death penalty. But capital punishment continued throughout his reign. The only form of alleviation was introduced in his twenty-sixth regnal year, when a three-day respite was granted to those who were condemned to death.<sup>(3)</sup>

Raychaudhuri maintains that the successors of Aśoka

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(1) RE III, Gir. CII, I, p. 4.  
(2) RE I, Gir. CII, I, p. 1.  
(3) PE IV. Delhi-Topra, CII, I, p. 123.

were brought up on a pacifist diet to such an extent that they were incapable of standing up to any armed force. They (1) "had heard more of dhamma-ghoṣa than of bheri-ghoṣa".

He interprets Aśoka's phrase bheri-ghoso aho dhamma-ghoso (2) as "the sound of the war-drum has become the sound of dhamma."

We have elsewhere examined this interpretation at some length (3) and have given our reasons for suggesting that it is not valid.

Bheri-ghoṣa does not refer specifically to the war-drum but to the sound of any kettle-drum.

It would seem from Raychaudhuri's argument that Aśoka issued an order for the demobilisation of all armies and settled down to a rule of non-violence in its literal sense. There is no hint of this in the edicts. The evidence suggests a stern monarch, even though his reign saw only one major campaign. For example he states his attitude towards the frontier people quite clearly. The king is willing to forgive those who have (4) done wrong, but only that which can be forgiven is forgiven. Even more precise is his message to the forest tribes. They are told of the power which he possesses, in spite of his repentance, so that they may cease committing faults and therefore not be killed. (5) Could any threat be couched so tactfully and yet be meant so firmly? The same edict contains further evidence to entirely contradict Raychaudhuri's contention, that Aśoka wished his successors to forswear conquests of territory.

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(1) PHAI. p. 304.  
(2) PHAI. p. 270.  
(3) See Ch. III, p. 154  
(4) XIII R.E. CII, I, p. 69.  
(5) Ibid.

Aśoka states that he believes that no further conquest is necessary, which is logical enough considering the fact that the Mauryan empire covered practically the entire sub-continent, but that, if his successors should have to make a conquest in the future, it was to be hoped that they would be merciful where possible and deliver light punishments. <sup>(1)</sup>

Aśoka was in a position to maintain pacific policies because his frontiers were secure and so was the territory within the empire. The only area that might have been troublesome, Kalinga, he conquered in the early part of his reign. The conquest of south India would not have been too difficult a task for the Mauryan armies, but, as we have explained earlier, there was no need for it. <sup>(2)</sup> The empire of Antiochus of Syria was the only serious rival to the Mauryan empire. To have attempted the conquest of the lands beyond the Hindu-kush would have been a foolhardy act on Aśoka's part, placing his forces in unnecessary danger, campaigning in the deserts and mountains of Persia. In any case the friendly relationship between him and Antiochus was on all counts a better relationship than any number of conquests. The only people from whom he could expect trouble were the frontier tribes already referred to. They may well have harassed his administrators. We know that with them he used great firmness.

The absence of innumerable conquests does not in any way suggest that Aśoka merely wished to retain what his father

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(1) Ibid. p. 70.  
 (2) See Ch. IV p. 237-238

and grand-father had conquered before him. That he was himself filled with the grandiose ideas of a conqueror cannot be doubted. As de la Vallée Poussin has pointed out if he was really such an extreme pacifist as some historians make him out to be, he would surely have returned Kalinga to an independent status.<sup>(1)</sup> But, being a practical ruler, he accepted the conquest of Kalinga as a fact and did not raise any moral doubts on the question. Moreover he did not publicise his confession of remorse over the conquest in Kalinga itself, doubtless because it was politically inexpedient to do so.

He appears to have been quite convinced that he had the submission of the Greek states of the eastern Mediterranean, merely by sending them Dhamma missions, and, what is more, he is proud of this supposed submission.<sup>(2)</sup> The only difference between him and Samudragupta of the Gupta dynasty is that Aśoka glories in the Dhamma-vijaya and the latter glories in the yuddha-vijaya. Similarly his power over Devanampiya Tissa of Ceylon was considerable, even though Ceylon was never actually conquered.<sup>(3)</sup> The military conquest of Ceylon, for instance, would have altered the relations between the two countries for the worse, in addition to creating untold other problems of an administrative nature.

Raychaudhuri would have us believe that military

(1) ITM, p. 119  
 (2) XIII R.E.Kālsi, CII, I, p. 43.  
 (3) Mah. XI. 17-42; XIII; XIV.

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conquests are the only ones of any value, and that the greatness of a king lies in the number and value of such conquests. We have shown above that Aśoka was not the naive and extreme pacifist that Raychaudhuri maintains. Even an entire generation of complete pacifism is not enough to weaken an empire and lead it to fast disintegration. Battles and territorial acquisitions are not alone responsible for the creation and destruction of empires. With regard to the Mauryan empire the causes must be sought elsewhere, in spheres which up to now have tended to be neglected by most historians of this period. Far more significant than the contribution of military inactivity to this decline were the factors of the organisation of the administration and the conception of the state during this period.

In any political system, the type of administration and the conception of the state, if such a conception exists, at all, are inter-related factors. The chief importance of a conception of a state lies in the fact that it becomes an idea above the king, the government and even the social order. It is an entity to which every citizen owes his loyalty irrespective of other barriers and differences between him and his fellow citizens. The state is then the supreme body and demands complete loyalty.

Such a conception of the state was not in existence in India during the Mauryan period. Many of the requisites for building up the idea of the state were not present. Common customs, a common language and a common historical

tradition did not exist throughout the area covered by the Mauryan empire. Thus the idea of nationhood among the Mauryan peoples was not present. If there was no conception of the state on this vast scale there was equally no conception of it either amongst the smaller units that constituted the empire.

For the purpose of this examination we shall for the moment restrict ourselves to the province of Magadha. Here, in a small area the requisites of a common language, common customs and common historical tradition were present. But despite this the idea of the state was not known. If the idea had been a familiar one it would have found expression in current thinking on political systems as it appears in political treatises and practice. We are fortunate in that we possess a treatise which is the direct expression of this people and this age, the Kauṭaliya Arthaśāstra. Historians of this period have insisted that this demonstrates the Mauryan ideas on the state. Nevertheless the work fails on this count, when tested on the basis of two fundamental pre-requisites. In the text, the loyalty of the subject is to the individual king and not to the state. Thus there is no conception of the state as an entity which is above the government as symbolised in the king. Secondly, the work does not consider the possibility of various political systems in the light of attempting to discover which is best suited to that particular state, for instance, monarchy, oligarchy,

republicanism, etc; but rather is concerned only with describing how best the king, as the motive power of the government, can function. To say that the Arthaśāstra embodies the Indian conception of the state, is to say in another context that Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, embodies the European conception of the state. Machiavelli at least saw *Il Principe* as the detail of his larger work *I Discorsi*, where the conception of the state is examined in considerable detail. Kauṭalya did not go beyond analysing the function of the king in a complex administration, and methods by which the king can govern.

Later Indian theorists, following Kauṭalya, continued discussing the methods of government and recording changes in social usage. It is significant that there was always this emphasis on the right and wrong of social order, since in Indian thought and practice, social order usurped the place of the state.

Max Muller writes, "The Indian never knew the feeling of nationality, and his heart never trembled in the expectation of national applause..... The only sphere where the Indian mind found itself at liberty to act, to create, and to worship, was the sphere of religion and philosophy".<sup>(1)</sup> This was the commonly held view of many writers of the last century and some of this century as well. Some have modified the term religion to include social organisation. This we feel is an

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(1) History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature. pp. 30-31.

important realisation. Indian society has always stressed the fact that it gained its sanction from religious sources. The caste system had invariably a supernatural origin when described by Hindu theorists throughout the centuries before the impact of Western thought. Similarly, Manu the law-giver is invested with godly powers. This position is strikingly in contrast to that of China for instance, where a distinction was made between social ethics and religion, and where Confucius has remained a mortal even among the most orthodox of his followers.

We are of the opinion that with the development of political ideas, the loyalty that in most other cultures is given to the state was, in India, given to the social order. As long as the social structure remained intact, the idea of the overall state failed to draw either recognition or support. This was one of the reasons why an imperial structure could not hope to survive for long in India. The Indian social order changed by slow degrees. Since the change was never sudden it was hardly noticed and the loyalty continued unabated. The resentment of the brahmans against the Buddhists was possibly not a religious resentment, since as a religion Buddhism was not acutely at variance with Buddhism, but rather a social one, since Buddhism may have upset the social order leading in turn to a new distribution of loyalties.

Ideally the three principles which mould the life of a Hindu are Dharma, Artha and Kāma. Dharma is interpreted as

obeying the sacred law and furthering the dictates of this law, the law being not the legislation that governs the citizens of a particular state, but social usage and the maintenance of social order. Since political conceptions could not claim the devotion of the citizen, it was inevitable that the rise and fall of empires and other political entities would be linked largely with the quality of those in government and administration.

Mauryan bureaucracy, had it been of a different nature, might still have saved the situation and prevented such a complete disintegration of the empire. As we have seen from a previous chapter, the administration was of an extremely centralised character, with the higher functions as far as possible under the direct control of the ruler. This in itself necessitated a king of considerable personal ability. In such a situation, the weakening of the central control leads automatically to a weakening of the administration. With the death of Aśoka and the uneven quality of his successors, there was a weakening at the centre, particularly after the division of the empire. The breaking away of the provinces was at this point almost inevitable.

Since the officials of the administration owed their loyalty to the king and not to the state, they became the personal employees of the king, particularly as the king had such overwhelming powers of personal selection. <sup>(1)</sup> This meant that a change of king could result in a change of officials,

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(1) See Ch. VI, p. 368 ff.

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at least of the more senior and responsible ones. This would be specially detrimental to a country during a period when there was a rapid succession of kings, as was the case in Mauryan India soon after the death of Aśoka. If the administration of contemporary France, since World War II had owed its loyalty to the government in power, France as a political unit might well have been on the way to disintegration by now.

Even with this fact of changing loyalties, the Mauryas could have employed a system to ensure the continuation of a well-trained bureaucracy, which would maintain the pace of administration through many political upheavals. This was the examination system which was used to such effect in later centuries by the Chinese emperors in China and British administrators in India. It is interesting that although the Arthaśāstra goes into such considerable detail regarding the administration of the kingdom, yet nowhere is there an indication of how the subordinate administrators were recruited. There is certainly no evidence of any examination system. We are told that the higher officials were selected on the personal choice of the king. It is to be presumed that this system of personal selection continued down the scale. This strengthened the force of social kinship, since there would be a natural tendency for officers to select subordinates from members of their own social group or friends. This would in

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(1) Cases of the continuity of officials are recorded in later times, largely through the hereditary tendency of appointments. Clearly this was not so strong in the Mauryan period.

turn create either group loyalties or group antagonisms towards the new king. Should one official have to be dismissed for disloyalty to the new king, possibly an entire section of the administration would have to be changed. No doubt the later Mauryas must have faced this situation. With a weak king at the centre, it was not difficult for a local ruler or prince to direct loyalty towards himself instead of the king.

The examination system had two obvious advantages. It eliminated social groups, since applicants could be recruited from any social stratum. Secondly, because it was an imperial service controlled from the centre, the officers could be posted to any part of the empire. This prevented local cliques from gaining too much power and threatening the position of the ruler at the centre. Such a system would again have been contrary to the conception of Indian social order, since the maintenance of the latter depended on each member of the society knowing his position in society and remaining there. Kings of śūdra origin may have been accepted if they were powerful enough to hold their own, but administrators from the same class of society would have disrupted the entire social order.

It is not to be wondered at that Megasthenes describes administrators as forming two of the seven classes of society. They must certainly have been a privileged group. The senior officers gained tremendous social prestige since they were personally selected by the king, and the juniors would form a closed community with the other members of the bureaucracy.

Together with social prestige, it is apparent from the scale of pay listed in the Arthaśāstra that they were economically well provided for.<sup>(1)</sup>

Another factor contributing to the disintegration of the empire, was that since the land was the de facto possession of the king, it could change hands more easily. The partitioning and parcelling out of land did not require any sanction. If on the other hand it had been regarded as state land, it might have escaped too frequent a change of ownership.

This absence of the idea of state ownership of land further prevented a consciousness of nationhood. Within the large Mauryan empire there were smaller areas, each developing its own resources, but the range of economic levels of production and income was obviously considerable. Owing to its fertility, the region of the Ganges basin was economically far more prosperous than the less developed region of the northern Deccan. The economies of the two areas varied considerably. The first was an agricultural economy with increasing possibilities for commercial interests. The second was a nomadic pastoral economy with occasional trade and agriculture. Mauryan administration was just beginning to understand the economic advantages of these various economies, as is evident from the Arthaśāstra. Administrators were better acquainted with the northern economy, since more attention had been paid to that system by the theorists. It is possible that the administration in the south became less efficient when it had

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(1) V. 3.

to rely increasingly on the ability of local administrators and could not turn continually for help to the emperor. This may well have been in part responsible for the breaking away of the southern territories. The northern regions would not feel the same lack of central control, since under the Nandas they had already experienced an attempt at a unified administration.

Kosambi has suggested that there was a considerable pressure on Mauryan economy under the later Mauryas. <sup>(1)</sup> He bases his argument on two factors. He believes that unnecessary measures were employed to increase the tax, as for example the tax on actors and prostitutes mentioned in the Arthaśāstra. Secondly the Mauryan punch-marked coins of this period show evidence of debasement. We are of the opinion that this view is the result of an analysis based on selected economic evidence, without taking into consideration the political factors of the time. As we have explained earlier, it was during the Mauryan period that for the first time ~~that~~ the importance of taxation as a source of income for the king was realised. <sup>(2)</sup> There was therefore a tendency to tax everything that could possibly be taxed. It is clear from the Arthaśāstra itself that the tax on actors, prostitutes and the members of other such professions, was not an emergency measure, since this tax is considered a legitimate tax, and one as normal as that received from the cultivators. In fact the

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(1) ISIH. p. 211.  
(1) <sup>See Ch. V. p. 294 ff.</sup> ISIH. p. 211. ff.  
(2) See Ch. V. p. 294 ff.

Arthaśāstra does mention certain measures that might be introduced in an emergency when the king's treasury began to empty, such as the system of double-cropping.<sup>(1)</sup> The tax on actors, etc. is not mentioned among these measures.

Debasement of coinage does not necessarily mean a pressure on the general economy. In the case of the later Mauryas it was their own political ineptitude that hastened the dwindling of the empire. Owing to the general laxity and lack of control, it is possible that debased money began to circulate, particularly in the areas which were gradually ceeding from the empire. Since the coins have been found largely in hoards, their provenance is often not known with certainty. In areas such as the above-mentioned, the coins may have been punched by the authorities and put into circulation without properly ascertaining their quality. Furthermore such debasement may also indicate that there was an increased demand for silver in relation to other goods, and therefore the silver content in coins was dropped. Moreover Kosambi's argument is based on his own identification of the coins of the later Mauryas, and this is by no means certain.

Evidence from other material remains does not suggest a pressure on the economy. If anything it suggests rather an expanding economy. From archaeological evidence at Hastināpura and Śiśupālagarh, it would appear that there was a considerable material improvement in the culture of the time, both from the point of view of technical advance, and the use of

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 a better quality of material. This improvement appears to have been more equitably distributed than during the earlier Mauryan period. For instance at the earlier level most of the pottery was a coarse grey ware, together with some deposits of northern black polished ware. At the later level of the post-Aśokan Mauryas and the early Śuṅgas, there is evidence of widely distributed pottery, wheel-thrown and of a fine clay. A comparatively new element, that of town-planning and house-planning, becomes a more regular feature. There is a distinct improvement in the workmanship of objects like beads, rings, terracottas, etc. Economically the reign of Aśoka was a great advantage. The unification of the country under a single efficient administration, the organisation and increase in communications, and peace, meant the development of trade as an opening up of many new commercial interests.

It is possible that during the period of extreme political confusion, particularly in the Ganges valley during the reign of the last three Mauryas, there may have been some hoarding of money by the merchants and commercial classes. This hoarding may well have led to a debasement of coinage, but there is no doubt of the economic prosperity that prevailed with the decline of the Mauryan empire. Surplus wealth was used by the rising commercial classes to decorate religious buildings. They were now the new donors for a brief period. The sculpture at Barhut and Sanchi and the

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(1) Anc. Ind. IX, Sharma. p. 140, p. 168.

Deccan caves was the expression of this new bourgeoisie.

It has been said by one writer at least that the Coup d'état of Pusyamitra was a people's revolt against Mauryan oppression and a rejection of the Mauryan adoption of foreign ideas, as for instance in Mauryan art.<sup>(1)</sup> This argument is based on the idea that Sunga art, largely the sculpture at Barhut and Sanchi, is more earthy and in the folk tradition than Mauryan art. We believe that Mauryan art expressed the materialism of its emperors quite unashamedly, as for instance in the Aśokan capitals. Whether derived from foreign sources or not this unmistakable character of Mauryan art would have remained nevertheless. The character of Sunga art changes because it serves a different purpose and its donors come from a different social class. The Aśokan columns are not as intimately connected with Buddhism as a religion, as are the railings and gateways at Barhut and Sanchi. Sunga art conforms more to the folk traditions because Buddhism itself had incorporated large elements of popular cults, and because the donors of this art, many of whom were possibly artisans, were culturally much more in the main stream of folk tradition.

The idea of a popular revolt against the Mauryas is further elaborated by Ray on the basis of the ban on Pamājas etc. It is possible that Aśoka's ban on festive meetings, and his discouragement of the eating of meat may have antagonized the population, though it is still open to question

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(1) N. Ray. Maurya and Sunga Art. p. 64.

whether these prohibitions were strictly enforced. In his later years, we have noticed a growing tendency towards authoritarianism, which may have resulted in measures that were irksome to the population. Nevertheless it is unlikely that there was a sufficient national consciousness among the varied peoples of the Mauryan empire to rise up in support of Puṣyamitra against Mauryan oppression, even if this existed.

As we have suggested earlier, the idea of nationality among the Indians was certainly not a conscious one at this period. Even the resistance against the Greeks was not an organized one, but rather the resistance of local rulers born of a fear of losing their newly acquired territories. It is significant that when Porus was fighting Alexander, or when Subhāgasena was paying tribute to Antiochus, they were doing so as isolated rulers in the north-west of India. They had no support from Pāṭaliputra, nor are they even mentioned in any Indian source as offering resistance to the hated Yavanas. Even the heroic Porus, who, enemy though he was, won the admiration of the Greeks, is left unrecorded in Indian sources.

Another argument that has been used in favour of the idea of a revolt by the population against Mauryan oppression, is that the land tax under the Mauryas is described as being one quarter by classical sources, and this high taxation was too heavy a burden on the cultivator. If the tax was indeed uniformly one quarter, there might be some truth in its causing

rural discontent. But, as we have shown in an earlier chapter, the tax must have varied from region to region according to the fertility of the soil and the availability of water.<sup>(1)</sup> As we have suggested earlier this figure of one quarter stated by Megasthenes probably referred only to the extremely fertile and well watered regions around Pāṭaliputra with which the Greek visitor would have been most familiar. That one quarter of the produce was not the usual amount collected from the cultivator seems fairly clear from the reference in the Arthaśāstra, where it is suggested that in periods of emergency the king may increase his demand to one third or one quarter.<sup>(2)</sup> Obviously therefore one quarter was regarded as a high tax. It is unlikely that the Mauryas would have insisted on such high taxation in normal conditions. If that were so, then Aśoka's injunctions to the rājūkas to be just and fair in their judgments would be sheer hypocrisy.

Large political units which are economically dependent on an agricultural economy have to insure the establishment of an efficient system enabling the cultivators to produce to the best advantage, and the same degree of efficiency amongst those who administer. The Mauryas were unsuccessful in both. We have already examined the reasons why they failed with the latter. With regard to establishing a system for the cultivators the importance of irrigation was realized, hydraulic

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(1) See Ch. VI p. 315 ff  
 (2) V. 2

works were constructed, but the settlement of the land system remained uncertain. Since this was the first time that an agricultural economy had gained prominence in India, it took many more years before a system of land settlement evolved.<sup>(1)</sup> Therefore political disturbances were reflected in a disturbance of the economy.

Because of the overwhelming powers of the king, and a complete absence of any body representative of public opinion to advise him, it was natural that he would have to maintain his contact with public opinion through various dubious means, methods that were not always ideal and which could at times react unfavourably against the king. Mauryan polity used, with the sanction of Kauṭalya, a system of espionage for this purpose. Not only were the subordinate officials such as the gopas actively employed in ferreting out information of every kind, in addition to their other duties, but at the same time an extremely complex system of spies was also employed. We have already discussed their role in the administration and society of the time.<sup>(2)</sup> The use of reporters and agents is admitted by Aśoka in his edicts, where he states that they have considerable priority of access to him.<sup>(3)</sup>

Apart from the lack of a representative organisation, there was in addition no distinction between the executive and judiciary in the function of the government. The only check the king could impose consisted either of the mahamattas in their role of royal inspectors, or else the spies and

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(1) See Ch. V. p. 294-295.  
 (2) See Ch. VI. p. 402  
 (3) RE. VI. Gir. CII, I, p. 11.

reporters. The control of this system again depended very much on the personal ability of the king. A wise king could use these officers with great dexterity both to gauge public opinion and if need be to turn it in his favour. But equally an incapable king could either use these officers for purposes of oppression or else be used by them to no good purpose.

Thus the machinery of Mauryan policy was so planned that an able ruler could use it both to his advantage and to that of his people. To the same degree, a weak ruler could easily lose control and allow the forces of decay and disintegration to enter the machine.

## CONCLUSION

In the nationalistic phase of historical thinking which is current in contemporary India, the name of Aśoka is much misused in certain circles, for purposes of false nationalism. The institutions of the past are invested with qualities which are required for the institutions of the present, thereby undermining the validity of historical research. Aśoka, for instance, is described as the founder of non-violence as a general attitude of life, this in turn being expressive of the Indian spirit, and it is held that a long tradition beginning with Aśoka of conscious non-violence and a tolerance of all beliefs political and religious, continued unbroken through the centuries culminating in the philosophy of Gandhi.

The Mauryan period is referred to as a period which was politically decentralised and individually democratic, whereas in fact, as we have seen, it was the beginning of political centralisation and it also saw the triumph of a social order which did not permit of much individual liberty. Democracy and individualism were not the ideals which inspired the Mauryan period and to attempt to invest it with such values is wishful thinking.

The fact that the work of Aśoka was erased from existing knowledge cannot be overlooked. This has been called on one

occasion, the Indian attempt at brain-washing, the brahmans wishing to erase any knowledge of the humanistic attitude of Aśoka, from the stream of Indian history and thought. This may be a doubtful explanation, nevertheless it must be kept in mind that the real value of Aśoka's ideas was successfully buried in the oblivion of the past, for in Indian secular sources Aśoka remained a mere name in a dynastic king-list, as obscure to the modern world as the script in which he had had his edicts engraved. In Buddhist literature he appears as a fanatic, changing suddenly from extreme wickedness to extreme piety and eventually suffering at the hands of the non-believers, a not unfamiliar treatment of the life and work of saints and pious men in any religion. Even the popular mind, despite the existence of his inscriptions and pillars, failed to retain any legends or traditions regarding Aśoka. Curiously enough some of the Aśokan pillars are known to the local people as the staffs of Bhīmasena. Some even revere them as liṅgas. One wonders what Aśoka's reactions would have been had he been able to see thus far into the future.

Among the more difficult aspects of assessing the importance of a personality belonging to the ancient past is the problem of differentiating between those of his actions which sprang from personal ambition and private motives and those which were undertaken for a social purpose. There is enough documentation on more recent personalities for this

distinction to be made. Unfortunately so little is known of the actions of people who lived in a period dating back to over two thousand years, that the private and social aspects of their activities become completely confused, and the scarcity of information is so great that even the most private actions are treated as social behaviour.

We have attempted in this thesis to place Aśoka in historical perspective, against the background of the third century B.C. in India, and also to distinguish, in so far as it is possible at this great distance in time, between Aśoka the man and Aśoka the monarch.

It is clear from his edicts that in his role as king, Aśoka was not the naive convert to Buddhism that Buddhist sources would have us believe. Certainly in the first half of his reign, he emphasised a tolerance and humanism which was by no means inconsistent with Buddhism, but which was a more personal expression of Aśoka, relating to general non-religious attitudes which he wished his subjects to cultivate. We have shown in the chapter on the policy of Dhamma, how his humanitarianism gradually became overshadowed by his belief in his own achievement in changing men's natures, till at the end of his reign he appears to have become over-confident of this achievement and succumbed to his own inflated ego.

As we have shown, the social and economic conditions in the third century B.C. in India were such as to make the attempted policy of Aśoka quite feasible. The transition from

a pastoral to an agrarian village economy necessitated an adjustment to the new conditions. The Dhamma emphasised the more important aspects of this adjustment, such as the need for an increasing amount of social responsibility. It is greatly to the credit of Aśoka that this change took place during an era of peace. A period of thirty years free from war, in itself no mean achievement, must have permitted a comparatively clear realisation of these new social and economic values.

The form adopted by Aśoka for the communication of his ideas was a socio-religious one as is apparent from a study of the Dhamma. His association of Buddhism with the new ideas was no doubt in part due to the fact that he was personally a Buddhist, because the religion was not averse to these ideas, and also due to the value of adopting a comparatively new religion during a period of political and economic change. This last idea has been employed to great effect by many another emperor, as for instance, the adoption of Zoroastrianism by Darius, Manichaeism by Shahpur I, and the Dīn-i-Ilāhī by Akbar. This idea is associated with a similar one of rulers who insist on a complete breaking away from the past, sometimes as extreme as in the case of Shi Huang Ti in China. It is however significant that Aśoka did not ask for the mass conversion of all his subjects to Buddhism, but rather stressed the conscious application of humanitarianism in social behaviour, thus appealing not to religious instincts but to a far wider

and immediate feeling of social responsibility.

The development of the Dhamma must also be considered in the context of the political system of the time. India in the third century B.C. was not a national unit, yet politically it was governed by a centralised monarchy and the administrative system hinged on centralised control. If the political system was to succeed it was inevitable that there would have to be some national factor in the multi-cultural society of the time. The Dhamma was certainly a way of life acceptable at any level of cultural development. The adoption of the Dhamma as a formal system, had it succeeded, might well have acted as a cementing factor throughout the country. In this the efforts of Akbar eighteen centuries later may well be compared with those of Aśoka.

This period was of immense advantage to the development of commerce in the form of free bargaining and speculative business. For instance, an efficient administration meant the establishment of good communications which were a vital necessity to the improvement of trade. The development of commerce during the thirty years of peace bore rich results in the succeeding centuries. It is important to keep in mind the fact that, though a political decline took place in the post-Aśokan years, there was an improvement in economic development as is demonstrated largely by archaeological finds. The stability of the reign of Aśoka was to a fair extent responsible for this.

Whatever may have been the personal weaknesses of Aśoka which were made manifest in his later years, our admiration for him is great when we consider the courage with which he tried to expound and impose the Dhamma, particularly in the complex cultural milieu of the third century B.C. It can indeed be said that religious texts of the time stressed man's responsibility to his religion and to his ancestors. To these Aśoka added yet another responsibility, perhaps the most important, that of responsibility to one's fellow human beings as he expresses it in the 6th Rock Edict. Aśoka's humanism lay not only in his insistence on non-violence whenever and wherever possible, even to the extent of not injuring animals, but more important it lay in his insistence on responsible social behaviour, and in his understanding of human limitations, when in his earlier edicts he preached moderation in action. It is apparent on reading his edicts that he constantly stressed the dignity of man. The divine certainly appears and the gods come down to earth and mix with man, but on a human level.

Yet the experiment of Dhamma disappeared soon after his death, without even a trace in the Indian tradition. It lay buried for over two thousand years till the deciphering of the edicts produced a discovery of the idea and a revival of interest in this hitherto unknown fact. Even in Cambodia when the Khmer king Jayavarman VII attempted, at the end of the

twelfth century A.D., to enforce ideas similar to those once expounded by Aśoka, he had no knowledge of his predecessor. The precise reasons for the failure of the Dhamma still remain something of a mystery. We can only suggest that, on the level of personalities involved, the excessive enthusiasm of its founder, as it would appear from Aśoka's later edicts, produced a reaction against the Dhamma which after the death of Aśoka was buried with its founder. It is equally possible that this over-enthusiasm on the part of Aśoka led his successors to mis-interpret it as a personal belief alone, and prevented them from realising its social and humanitarian significance, such as it had originally possessed.

After examining the background which produced the personality of Aśoka, we would re-assert our earlier hypothesis that Aśoka's greatness lay in the fact that he was equipped both by his own endeavour and by circumstances, to understand the culture to which he belonged and its then rapidly changing requirements; this characteristic was coupled with an extraordinary degree of idealism. Both of these gave him the overwhelming courage which he needed to experiment with the contemporary situation and strike out towards an uncommon solution.

## APPENDIX A

(1)

Chronology of the Reign of Aśoka according to Smith

273 B.C.	Accession
269	Coronation
261	Conquest of Kalinga Aśoka becomes a Buddhist lay-disciple Accession of Antiochus Theos of Syria
259	Aśoka enters the Buddhist order as a monk Abolition of royal hunts System of the tours of piety started Missionaries dispatched to various countries
258	Death of Magas of Cyrene Death of Alexander of Epirus
257	Minor Rock Edicts issued and II and IV R.E. Barābar Hill Cave inscriptions i and ii issued Quinquennial tours inaugurated
256	Completion of XIV R.E.
255	? Kalinga Provincials Edict
250	Barābar Cave inscription iii
249	Pilgrimage to Buddhist holy places
247	Death of Ptolemy II
247/6	Death of Antiochus Theos
243	Pillar Edicts I to VI issued

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242 B.C.	Completion of P.E. VII
	Death of Antigonus Gonates
c 240	Buddhist Council of Pāṭaliputra
240-32	Minor Pillar Edicts
232	Death of Aśoka

## APPENDIX B

The Date of the Arthaśāstra

A considerable amount of literature has already accumulated in connection with the question of the date of the Arthaśāstra. The range of suggested dates stretches from the Mauryan to the Gupta period. In this Appendix we propose to briefly treat of the arguments already used in dating the text and to give our own suggestions on the subject.

Fleet in his introductory note to the English translation of Shamasastri states that he believes the <sup>text</sup> ~~law~~ to be of an early date because of its archaic style, its contents and the fact that early Indian writers are known to quote from it. (1) As a manual on kingship and government it may well have served as the first practical guide of its kind. As Fleet further states, it endorses passages from the account of Megasthenes and early inscriptions.

Shamasastri supports his claim for an early date by the following arguments. (2) The author refers to himself as Kaṭalya at the end of each chapter. (3) A verse in the concluding chapter of the entire text refers to his overthrowing the Nandas, and to his other name, Viṣṇugupta. (4) Shamasastri

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- (1) Artha. Fifth Ed.  
 (2) Artha. " " Preface  
 (3) Artha. II, 1.  
 (4) XV, 1.

points out that this evidence is endorsed by the Viṣṇupurāṇa, describing the overthrow of the Nandas by the Mauryas, assisted by Kauṭalya. (1) Daṇḍin in the Daśakumaracarita refers to the same event, though he does not state that Kauṭalya overthrew the Nandas. (2)

Shamaśāstry believes that Kauṭalya's reference to collecting the material into a book for the benefit of the king Narendra, refers to Candragupta Maurya. (3) This we feel is perhaps stretching a point. It may well have been a general reference to any king.

Shamaśāstry mentions the use of the word "prakṛiti" by Kauṭalya as a word meaning the element of sovereignty, and suggests that this word was given special significance by Kauṭalya, as previous to him writers had used the term "āṅga" for the same purpose. (4) Shamaśāstry claims that Yājñyavalkya followed Kauṭalya and borrowed from the latter. This theory he bases on the fact that Kauṭalya appears to be unacquainted with the grammatical forms emphasised by Pāṇini, that the style of Kauṭalya is close to that of the Upaniṣads and the Brāhmaṇas, and furthermore that the type of society described by Kauṭalya is pre-Buddhistic, whereas the smṛtis of Manu and Yājñyavalkya depict the conflict between the Hindu ideal of society and the Buddhist. (5)

Krishna Rao has also discussed this question and is of

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- (1) IV, 24.  
 (2) II, 8.  
 (3) Artha. Fifth Ed. p. viii. (English trans.)  
 (4) Artha. p. xiv.  
 (5) Ibid. p. xv-xvi.

the opinion that the Arthaśāstra belongs to the Mauryan period. He states that Kauṭalya envisages the birth and expansion of an empire of righteousness under the aegis of a high-born and noble king and here suggests a comparison with Aśoka.<sup>(1)</sup>

Furthermore he maintains that Aśoka built his empire on the lines suggested by Kauṭalya and that the kingdom under discussion in the Arthaśāstra stretched from the Himalayas to the ocean.<sup>(2)</sup> Such a vast empire first came into being under the Mauryas. Later, it is stated that Kauṭalya was influenced by the doctrine of ahimsā, but he was far too imbued with the spirit of brahmanical Hinduism to disallow all killing,<sup>(3)</sup> particularly that concerned with sacrifice and rituals. We

feel that some of these interpretations made by Krishna Rao are the result of reading more into the text than Kauṭalya had intended. For instance the former's interpretation of the term janapada to mean the empire of Aśoka, stretching from the Himalayas to the ocean, is clearly incorrect. In the text the term occurs in the general context of "country".<sup>(4)</sup>

Kauṭalya states that it means the earth, and adds that the earth stretches from the Himalayas as far as the ocean, which was possibly the only part of the globe known geographically to Kauṭalya. We feel that this description is used figuratively to indicate the whole earth, since no specific ocean is mentioned. Furthermore Aśoka may well have made use of practical suggestions in the Arthaśāstra, regarding administration and

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- (1) Studies in Kauṭalya. p. xi.  
 (2) Ibid, p. xiii.  
 (3) Studies in Kauṭalya p. 10.  
 (4) IX, 1.

the governing of the country, but the overall policy of the Arthaśāstra would have been in conflict with the principles of the Dhamma. As regards Kauṭalya being influenced by the doctrine of ahimsā there is certainly no indication of it in the text.

(1)  
Krishna Rao's final argument for an early date is that Aśvaghōṣa mentions Kauṭalya, (2) thereby suggesting that the Arthaśāstra was known to him. This however is a weak argument since the text itself is not clearly referred to. Aśvaghōṣa is generally placed not later than the second century A.D. A text of the fourth century A.D. or somewhat earlier, the Lankāvatāra Sūtra, mentions a list of riṣis, amongst whom the name of Kauṭalya is included. (3)

Among those who have dated the Arthaśāstra to the third century A.D. or even later is Jolly. His arguments which we shall consider at length, cover almost all those that are cited in favour of a later date. Jolly has stated that since the Arthaśāstra bears a close stylistic resemblance to the Kāmasūtra, which is generally dated in the fourth century A.D., the Arthaśāstra cannot be earlier than the third century A.D. (4) However, a resemblance in style does not always signify a closeness in date. It is equally possible that stylistically Vātsyāyana deliberately based himself on Kauṭalya. The history of literature has furnished many

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(1) Studies in Kautalya, p. 6.

(2) Buddhacarita XI

(3) Verse 816.

(4) Kauṭalyam Arthaśāstram. Panjab S.K. Series. No. IV. Introduction.

examples where a particular style is deliberately imitated in order to create a more appropriate effect. This would be all the more possible when writing in a classical language during periods when the use of the language was regarded more as a literary accomplishment than as an expression of everyday speech.

Since the text is assigned to a later date, Jolly is also dubious of the authorship of Kauṭalya. His arguments are as follows. <sup>(1)</sup> None of the traditional accounts refer to Kauṭalya as a teacher or as the author of literary compositions. As we have shown earlier there is ample evidence to the contrary, since many later writers describe him both as a teacher and as an author. Jolly next states that Megasthenes does not mention Kauṭalya. Since Megasthenes' account survives only in fragments it is not possible to accept the existing version as complete. Thus lack of confirmation in the Greek sources cannot be regarded as proof to the contrary. Moreover nowhere in his surviving account does Megasthenes mention any of the more important persons whom he must surely have met at the court of Candragupta. That Megasthenes' account does not agree with the description of administration in the Arthaśāstra, is certainly a more valid argument on the part of Jolly. Though here again it can be said that the Arthaśāstra agrees better with Megasthenes than with Fa hsien or Hsüan Tsang, both of whom would be closer to

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(1) Arthaśāstra of Kauṭalya. pp. 1-47.

the period of the Indian text if Jolly's date be accepted. As we have already pointed out, the purpose of the work was so entirely different from the account of the Greek visitor, (1) that this fact in itself may explain the lack of uniformity.

A further argument raised by Jolly is that Patañjali refers to the Mauryas and to Candragupta, but he is silent about Kauṭalya. Here again we must remember that Patañjali was a grammarian and not an historian. Incidental references to personages and events can be used when they are mentioned, but lack of mention in Patañjali does not indicate the non-existence of the person in question. Jolly is also of the opinion that Kauṭalya was a nick-name and was inappropriate to a minister of Candragupta. There has been much discussion on the name and its grammatical derivation. We are of the opinion that the name was Kauṭalya and was derived from its owner's gotra which was Kuṭāla. The alternative name found in some texts is thought to derive from the word kuṭīla meaning "crooked", a reference to the devious means to attain the end advocated by the author of the Arthaśāstra. Opponents of Kauṭalya, particularly supporters of the Nandas, may well have referred to him as "Kauṭilya" in sarcasm, and this name may have been used through error in some later versions of the text. (2) We see no reason to doubt that the author of the Arthaśāstra belonged to the Kuṭāla gotra, and adopted the

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(1) See Ch. V. p. 298 and Ch. VI, p. 425

(2) Kane. JBORS. VII, 1926.

title of Kauṭalya.

Jolly continues with a series of arguments for dating the Arthaśāstra in the third century A.D. His arguments have been refuted at great length by Jayaswal. (1) So we shall give a resume of the discussion here. Jolly bases his arguments on the following ideas. Since there is a quotation from Bhāsa in the Arthaśāstra it is therefore a late work. There is general agreement in the laws promulgated by Kauṭalya and Yājñavalkya. It would seem that Kauṭalya converted the laws of the latter into sūtras. The Arthaśāstra also has knowledge of the Purāṇas and they are of a post-Mauryan date. The Vaiśika section of the Kāmasūtra is mentioned by Kauṭalya. The Arthaśāstra shows acquaintance with the Aṣṭadhyāyī. Astrology and divination are known to Kauṭalya, as also is the science of metallurgy and alchemy, and these were late developments. The use of the word suranga is an adaptation from the Greek word "syrinx". The Arthaśāstra mentions written documents but Megasthenes states that the Indians did not know the art of writing. Since Pāṭaliputra is not mentioned in the text, the work may have been written by a southern author. The views of Kauṭalya are stated by his name, which suggests that he was not the author of the work. Furthermore the names used in citing other opinion are imaginary, as they are taken from the Mahābhārata.

We feel that in stating these arguments Jolly has at times been too extreme in his interpretation. The use of

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(1) Hindu Polity. App. C, p. 364.

the word suranga taken from the Greek "syrinx" may have been current in the Mauryan period after the invasion of Alexander. Considering the close contact between the Mauryas and the Seleucid Greeks, the adaptation of Greek words where necessary is not to be wondered at. Megasthenes' statement that Indians did not know the art of writing has been proved untrue by the discovery of the Aśokan edicts. The views of Kauṭalya being stated by name may have been the addition of a later editor, who inserted the name of Kauṭalya in order to clarify the author's opinion on a particular subject.

Jayaswal's arguments consider all the points raised  
(1) by Jolly. He states that Kauṭalya was the author of the text since it is repeatedly said so in the work. There are so many other references to his authorship of this work, as we have already shown, that this authorship can hardly be doubted. Jayaswal says further that the kingdom under discussion in the text is not specified. The text is a general treatise which should be equally valid for any kingdom. For instance the doctrine of maṇḍala would be as useful to the ruler of a small kingdom as to a cakravartin. As regards the verse to be found in Bhāsa as well as Kauṭalya, Jayaswal is of the opinion that the version in Bhāsa is incomplete, whereas that in Kauṭalya is the complete one, therefore it is unlikely that Kauṭalya was quoting from Bhāsa. We may add here that it is equally possible that Bhāsa was quoting from Kauṭalya, or that

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(1) Hindu Polity. App. C, p. 364 (Third Ed.)

they were both quoting from a common source. Jayaswal then considers the terminology of various texts and is of the opinion that the early forms of certain terms occur in the Arthaśāstra. The Prākṛit version is yutta as used by Aśoka. Yājñavalkya uses yoga, which is a much later form than yukta. Though most Purāṇas are post-Mauryan in date, the earliest, the Bhaviṣyapurāṇa has been dated by Pargiter to a pre-Mauryan date. Moreover whatever the dates of the Purāṇas as we have them now may be, there is no good reason to believe that they did not exist in earlier forms. The knowledge of metallurgy was not a late development, since archaeology has revealed an extensive use of metals during the Mauryan period.<sup>(1)</sup>

Jayaswal then gives his own reasons for dating the text to the fourth century B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> The use of the term yukta is Mauryan and it is confirmed by the Aśokan inscriptions. According to Jayaswal the chapters describing the policy of war and peace could only have been written for a king with a vast empire. Such was not the case in the third century A.D. We however are in disagreement with this argument, since this policy could have applied equally well to smaller kingdoms in conflict with each other. The use of the term yuga is known according to Jayaswal to the Jyotiṣa Vedāṅga, but not to the writers of the early centuries A.D. as for example Manu. In the Arthaśāstra, the rainy season is mentioned as beginning in Śrāvāṇa whereas in present times it

(1) See Ch. V. p. 333

(2) Hindu Polity, p. 374.

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begins in Āṣāḍha. We are told that seasons fall back at the rate of a day and half per century. Calculating at the rate of a change of one month, we arrive at the Mauryan period, a fact confirmed by Cunningham. (1)

Jayaswal quotes the passage regarding the ban on entertaining Buddhists and Ājīvikas at religious feasts as being pre-Aśokan, as in the Aśokan period such a ban would not have existed. Certainly in post-Mauryan times the Ājīvikas became quite insignificant except in south India. The exclusion of the Jainas from this list was either because they were unimportant, or possibly because, Candragupta being partial to the Jainas, Kauṭalya may not have wished to offend him. Jayaswal further maintains that the political and fiscal organisation described by Kauṭalya was akin to that in existence during the Mauryan period.

On the question of the introduction of the term cīnapaṭṭa, generally thought to be a late term for Chinese silk, Jayaswal gives his views at length. (2) He explains that the word Cīna does not refer to China, but is taken from a tribe called Shina, who lived near Gilgit and were producers of silk. The use of the term cīnasi in the same chapter to mean skins from the region of Bahlav, thought to be a Himalayan country, would suggest that cīnapaṭṭa too was silk from a region in the northern Himalayas, and not from China. It is difficult to accept this interpretation as it appears a little

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(1) Indian Eras p. 3.

(2) Hindu Polity, p. 212, n. 1.

too forced. There is evidence to prove that silk was used in Bactria which was imported from India. <sup>(1)</sup> Chang K'ien in about 129 B.C. found the Bactrians using Chinese silk, which according to the inhabitants came from India. The interesting point is that it is referred to as silk coming from the province of Szechuan. This province has always been known as the area where the silk worm flourished. The implications of this are that there was no silk made in Gilgit. Thus it would appear that silk was available in India at an early period and it came from Szechuan. The problem of the name remains unsettled. The cīna of the term cīna-paṭṭa is generally believed to refer to the Ch'in empire, which came into existence much later than the Mauryan empire. Kosambi has suggested that this may be a reference to the state of Ch'ia <sup>(2)</sup> before the period of Shih Hwang Ti. It is possible that silk was referred to by another name in the early period, and that the term cīna-paṭṭa is a later interpolation introduced when the text was being brought up-to-date.

Through these arguments Jayaswal has attempted to disprove Jolly's contention that the Arthaśāstra was a work of the third century A.D., that Kauṭalya was not its real author, the latter being a theoretician. It can be said with fair degree of certainty, that Kauṭalya did in fact write the Arthaśāstra, and though the text was edited by various hands through the centuries, the core of the book dates

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(1) Ssi-ma-Ts'ien, Shi-ki 123; trans by Hirth. JAOS. XXXVII, 1917, p. 89 ff.

(2) ISIH, p. 202.

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back to the Mauryan period. Having considered the arguments of two prominent writers in this controversy, we shall continue with the arguments of other historians.

Raghavan in his study of Kālidāsa and Kauṭalya, states that Kālidāsa has borrowed from the Arthaśāstra in certain passages of the Raghuvamśa (XVII, 49, 76; XVIII, 50)<sup>(1)</sup>. This borrowing consists largely in the use of technical terms occurring in a political context. Some of these terms were no doubt current at that time and were based on earlier texts such as the Arthaśāstra. Men of learning such as Kālidāsa would be familiar with these terms.

H.C.Ray enters into a lengthy discussion on the question of Kauṭalya's remarks, as quotations, being part of the original text.<sup>(2)</sup> He explains that the phrase iti Kauṭilyah does not imply that Kauṭalya was not the author of the work, but that as in the case of later writers such as Nānak, Kabīr, etc., it was merely the accepted Indian usage and form in such writings. Furthermore, that the distinction between practical politics and academic politics never existed in India, so that Kauṭalya could well have been an active statesman as well as the author of a theoretical work on statecraft. Ray dates the work to circa 300 B.C. and allows for later interpolations.

As we have noticed earlier there has been much debate as to whether the work was written for a small kingdom or a

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(1) Kālidāsa and Kauṭalya. AIOC. 1946. XIII Session. Nagpur.  
(2) IA. Sept. 1925. p. 171 ff. p. 201 ff.

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large one. We would suggest that the work originated in the early years of Candragupta when the Mauryan empire had not been fully consolidated. The Nanda empire was known and was probably used by Kauṭalya as an example, and this was certainly not nearly as large as the Mauryan empire was to become. This early period may have given cause for the writing of the section on inter-state relationships. Later when the empire was established, the section on administration may have been written or at least expanded. Since the concept of an empire on a scale as large as that of the Mauryas was quite new to Indian polity, it is not to be wondered at that even a theoretician such as Kauṭalya wrote from the point of view of a smaller state. It is possible that he thought of the Mauryan dominion in terms of its nucleus, the province of Magadha. As such, even the section on inter-state relations would represent the logical expression of a political idea.

Kalidasa Nag maintains that Aśokan policy was anti-<sup>(1)</sup>Kauṭalya. We would modify this statement and say that where Aśoka chose to, he ignored the advice of Kauṭalya. In matters of administration he was not anti-Kauṭalya, He accepted much that the text suggested, even to the extent of employing agents and reporters to keep him informed of public opinion.

D.R. Bhandarkar has suggested that the Arthaśāstra was originally written in verse, as reference is made to ślokas

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(1) Les Theories Diplomatique de l'Inde Ancienne. p. 121

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 in the body of the text. The question arises as to when it was reduced to sūtras, if we accept this view. Bhandarkar quotes Daṇḍin, who refers to the text as written in metrical form, and Bhavabhūti, who quotes it in the form of sūtras. Therefore Bhandarkar is of the opinion that it was reduced to sūtra form in circa A.D. 400 when it started becoming popular. The original text must have been composed in verse. It is unfortunately not possible to state categorically which form the earliest version of the Arthaśāstra took, since early texts are known to exist both in verse form and in sūtras. It would need an extremely detailed study of the present verse and prose passages of the Arthaśāstra to determine which are the earlier.

Certain sections of the Arthaśāstra suggest that it was composed at the same period as some of the Jātakas. This is particularly noticeable in some of the features of economic life described in both sources, as for example the establishment of the guilds. Bhandarkar has drawn attention to a particular verse which is almost identical in both sources. (2) The verse concerns the acquisition of wealth. In the Arthaśāstra it reads, (3)

nakṣatram atiprechantam balam artho 'tivartate  
artho hyarthasya nakṣatram kiṃ kariṣyanti tārakāh.

The Jātaka verse reads thus, (4)

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- (1) ABORI, VII 1926, pp. 82-84.  
 (2) ABORI, VII, 1926 p. 80.  
 (3) IV, 9.  
 (4) Jāt. I, p. 258.

nakkhattam patimānentam attho bālam upaccagā

āṭṭho atthassa nakkhattam kim karissanti tārakā.

Bhandarkar adds rightly that this verse is most appropriate in the Arthaśāstra since it occurs at the conclusion of a chapter concerning the loss of men, wealth and profits. The author of the Jātaka may have been familiar with the Arthaśāstra text and may have quoted from it. However we cannot ignore the other possibility that both authors were quoting from a common source, particularly as both these texts quote numerous popular gnostic verses.

Winternitz agrees on the whole with the earlier (1) criticism of Jolly and doubts the authorship of Kauṭalya. He is of the opinion that the phrase iti Kauṭalyah suggests a school of thinkers and not a single author. Winternitz has also criticised the division of the power of the state into seven factors which he believes to be a pedantic classification. Hence he maintains that the text is the work of a theorist and not of a practical politician. This criticism has been countered at length by Law who bases his views largely on the argument that such a classification is necessary to the theory of maṇḍala, otherwise it would not be possible for a king to determine the relative power of his neighbour. (2)

Raychaudhuri does not accept the Mauryan period as the date of the Arthaśāstra and maintains that it is later. (3)

(1) CR. April 1924.

(2) CR. Sept. 1924, p. 512 ff; Nov. 1924, p. 228 ff; Dec. 1924, p. 466 ff.

(3) HCIP. The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 285-87.

He states that none of the authors used for cross-dating can be definitely placed before A.D. 300. The language of the Arthaśāstra is Sanskrit, but the Mauryas used Prākṛit.

This argument is based on the fact that Aśoka used Prākṛit for his inscriptions. However, since the inscriptions were meant to be read by the populace it is but natural that they should be written in the popular language. There was nothing to prevent the use of Sanskrit in court circles and among the better educated sections of society even during the Mauryan period. We know from the plays of Kālidāsa that even in the Gupta period when Sanskrit was widely employed there was a distinction between the classes of society who were expected to speak Sanskrit and those who spoke only Prākṛit. Had any of the Gupta rulers wished to issue inscriptions for the same purposes as Aśoka they might well have used Prākṛit. It is also possible that Aśoka encouraged Prākṛit since it was a more widely used language, but for purposes of erudition Sanskrit was used.

A further point raised by Raychaudhuri is that Kauṭalya was against the use of wood in buildings and preferred the use of bricks, but Arrian on the authority of Megasthenes states that the cities near rivers or the sea were built of wood. We see nothing contradictory in this. Kauṭalya saw the danger of building cities in wood, a more easily perishable material than brick. Since it was economically cheaper to build in wood, owing to the clearing of large forests at this

(1). Indika. X.

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time, Kauṭalya's advice on this matter tended to be disregarded. However Arrian does add that cities other than the above mentioned ones were built of brick, and that wood was only used in areas where brick would not be able to withstand the destruction of rain and flood. Although Kauṭalya advises against the use of wood for buildings, he is not unaware of the prevalence of construction in wood, as is evident from the elaborate precautions he lays down for the extinguishing of fires (1) Judging from the fear expressed at the possibility of conflagration, it would seem that he lived at a time when there was a constant danger of wooden buildings catching fire.

Raychaudhuri's next argument is that there is no reference in the Arthaśāstra to the royal titles used by the Mauryan kings. This is so because there was no set formula for royal titles at this time. Devānampiya may have been a Mauryan title since it was used by two of the kings, but this may equally well have been a matter of personal choice in both cases. Since Kauṭalya does not mention any of the Mauryan kings by name, and there is naturally no cause for mentioning any of the titles that may have been borne.

Certain official names in the Arthaśāstra, such as the samāhartr and the sannidhātr were current in a later period than that of the Mauryas, according to Raychaudhuri. It is possible that these titles were introduced in a later edition of the text. At the same time there is no proof that they were not used during the Mauryan period, from the fact that they

(1) II, 36.

do not occur in definitely contemporary sources. It is possible for instance that if Aśoka had had to refer to either of these officials in his inscriptions he may have used these titles.

The above is indeed a dubious argument for we have the example of the official designation of mahāmātra occurring in rare instances in the Arthaśāstra.<sup>(1)</sup> This was most definitely a Mauryan designation and appears to have been discarded or altered in the early centuries A.D. This would indicate that at some stage in the Arthaśāstra's history the term was used quite extensively, probably during the Mauryan period when it was used as a title in practical administration. Gradually as it ceased to be used, it gave way even in the text to more contemporary terms. That it still occurs is probably due to the fact that it was overlooked in certain places during the later transcription or editing of the text.

As his final argument Raychaudhuri raises the question of geographical knowledge. The inclusion of the terms Pārasamudra, Cīnabhūmi and Kambu would suggest a later date. If the first of these refers to a place it may have been the Palai Simoundou of Classical sources, which was a later name for Ceylon.<sup>(2)</sup> A Mauryan text would have used Tāmraparṇi or Simhala. If the word is taken together with Cīnabhūmi, it would mean, "the land of Cīna across the seas", which again points to a late period of the early centuries A.D. when China

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(1) I, 10; II, 5.

(2) Ptolemy, AI, IV, 14. Quoted MacCrindle p. 252.

was becoming known to India. We feel however that this argument based on geographical knowledge is not sufficient evidence for giving the work a late date. As we have already accepted the fact of interpolations at various stages, it seems more than likely that the inclusion of new place names can be regarded as evidence of such interpolations. In bringing the text up to date it would be natural for the editor to extend the geographical horizon of the original work. Whilst agreeing with Raychaudhuri that the geographical knowledge of some sections is of a later date, we maintain that the work itself was of the Mauryan period.

Ojha has suggested that the name Viṣṇugupta for Kauṭalya was a later fabrication, which came into use after the sixth or seventh century A.D.<sup>(1)</sup> Most of the earlier texts such as the Purāṇas and the Mahāvamśa refer to him as Kauṭalya or Cānakya. The Mahāvamśa for instance refers to Caṇakka anointing Candragupta.<sup>(2)</sup> The present version of the Mahāvamśa is dated to the fifth century A.D. though it is based on an earlier original. Furthermore since it is based largely on material brought in by the Buddhists to Ceylon, there is no special reason why this tradition regarding Cānakya should be a fabrication. On the question of Viṣṇugupta we feel that the concluding passage at the end of the text is significant.<sup>(3)</sup> The final chapter contains a brief summary of the book. There is the usual concluding formula for the chapter, explaining that it is the first chapter of the fifteenth book and that it

(1) IHQ, XXVIII, No. 3. Sept. 1952 p. 265 ff.

(2) Mah. V, 16, 17.

(3) XV, 1.

brings to a close the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭalya. Then there follows another sentence which has been translated thus, (1)  
 "Having seen discrepancies in many ways on the part of the writers of commentaries on śāstras, Viṣṇugupta himself has made this sūtra and commentary."

We are of the opinion that this indicates that Viṣṇugupta was not the original author of the text but was responsible for putting it into its present form. The reference to putting it into sūtras would suggest that the earlier form was in verse form, but as we have already stated there is no certainty on this point. Quite possibly Viṣṇugupta's version was completed in the sixth or seventh century, as Ojha has suggested or even earlier. Having been edited by Viṣṇugupta the latter's name would naturally tend to be linked very closely with the text, even to the extent of his being regarded as the author on occasion, a situation not altogether unknown in the literary world.

We believe that the Arthaśāstra as compiled by Viṣṇugupta was a much larger one than the original, incorporating other works on the same subject. The MSS which have come down to us are probably those in which the Kauṭalya Arthaśāstra has been extracted from a larger work. It is indeed strange that an entirely new section should be started at the end of the book containing only one chapter, which is a summary of the book, but which is so brief and so general that it could as well

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(1) Shamasastriy trans.

have been added to the previous section. In the original and complete work of Viṣṇugupta there may have been more sections dealing either with earlier commentaries on the Kauṭalya text or with other smaller works on the same subject.

Because of the change of form that the work underwent at the hands of Viṣṇugupta, it is impossible to treat it in its present state as the work of entirely one period. Thus the analysis of Kalyanov based on philosophical attitudes cannot be used with certainty. Kalyanov states that the Arthaśāstra shows evidence of differentiation between philosophy and the natural and social sciences. <sup>(1)</sup> He explains further that this stage is usually associated with the downfall of the slave society and the birth of feudalism, which in India he dates to the first to third centuries A.D. We are of the opinion that this argument tends to oversimplify changes in society. Terms such as slave society and feudal society may be applied as broad generalisations, but in every society the peculiarities and degrees of change vary, so that the validity of these generalisations demand a detailed study. Kalyanov is of the opinion that the Arthaśāstra as we have it today is a work of the third century A.D. because the means of production which it discusses, the social system and the economic and political institutions are all more advanced than those described by Megasthenes. Yet earlier in his paper Kalyanov states that Megasthenes' account cannot be relied upon entirely. The

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(1) XXIII Orientalists Congress. Cambridge, Aug.1954.

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main part of the work, however, could well have come from Kautalya's school, since the period of Candragupta was one of stabilising the country, and a philosophy advocating the use of any means of doing so was very welcome. Kalyanov believes that the Arthaśāstra was based on a long tradition of political thinking and that it was revised and edited in later years. He points out that both the Arthaśāstra and the Daśakumāracarita emphasise the importance of philosophy. The central part of the Arthaśāstra is concerned with the description of the functioning of the economic, political and social institutions. If these are described as being post-Mauryan when compared to similar institutions as described by Megasthenes then it is difficult to say as Kalyanov does that the main body of the work dates to the Mauryan period. We are of the opinion that the institutions are in the main Mauryan.

In connection with social institutions, it would seem that some of the ideas in the text suggest an early stage in the development of society. As for example the attitude towards actors and performers of all kinds in the Arthaśāstra<sup>(1)</sup>. They were regarded with great suspicion and were considered socially outcaste. It is unlikely that such an attitude would have existed during the Gupta period, when the theatre rose in esteem and people connected with it became socially much more acceptable. The strict attitude towards actors in

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(1) II, 27.

the Arthaśāstra seems to agree with the puritanical moods of some of Aśoka's inscriptions, particularly the one which appears to forbid non-religious entertainment.

The attitude of mind of the author of the Arthaśāstra cannot be described as being uniform throughout the book. In the latter part of the book there is an increasing tendency to suggest magical and mystical means of achieving one's end. The strictly practical approach of the earlier part of the book appears to have been modified. For instance in the section discussing methods of ridding the country of plagues and pestilences, both natural and animal, in every case the first suggestion is a rational and practical one, after which the author resorts to some magic ritual or mystical prayer.<sup>(1)</sup> It may be suggested that the author being a brahman felt that he had to make some concessions to the brahmins who alone could perform these rites and ceremonies. We prefer to believe that the first suggestion in each case was probably in the original text of Kauṭalya, and that the latter suggestions incorporating magical means were put forward by later editors, when such practices were on the increase.

We have already in the course of the thesis indicated various occasions when certain measures adopted by Aśoka agree closely with those suggested by Kauṭalya. For instance the propaganda measures of informing the population that the king is somehow close to the gods.<sup>(2)</sup> The curious ban on the killing

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(1) IV. 3.  
 (2) See Ch; III p. 156

(1)

of animals is also common to both sources. In addition there are many technical terms which are similar and we here list a few of them.

Aśokan Inscriptions	Arthaśāstra
Yuta R E III	Yukta II 5.9
Pradeśika "	Pradeṣṭṛ IV. 1
Parisa R E I, VII	Parīṣad IV. 1
Pulīśā P E. IV	Puruśa II. 5
Gananāyam R E III	Gananayam II. 6
Vraca R E II, VI	Vraja II, 1
Nagala Viyohalaka S E I	Paura Viyavahārika I, 12
Palikilesu S E I	Parikleṣa IV. 9
Atthabhāgiya Rum. P E	Aṣṭabhāga II. 24
Simale P E V	Srimara II. 17

To conclude, we are of the opinion that the Arthaśāstra was originally written by Kauṭalya, the minister of Candragupta, known also as Cānakya. It was edited and commented upon by various later writers, until in about the third century A.D. Viṣṇugupta worked over the entire text, with whatever interpolations had occurred by then. The text as it is known to us today is in this later form of Viṣṇugupta's. Borrowings and similarities in other works throughout the centuries can be explained by the fact that only the original text was written at the end of the fourth century B.C.

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(1) See Ch. V p. 323

(2) Dikshita. Mauryan Polity. p. 47.

## APPENDIX C

Pottery and Coins of the Mauryan PeriodPottery

One of the methods of determining the date of a level at an excavation is by an analysis of the pottery found on the site. Thus levels of habitation dating to the Mauryan period are revealed in excavations by the presence of common objects such as pottery associated with that period. A study of pottery for purposes of dating is made on the basis both of material used and the form of the pot. The remains can either be in the form of complete vessels or potsherds.

The more commonly found pottery associated with the Mauryan period is the special ware, known as the Northern Black Polished ware (to which we shall refer from now on as N.B.P.), and various types of coarse red and grey ware. The N.B.P. ware is made of finely levigated clay, which when seen in section is usually of a grey and sometimes of a red hue. It has a brilliantly burnished dressing of the quality of a glaze which ranges in colour from a jet black to a deep grey or a metallic steel blue. Occasionally small red-brown patches are apparent on the surface. It can be distinguished from other polished or graphite-coated black wares by its peculiar lustre and brilliance. This ware was used largely

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(1) Wheeler and Krishna Deva. Anc. Ind. I, p. 55.

for dishes and small bowls.

In the Ganges valley, where it is found in great abundance, it is sometimes difficult to use it to determine the date of the levels, since some of the sherds are rain washed. The original place of manufacture of this ware has not been as yet ascertained, though more recent opinion tends to place it in the central Ganges basin in the neighbourhoods of Kausambi and Patna. <sup>(1)</sup> This hypothesis is based on the thick distribution and abundant occurrence of the ware in this area. The other possibility is that it may have been imported into this area, which appears to have been a flourishing one, and therefore one where a demand for the more expensive ware would be present. But this seems an unlikely explanation since no other region has yet been found equally rich in remains of N.B.P. ware.

It has been suggested that eastern Rajasthan, western, central and eastern India, all imported this ware in some quantity either through traders or pilgrims. <sup>(2)</sup> In this connection mass production and export of pottery is referred to in the Jain work Uvāsaga Dasāo, which may relate to the Mauryan <sup>(3)</sup> period. The Kausambi area would certainly be a suitable place from which to export the ware. Although it was not so rare it was nevertheless obviously more expensive than the other wares, since some broken pots of N.B.P. ware have been found which have been rivetted with copper pins.

The ceramic technique of producing this ware has not yet been

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(1) Sharma. Anc. Ind. IX. p. 142.  
 (2) Ibid. p. 119  
 (3) VI, p. 163 ff.

fully analysed. Nor is it certain how the process came to be used in India, whether it was a technique learnt from the Greeks or whether it was known in India before the coming of the Greeks. The Greek black ware which Marshall claimed to have found at Taxila has a lustrous quality not entirely dissimilar to the N.B.P. ware. Evidence of N.B.P. ware in the form of sherds at Bhir Mound in Taxila, dating to circa 300 B.C., suggests that it may have been in use prior to the coming of the Greeks. During more recent excavations at Bhir Mound, a coin of Alexander was found at the Greek level. But N.B.P. sherds were found lower down. <sup>(1)</sup> This would suggest that N.B.P. ware was used before the invasion of Alexander. It is however just possible that these sherds may be strays from an upper level. The matter can be decided only by further and more extensive excavations in the area. Even more important is the fact that this ware does not occur at Taxila, even at later levels, with the same abundance as in the Ganges valley.

The range of this ware was very extensive in northern India. Among the sites excavated up to now where it has been found, the following may be mentioned: Ahicchatra, Mathurā, Kauśāmbi, Bhīta, Jhūsi, Masaon, Atranjī, Kheda, Sārnāth, Rājghāt, Patna, Rājgir, Giriak, Bangadh, Kasrawādh, Bairāt, Sanchi, Taxila and Buxar. This would indicate that these sites were places of habitation during the Mauryan period.

At Rājgir, N.B.P. ware was found together with a plain

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(1) Lal. Anc. Ind. X. p. 23.

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black ware, throughout the Mauryan level. The shapes of both wares were similar, the only difference between the two wares being that the black ware was not treated with the coating that was responsible for the gloss in the N.B.P. ware. Here the N.B.P. ware consisted largely of dishes and of bowls with limited rim forms.

Most of the other ware found at Mauryan levels tends to be grey or red. At Śiśupālgarh, during a recent excavation, Period I, which is dated to 300-200 B.C., revealed a plain ware, dull grey or red, occasionally polished.<sup>(2)</sup> It showed evidence of a well developed technique of firing. Fragments of N.B.P. ware were also found. A later level of Period IIA, dated to 200 B.C. - A.D. 100, showed a more developed type of pottery with applied and incised decoration, and a greater amount of N.B.P. ware.

Excavations at Ahicchatrā produced a tremendous variety of pottery at Mauryan level.<sup>(3)</sup> In Stratum VIII, dated to 300-200 B.C., both plain and decorated grey and red ware were found. The plain ware of this period can be distinguished from earlier ware in that<sup>it</sup> is more heavy and lighter in colour. Occasional pieces show the use of a slip. The red ware is largely in the form of jar-like vessels with thin walls and a light body, evidence of a developed technique. In shape though, these jars do not have a well defined neck. More characteristic vessels of this period were also found fired to a dark buff

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(1) Ghosh. Anc. Ind, VII, p. 71.

(2) Lal. Anc. Ind. V. p. 79.

(3) Panigrahi. Anc. Ind. I, p. 43.

colour. These consisted of two varieties. One was a jar with the neck rising from the shoulder and ending in a flat horizontal rim. The other type, shaped rather like a modern hāṇḍī with a very low rim or no rim at all, was apparently a cooking vessel.

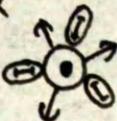
The more unusual pottery found at this stratum at Ahicchatrā was the decorated ware. Of this the most important type for our purposes, is one that has a stamped taurine design, a design which becomes more common during the next period. This consists of four conjoined taurines with a central prong, a design very similar to that found on the punch-marked coins of this period. The same design was found in the same stratum on grey terracotta figurines. We shall consider it in detail when we discuss the symbols on the punch-marked coins. It is significant that from the excavations carried out so far there is no evidence of N.B.P. ware in south India. It would seem that the ware was used largely within the confines of the Mauryan empire, and it was certainly more commonly used in the Ganges valley than elsewhere. At the conclusion of this Appendix we have listed the names of places which we believe were inhabited during the Mauryan period. We have used as our evidence, the archaeological discovery of N.B.P. ware and punch-marked coins. We are aware that this is not precise evidence. The use of N.B.P. ware was not limited to the Mauryan period. It was used possibly earlier and certainly at a later date. All that we can say at this stage is that the

# Symbols from Punch-Marked Coins

PLATE IV

GROUP.

I. Sun Symbol 

II. Sadaracakra 

III. Mountain or Stupa 

IV. Mountain and Animal



V. Single Animals



VI. Trees and Branches



VII. Weapons and Tools



VIII. Taurine symbols in various combinations

IX. Abstract symbols



X. Human Figures



Further Animal symbols -



Dog seizing Hare.



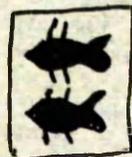
Rabbit



Scorpion



Snake



Fish

frequent use of this ware appears to have been a Mauryan feature. Furthermore, it is usually found in greater abundance in the Mauryan levels.

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### Punch-marked Coins

The term punch-marked coins generally refers to early Indian coins, largely silver, with a few copper coins as well, which are in fact pieces of metal of various shapes, sizes and weights and which have one or more symbols punched on them. Uninscribed cast copper coins with similar symbols have also been found on occasion together with silver punch-marked coins. (1) The most common symbols on these coins are the elephant, the tree-in-railing symbol, and the mountain.

Before making a detailed examination of punch-marked coins in India, we may briefly mention a few of the varieties of coins of foreign provenance discovered in sites in India. It has been suggested that some early Persian coins, largely sigloi of Darius, were in circulation in the Panjab, from circa 500-331 B.C. (2) Some of the silver sigloi bear counter-marks similar to Indian punch-marks and some bear characters in brāhmī and kharoṣṭhī. This would suggest that there was a period when the sigloi and the punch-marked coins were in circulation together. The first coin of those issued by

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(1) Allan. CIC, p. lxxiv.  
 (2) Rapson, IC, p. 3

Alexander and found in India, was a copper coin roughly square in shape, bearing the legend  $\text{ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ}$ .<sup>(1)</sup>

Marshall discovered two silver tetradrachms of Alexander in Bhir Mound at Taxila.<sup>(2)</sup> One of them bears the legend  $\text{ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ}$ . They were both found at the level dated to the third or fourth century B.C. From the same stratum a silver coin of Philip Aridaeus was also found. This has been dated to circa 317 B.C. These three coins were found in a hoard containing silver punch-marked coins, bent-bar Indian coins and a Persian siglos.

Another type of Greek coin which influenced the coinage of north-western India in the fourth century B.C., was the Athenian "owl". The originals were silver coins of a varied range, though usually tetradrachms. The owl was sacred to Pallas Athene, the diety of the city. These coins were of immense importance in the commerce of the Mediterranean region and further east, and it is believed that the reason for the imitations minted in north-western India, was largely that of facilitating trade.<sup>(3)</sup> Of the Indian imitations some were exact reproductions and in other cases the owl was replaced by an eagle.

A further group of silver coins influenced by Greek coins though thought to be minted in India, are the coins of Sophytes.<sup>(4)</sup> He is generally identified with the Sopeithes

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(1) Ibid, p. 4.  
 (2) ASR. 1924-25. pp. 47, 48. pl. ix.  
 (3) Rapson, IC, p. 3.  
 (4) N. Sastri. ANM, p. 126.

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(1) mentioned by Arrian and Strabo, (2) and who is said to have ruled the territory of the Salt Range in the Panjab, during the period of Alexander's invasion. The identification of Sophytes ~~is~~ is not certain. Whitehead believes him to be an eastern satrap of the fourth century B.C., who was ruling in the region of the Oxus. (3) The coins bear the legend ΣΝΦΥΤΟΥ . Unfortunately none have yet been found in Indian sites. Their (4) close affinity to the imitation Athenian owls tends to strengthen the probability of their being an issue of Sophytes, the Indian king, who perhaps intended them largely for purposes of trade.

The coins of Sophytes are also linked with certain Seleucid coins, suggesting the influence of the one upon the other. The elephant has been found as a symbol on some Seleucid coins. It has been suggested that this was in commemoration of the Maurya-Seleucid alliance, when the Seleucids received five hundred elephants from the Mauryas. (5)

It was against this background of foreign and foreign inspired coins that the punch-marked coins came into circulation. The technique of producing such coins was generally that the metal was cut first and then the device was punched. Amongst some of these coins however the symbol is half off the metal. This suggests that the coins were cut after the metal had been punched, but may be due of course

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(1) VI, 2, 2.

(2) XV, 699.

(3) Numismatic Chronicle 1943

(4) N. Sastri. ANM, p. 127.

(5) Rapson, IC, p. 4; Babelon. Rois de Syrie, pl. I, 15.

to the fact that the punching was done carelessly. Curiously in one group, the reverse symbol  is regular and complete, only the obverse is incomplete. <sup>(1)</sup> This would suggest that the regular symbol was that of a central authority. It was probably punched on to an entire sheet of metal which was then cut into coin shapes. The other symbol, sometimes not complete, may have been that of a subsidiary body, through whose hands the coin went into circulation.

In discussing this type of coinage, Allan is of the opinion that Class II and VI are issues of one kingdom and certainly of one dynasty. <sup>(2)</sup> He bases this argument on the fact of their wide distribution, and also that they were found largely at levels suggesting a date of between the fourth and second century B.C. Consequently he suggests that they were Mauryan issues.

Discussing the punch-marked coins at length, he believes that the tradition about the wealth of the Nandas may have arisen because they were the first dynasty to have issued coins on a large scale. <sup>(3)</sup> Allan did not accept any evidence of earlier coinage. Since many of the earliest finds were located at Paila, Set Mahet and Gorakhpur, it is possible that this area was the region of their origin. He suggests that punch-marked coins were not long in existence, because in the second century B.C. they rapidly gave way to struck coins. It is possible that the idea of such a coinage was based on the

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(1) Allan CIC. Class I, Group 1.

(2) Ibid, p. lxxi.

(3) Ibid. p. lxxi-lxxii.

Persian sigloi and was used in India in the late fifth or early fourth century B.C. Allan is convinced that they were issued by a government, because they appear to have been minted in a regular series. For instance the sun and the six-armed symbol are quite regular. He suggests that those two symbols may have been those of a king and of a high official. The variation of the symbol on the reverse is explained by its being the symbol of a district or local ruler. He makes the ingenious suggestion that the five symbols on the obverse represent five controlling organisations, possibly similar to the committees mentioned by Megasthenes. On the question of some coins bearing counter-marks or what have been called shroff marks, he suggests that these may have been earlier coins that were re-issued.

Walsh in his study of the punch-marked coinage maintains that the symbol of the hare on the hill represents Taxilā<sup>(1)</sup>. Furthermore he is of the opinion that since the symbol  , does not appear in any of the Bhir Mound coins, it was distinctive of the coins of the Mauryan empire. It appears to have been stamped on the reverse of such coins at a later date, to authorise their continued circulation. But Walsh's most original suggestion is that the symbols are continuations of the seal designs from Mohenjo-daro. This continuation appears to exist more in the idea than in the actual design. We are of the opinion that at the moment there is little or no evidence to suggest the unbroken continuation of the traditions

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(1) ASIM. No. 59, p. 20.

of this design from Mohenju-daro to the Mauryan period, a continuation which would be necessary for the designs on the seals to be the prototypes of the devices of the punch-marked coins, as Walsh describes them.

Decourdemanche has suggested that these coins were an Indian variation of Achaemenid Persian coinage.<sup>(1)</sup> This view is untenable as there are no Persian coins with similar symbols. The idea of coins may have come from Persian sigloi and other coins, but punch-marked coins cannot be described as an Indian variety of these.

Kennedy believed that this coinage was copied from Babylonian originals, after the opening of maritime trade with western Asia in the sixth century B.C.<sup>(2)</sup> Smith has much the same view, though on one occasion he placed them as early as the seventh century B.C.,<sup>(3)</sup> and on another occasion, 100 to 200 years later.<sup>(4)</sup> Rapson<sup>(5)</sup> and Macdonald<sup>(6)</sup> both believe these coins to be indigenous to India.

Durga Prasad dates these coins to the Mauryan period on the basis of the following arguments.<sup>(7)</sup> The coins with the  symbol, when tested chemically, appear to have the same alloy content as the amount suggested in the Arthaśāstra. Furthermore, a similar symbol occurs in the Sohgaurā copper

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(1) JA. XIX, 1912, p. 17 ff.  
(2) JRAS, 1898, pp. 279 ff.  
(3) IG, II, p. 183.  
(4) IMC, I, p. 183.  
(5) IC, p. 2.  
(6) CHI, I, p. 343.  
(7) JASB, XXX, Num. Sup. pp. 40-45.

plate, and this inscription is generally accepted as being of the Mauryan period. That these symbols were not shroff marks is suggested by the Arthaśāstra. A passage in the text reads that coins were minted by the state for two purposes, for hoarding in the treasury and for using in commercial transactions. Thus they would be punched by the state and there would be no necessity for shroff marks.

The Taxila hoard of silver punch-marked coins, and other punch-marked coins from excavations at Taxila have been discussed by Marshall. He is in general agreement with Walsh, that the symbols and marks may be connected with the Indus valley.<sup>(1)</sup> Of the copper coinage he states that it was the coinage of Taxila, because of its abundance at Sirkap levels<sup>(2)</sup> and the comparatively less evidence of it at Bhir Mound.<sup>(2)</sup> This local coinage continued to be struck for some time after the Greek invasion and possibly after the Saka conquest also. In interpreting the symbols he states for example, that the symbol  represents the Dharmarājika stūpa. The shape  above the arches represents the "horns of divinity" idea, a symbol which occurs on prehistoric seals as well. We are of the opinion that this is too imaginative an interpretation. The symbol of the stūpa, if that was in fact what was intended, would have been indicated in a more conventional design. As regards the date of this coinage, Marshall writes

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(1) T. II, p. 846.  
 (2) Ibid, p. 756.  
 (3) Ibid, p. 756 ff.

that more than half of the "long-bar" variety and the "round concave" type were found in Strata III and IV, which would suggest the fourth or fifth centuries B.C. Thus the first issue of punch-marked coins must have been in about 400 B.C. Punch-marked coins were also found in small numbers at the Sirkap levels, therefore the circulation continued, even though the minting of these coins must have stopped with the break-up of the Mauryan empire. The Bhir Mound produced two large hoards, mainly of silver punch-marked coins.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus it would seem that there was a greater circulation of silver coins during the Mauryan period, but in the post-Mauryan period copper coinage was more extensively used at Taxila.

More recently Kosambi has worked on punch-marked coins. He has examined a series of coins and has made a metallurgical analysis.<sup>(2)</sup> His analysis is based on the idea that handling a coin causes an erosion of the metal. This results in a loss of weight. If therefore the amount of weight lost in circulation can be measured, it may be possible to calculate the date of the coin. This method can be regarded as valid if the original weight of the coin is known. In the case of the punch-marked coins there is no certainty as to their original weight. Furthermore, since the hoarding of coins was a common practice in those times, calculations of the date on the basis of erosion may not always be reliable. Although this method may indicate the number of years during which the coins was in circulation, the date of the coin would

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(1) Ibid. p. 756 ff.  
 (2) JBRRAS. NS. XXIV-XXV, 1948-49.

still have to be determined by the consideration of other factors as well. Nevertheless such a metallurgical analysis is of great interest, and in any attempt to date these coins one must consider a combination of various possible methods.

On the interpretation of symbols, Kosambi has suggested that the sun symbol  is the symbol of sovereignty, as also is the ṣaḍaracakra  . The crescent on arches  is a Mauryan symbol and is often associated with the ṣaḍaracakra. According to him each symbol is associated with a dynasty. The fourth mark in the cluster of symbols is the personal signet of the king, because there are about nine such variations. The fifth mark is the mark of the issuing minister. The symbols with human figures and without the cakra indicate coins of the tribal oligarchies. He does not accept any of the marks as the symbol of the mint. He believes that the later Mauryan coins suffered debasement as compared with the earlier coins from the Taxila hoard. He explains this by suggesting that possibly the new areas that were included in the empire had a debased currency which was allowed to circulate by the Mauryas. The symbol  , three ovals and a tangent he maintains is an Aśokan symbol since it occurs most often, suggesting a long reign, and it also sometimes occurs on the coins which Kosambi believes were issued by Bindusāra. The peacock on the arches he believes to be a symbol of Bindusāra, and states that it originates from the totem of the peacock associated with the Mauryas.

Further research was carried out on the subject by Dani,

who has refuted many of Marshall's suggestions on the two hoards found at Taxila.<sup>(1)</sup> The larger hoard at Bhir Mound is dated by two gold coins of Alexander and one coin of Philip Aridaeus, as we have already seen, to circa 317 B.C. The smaller hoard is dated by a coin of Diodotus to circa 248 B.C. The presence of Hellenistic objects in what Dani calls "phase B" at Bhir Mound, suggests the influence of the Indo-Bactrians over Taxila, towards the end of the Mauryan period. It is at about this time that local Taxilan coins begin to appear in large numbers. Dani continues to explain that the bar coins are not found elsewhere on the site, and suggests that they come from the Ganges-Jumna area. Furthermore a necklace from the larger hoard tallies with beads from Sirkap. Therefore he suggests that the hoard is not pre-Mauryan. Although it is not earlier than 317 B.C. it can in fact be much later, since the Greek coins may have been hoarded. Nor is the larger hoard earlier in burial than the smaller, as Marshall asserts. Both hoards of coins occur in "phase B" of Bhir Mound and the associated objects show that there was no great difference in the time of the burial of the two hoards. Therefore the hoards would appear to be post-Mauryan, and consequently the evidence from Taxila should not be held to prove the pre-Mauryan existence of punch-marked coins. Dani adds that the local currency in Taxila was bar coins, which occur in what he terms "phase A" in Bhir Mound. This analysis would suggest

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(1) JNSI, XVII, Part II, 1955, p. 27.

that the punch-marked coins were first minted by the Mauryas. Possibly bar coins were in existence before the Mauryan period.

Apart from the silver punch-marked coins, there are examples of the bent-bar silver coins. These according to Allan were struck on a Persian standard and probably represented the double sigloi or staters.<sup>(1)</sup> They appear to have been earlier than the punch-marked coins, since there were none in the smaller hoard at Taxila, generally believed to be of the time of the later Mauryas, owing to the presence of the Diodotus coin dated to 248 B.C. Omphis is said to have made a present of 200 talents of silver to Alexander, which Allan believes was probably made in this form of coinage. He suggests that this coinage came to an end soon after this event.

Punch-marked copper coins are much rarer than the silver variety. Most of these coins have five symbols on the obverse and four on the reverse.<sup>(2)</sup> The silver variety generally have one symbol on the obverse and about five on the reverse.

Because of the close connection between the Mauryas and Buddhism, it was to be expected that the symbols would at some stage be described as Buddhist symbols. Foucher is of this opinion.<sup>(3)</sup> The elephant and the bull which appear as symbols on the coins, represent according to Foucher the traditional symbols of the Buddha's conception, and the zodiacal sign of his birth-date, Taurus. This is a doubtful

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(1) CIC, pp. 2, 3.

(2) Allan, CIC, p. lxxviii

(3) Beginnings of Buddhist Art. p. 20 ff.

interpretation, since there is no very good evidence that the twelve-constellation zodiac was used in India at this time. Coins with the horse and the lion, the other two traditional symbols, have not been found so far. Foucher describes the ṣaḍaracakra symbol as a variant on the lotus symbol of the birth when the child took seven steps and at each a lotus sprang up. The tree-in-railing symbol represents the sambodhi. The arches he takes as variants on the stūpa or tumulus symbol. There are , signifying the stupa, crossed by the yaṣṭi or staff, with a chatra or parasol on top.

Owing to the absence of a legend on these coins our estimate of their date, must rest largely on the significance of the symbols, and whatever knowledge scientific analysis can provide. We believe that coins were in circulation in the pre-Mauryan period. Probably the earlier coins were the bent-bar variety, the punch-marked coins coming into use later under the Mauryas. Coins were used extensively as a medium of exchange and as legal tender. This fact is corroborated by (1) the Arthaśāstra which gives the above as the purposes of money. Curiously enough the Arthaśāstra frequently mentions two main types of coins. One is the silver coin or paṇa which has a range of 1,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $1/8$ . The other is the copper coins called māṣaka, which again has a similar range, the quarter piece being called kākaṇi. Gold coins are also mentioned, but these appear to have been very special issues which were hardly in circulation, since most transactions are paid for and

(1) II, 12.

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salaries are given in the silver currency of the pana.<sup>(1)</sup>  
Even the extremely high salaries of the senior officials are stated in panas and not in the gold coins. Punch-marked coins exist only in silver and copper. We have noticed that the copper coins are very rare. This is but natural since the silver coins are available to us through hoards. The copper coins, being smaller in value, were no doubt used very widely, whereas the silver coins, being of greater value, tended to be hoarded. If copper coins should be found in the future lying scattered in a site under excavation then Kosambi's metallurgical analysis would no doubt produce some interesting results when applied to them.

It appears from the Arthaśāstra that there was a well organised mint, the officers of which carefully supervised the contents of the coins, which are stated in detail, and guarded against the possibilities of counterfeiting.<sup>(2)</sup> Judging by the descriptions and remarks concerning commercial transactions, fines, revenue, etc. it is apparent that money was handled with experience at this period, and a money economy was a well known idea. This would suggest that punch-marked coinage was not the first type of coinage used in the area. <sup>We</sup> ~~To~~ agree with Allan's view that the bent-bar silver coins preceded punch-marked coins and were therefore in use in the pre-Mauryan period. This fact is also borne out by the two Taxila hoards. The one containing the Philip Aridaeus coin dating to circa 317 B.C.

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(1) II, 5.  
(2) Ibid.

also contained bent-bar coins. The smaller hoard containing the Diodotus coin of 248 B.C., even though it may have been buried at the end of the Mauryan period, does not contain any bent-bar coins, indicating thereby that they were out of circulation by then. The punch-marked coins, being easier to handle, probably replaced the bent-bar coins early in the Mauryan period.

We believe that the coins were issued by a central authority, probably the imperial mints situated perhaps in the five major cities of the empire. We do not accept the idea that these coins were traders' tokens which gradually acquired the status of a national coinage. The symbols possibly had some connection with local commerce, or local administration, but here again the symbol was probably passed on to the mint and became incorporated with other marks of royal authority. It is possible that, since commerce was at a comparatively nascent stage, local traders preferred a local symbol amongst others in order that they could differentiate between money minted in their own area and that of other areas. Thus though the issuing authority would be solely the royal mint, the symbols on the coins would represent, apart from the royal and dynastic symbols, various institutes such as the guilds, or administrative units, such as provinces.

The most complicated problem connected with the punch-marked coins is to unravel the meaning of the symbols. The peacock on arches seems most certainly to be a symbol of the Mauryan dynasty. The  we believe represents

Candragupta, interpreting it as symbolic of his name, "protected by the moon". This is depicted by representing the moon against a background of hills.

Bindusāra we believe may be represented by this symbol, . Again the idea is linked with the meaning of his name, the stretching out or extension of a dot or particle. Similarly the sun symbol  and the ṣadaracakra may both be variants of this symbol. The Aśokan symbol seems most obviously the tree-in-the-railing, representing the Aśoka tree. It may represent the Bodhi-tree, implying that Aśoka had become a Buddhist. The symbol of  which Kosambi believes to be Aśokan can only be attributed to Aśoka on the basis of its occurring more frequently than any other. On some coins it occurs with the ṣadaracakra, therefore Kosambi believed that the latter was the symbol for the Dharma wheel. But if we accept the ṣadaracakra as the mark of Bindusāra, then it implies the restamping of Bindusāra's coins, during the reign of Aśoka, or possibly the issuing of coins from Ujjain when Aśoka was viceroy during the reign of Bindusāra.

We shall conclude this Appendix by giving a list of places where N.B.P. ware or punch-marked coins were found during excavations, suggesting thereby that these places were inhabited during the Mauryan period. These sites are as follows, Amarāvati, Bahal, Bairat, Bāngarh, Basarh, Bhīta,

Hastināpur, Kauśāmbi, Maheshwar, Mathurā, Nāsik, Piprāwa, Rairh, Rugar, Sambhar, Tripuri, and other sites that we have referred to in our discussion on N.B.P. ware and punch-marked coins.

## APPENDIX D

The Titles of Aśoka

The titles used by Aśoka are in themselves of some interest. Sometimes the full title is not used, but just Devānampiya, or, as in the Barābar Hill cave inscriptions, only Piyadassi rājā. The Maski rock inscription has Devānampiya Aśoka and this provided the evidence that Devānampiya and Piyadassi were in fact the titles of Aśoka. (1)

As Hultsch explains, the etymological meaning of the term Devānampiya is "dear to the gods". (2) Patañjali in the Mahābhāṣya explains that this term was used as an honorific similar to bhavān, dīrghāyu and āyusmān. (3) Kaiyata's commentary on Patañjali refers to another meaning of this term, "fool", which was known to Patañjali. (4) This may have been due to a hostile recollection among brahmans of the unorthodox Mauryan dynasty. It occurs as an honorific in Jaina literature. (5)

In Ceylonese literature Devanampiya is used not for Aśoka but for his Ceylonese contemporary Tissa. (6) We have no evidence of this title having been used by Aśoka's predecessors or for that matter by any of the kings previous

(1) See Ch. I p. 15 ff and CII, I, p. 172.

(2) CII, I, p. xxix.

(3) Mahābhāṣya on Pāninī II, 4, 56.

(4) Ibid.

(5) JRAS. Keilhorn. 1908, p. 505.

Hemacandra. Abhidānacintāmani. III, 17.

(6) Dip. XI, 25-29 and Fleet JRAS, 1908 p. 485.

to him. But in the Eighth Rock Edict<sup>(1)</sup> he refers to previous devānampiyas, implying thereby that the term was well known to his readers and hearers in the sense of a royal title. The fact that it was adopted as a title by his grandson Daśaratha<sup>(2)</sup>, and by various Ceylonese kings after Tissa<sup>(3)</sup> would suggest that it was in fact a royal title.

The other name that occurs frequently with that of Aśoka is Piyadassi, meaning "he who regards amiably" or "of gracious appearance". This appears to have been a personal name of Aśoka, probably a throne name. In the Dīpavaṃsa he is referred to largely by this name alone.<sup>(4)</sup> In later years it appears to have been adopted as a title of royalty. Anantadeva in the Rājendra Kauṣṭabha quotes from the Viṣṇudharmotara in which Priyadarśana is mentioned as a title of royalty.<sup>(5)</sup> Vālmīki uses it in the Rāmāyana as a title for Rāma.<sup>(6)</sup> Smith in his biography of Aśoka suggests that Aśokavardhana was the king's personal name and Piyadassi his title, which he used in the edicts because it means "the humane".<sup>(7)</sup> We are of the opinion that Aśoka was his personal name, Piyadassi was as it were an official name, which he probably began to use after his coronation, and Devānampiya was a generally known royal title of the time.

The origin of the title Devānampiya remains obscure.

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- (1) Bloch. LIA, p. 111.  
 (2) Sircar, SI, p. 79.  
 (3) Ibid, p. 231.  
 (4) Dip. VI, 1, 2, 14, 24.  
 (5) Kamal Krishna Smrithirtha Ed. p. 43.  
 (6) I, 1, 3.  
 (7) A. p. 41.

Although known before the time of Aśoka it may not have been widely used. Aśoka may have felt it appropriate for himself, meaning "blest by the gods", after his efforts at increasing piety among the people. If he believed that he had set the people of Jambudvīpa on the road to heaven then no doubt he would be justified in calling himself the beloved of the gods. It is equally possible that there was a political motive in his assumption of this title. Knowing the partiality of his subjects for things religious, he may have felt that it would strengthen his position if he could in a subtle way link the state machinery with divine power. This was achieved in the adoption of this title.

APPENDIX E

(1)  
Reference to Megasthenes in India

It is generally assumed that Megasthenes came to India as the ambassador of Seleucus Nicator to the court of Candragupta Maurya at Pāṭaliputra. However the sources are not in complete agreement on this point. The following statements have been made regarding Megasthenes, (2) "Megasthenes the historian who lived with Seleucus Nicator". (3) "Megasthenes, who lived with Sibyrtius the satrap of Arachosia, and who says that he often visited Sandracottus king of the Indians". (4) "To Sandracottus to whom Megasthenes came on an embassy." (5) "Megasthenes and Deinachus were sent on an embassy, the former to Sandracottus at Palimbothra, the other to Allitrochades his son; and they left accounts of their sojourn in the country." (6)

"Megasthenes says that he often visited Sandracottus, the greatest king of the Indians, and Porus, still greater than he". (7)

"Megasthenes remained for some time with the Indian kings, and wrote a history of Indian affairs, that he might hand

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(1) I am indebted to Prof. Basham for this idea.  
 (2) MacCrindle. Introduction to Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian. p. 13.  
 (3) Clem. Alex. p. 132 Sylb. (Fragm. 42).  
 (4) Arrian, Exp. Alex. V, vi, 2.  
 (5) Strabo, XV, p. 702.  
 (6) Strabo, II, p. 70.  
 (7) Arrian, Indica, c. 5.

down to posterity a faithful account of all that he had  
witnessed."<sup>(1)</sup>

Strabo is the only writer amongst the ones quoted above who states definitely that Megasthenes was sent on an embassy. According to the others he merely resided for some time at the court at Pāṭaliputra either as an official guest or as a visitor.

It is therefore more accurate to state that there is no certainty as regards Megasthenes having been the ambassador of Seleucus. He was obviously a close friend of the latter, and appears to have been interested in travelling and writing about the places he visited. Possibly he was only a visitor at Pāṭaliputra, but owing to his connection with Seleucus was treated as a royal guest, and came to be regarded by later writers as the official ambassador.

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(1) Pliny. Quoted Solinus, Polyhistoria. c. 60.

The Greek Text

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2 . . . . . [AN]-  
3 ΘΡΩΠΟΙ[Σ] ΚΑΙ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ[ΤΟΥ] ΕΥΣΕΒ[Ε]ΙΑΝ ΕΙΣ  
4 ΤΟΥΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥΣ ΕΠΟΙ[Η]ΣΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝΤΑ  
5 ΕΥΘΗΝ[Ε]Ι ΚΑΤΑ ΠΑΣΑΝ ΓΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΕΧΕΤΑΙ  
6 ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΜΨΥΧΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΛΟΙΠΟΙ ΔΕ  
7 ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΟΣΟΙ ΘΗΡΕΥΤΑΙ Η ΑΛΙΕΙΣ  
8 ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΕ[Ρ]ΙΑΥΝΤΑΙ ΘΗΡΕΥΟΝΤΕΣ  
9 ΕΙ ΤΙΝΕΣ ΑΚΡΑΤΕΙΣ ΠΕΛΑΥΝΤΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΚΡΑ-  
10 ΣΙΑΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΔΥΝΑΜΙΝ ΚΑΙ [ΕΝΗΚ]ΟΟΙ ΠΑΤΡΙ  
11/12 ΚΑΙ ΜΗΤΡΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΩΝ ΠΑΡΑ/ΤΑ ΠΡΟΤΕΡΩΝ  
ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΛΟΙΠΟΥ ΔΑΙΕΝ  
13 ΚΑΙ ΑΜΕΙΝΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΑΥΤΑ  
14 ΠΟΙΟΥΝΤΕΣ ΔΙΑΘΟΥΣΙΝ

## APPENDIX F

A Recent Aśokan Inscription found near Kandahar

An inscription issued by Aśoka was discovered recently in Afghanistan. <sup>(1)</sup> It is a bilingual Greek-Aramaic inscription engraved at the site of Shar-i-Quna, the old city of Kandahar. The inscription consists of  $13\frac{1}{2}$  lines of Greek and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lines of Aramaic. It was engraved on a rock which was discovered during an excavation in the area. The greek letters are carefully engraved, and the language, though not correct, is not abnormally barbaric.

It is said that the inscription refers to "Piodasses", the "ruler of all things over the whole earth". This is clearly a reference to Aśoka. A rubbing of the major part of the Greek inscription, omitting the first two lines, has been published, the translation of which is as follows, "...to men. And besides that he has practised piety towards all men. And all things flourish throughout the whole world. And the king refrains from (killing) living beings. And the rest of mankind and those who are the hunters and fishermen of the king have ceased from hunting. If any were licentious they have ceased their licentiousness

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(1) The first account of this inscription has been published in East and West (Rome) 9, 1-2, 1958 pp. 4-6.

and, in contrast to what they did before, (are) obedient to mother, father and elders. And for the rest they will always keep on doing better in all those things".<sup>(1)</sup>

This inscription is indeed of considerable importance. Primarily it establishes the fact that Aśoka's empire extended as far west as Kandahar. That this edict is addressed to people who were his subjects is clear from his having described himself as the "ruler of all things over the whole earth". This phrase is reminiscent of the grandiose titles used by the Achaemenid emperors.<sup>(2)</sup> He may have used this phrase in the belief that the people of this region, familiar with Achaemenid inscriptions, would recognise it as an imperial edict.

Since it is a bilingual inscription using Greek and Aramaic, it is evident that there was a large settlement of Greek speaking people in the area. No doubt Asoka's reference to the yonas in his other edicts, must have included the Greeks of this region.<sup>(3)</sup> This inscription further strengthens the view that the edicts of the king were meant to be read to, and by the populace, and were not merely issued for the edification of the officials. The purpose of a bilingual inscription at Kandahar was that its contents should be available to the older inhabitants of the area

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(1) Translated by Prof. A.L.Basham, with the consultation of Profs. A. Momigliano and J. Brough, from a photograph of a rubbing of the inscription, included in the above mentioned journal.  
(2) ~~Sincar~~. *SI*, p. Ghoshman. *Iran*. p. 153.  
(3) V R.E. Gir. *CII*, I, p. 8.

who read Aramaic, and to the more recently settled Greek speaking people.

The purpose of having an inscription engraved at Kandahar is evident from the fact that it was an important centre of routes. As we have stated earlier, one of the main highways from India, branched at Kandahar into a northern route to Herat and Ecbatana, and a southern route to Persepolis and Susa. (1)

The reference to the hunters and fishermen of the king is curious. It may be suggested that this refers to the hunters and fishermen employed by the king on his estates or for his private purpose. It is hardly possible that all hunters and fishermen throughout the kingdom have ceased to hunt and fish.

The text of the edict is not similar to any of the other edicts issued by Aśoka. It would appear that the edict was issued late in his reign, perhaps at about the same time as the pillar edicts, since he speaks of various achievements as the result of his policy of Dhamma. He claims in his edict that virtue has triumphed in his empire and that his subjects are all living according to the ethics of the Dhamma, such as non-violence, sobriety of behaviour and obedience to parents and elders. The purpose of the edict was not merely to make this statement, but to publicise the Dhamma, in the

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(1) See Ch. IV. p.291.

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hope no doubt, that people from other countries would be curious about it. It was obviously a piece of propaganda proclaiming the benefits of the Dhamma, and the king's faith in the Dhamma as the way to social progress.



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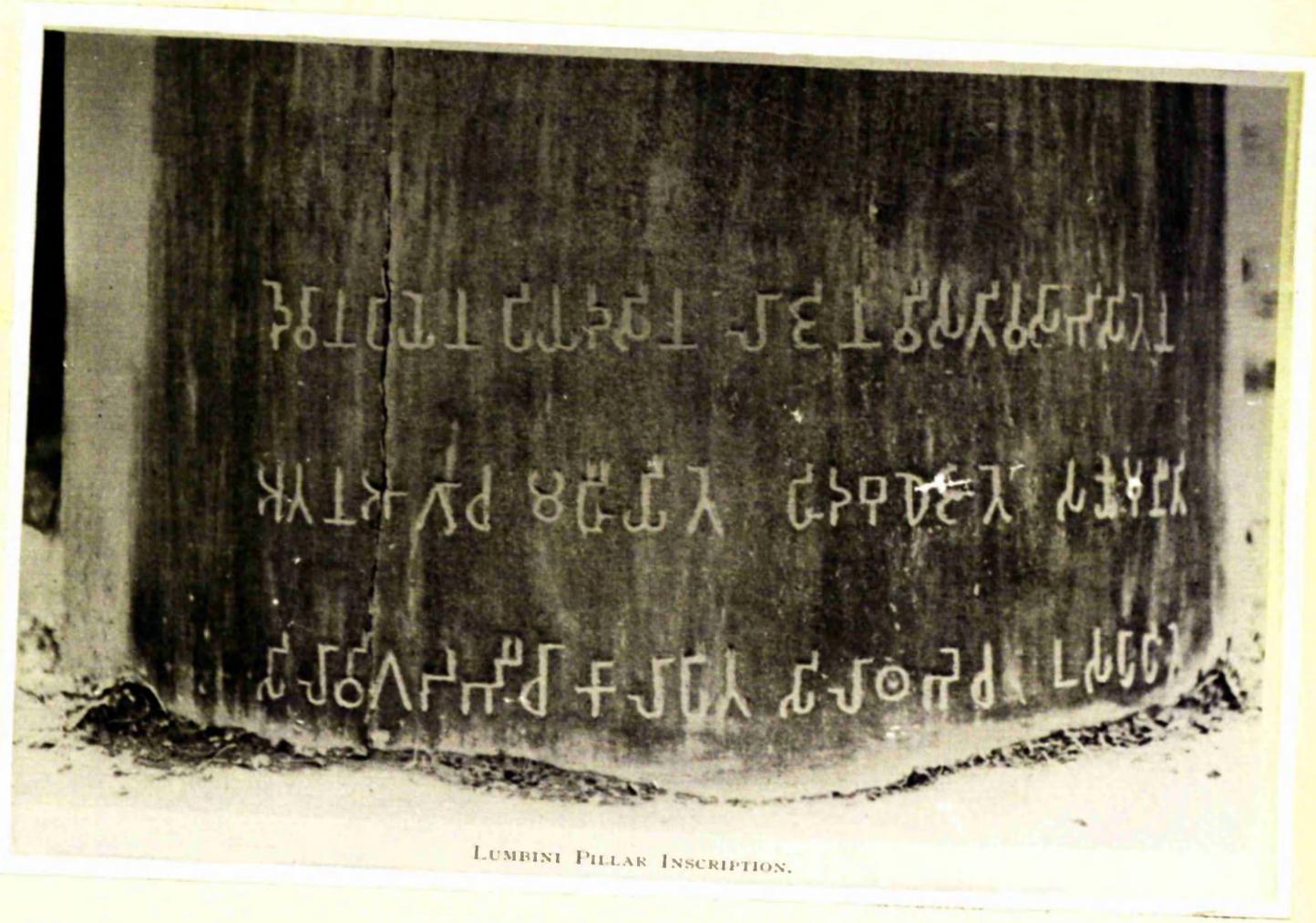
PLATE VI



CAPITAL OF ASOKAN COLUMN AT SARNATH.

*Frontist 100*

PLATE VII



LUMBINI PILLAR INSCRIPTION.