STRUCTURE OF POLITY UNDER THE GURJARA-PRATĪHĀRAS OF KANAUJ

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
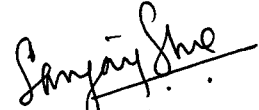
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To

the memory of my

late Grand Parents

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Declaration

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled *Structure of Polity under the Gurjara-Pratīhāras of Kanauj* submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of the Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university and is my original work.
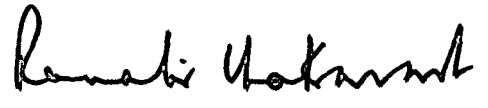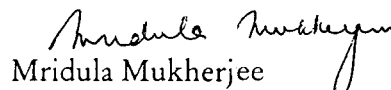
Sanjay Sharma

Certificate

We recommend that dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Abbreviations

ACAIC	*Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China (Al-Masālik Wa'l-Mamālik by Ibn Khurdādhbih and Akhbār Al-Ṣīn Wa'l-Hind by Sulaymān Al-Tājir et. al.)*, translated from Original Arabic with commentary by S. Maqbul Ahmad
ACHI	*A Comprehensive History of India, Volume III (Part I and II)* edited by R. C. Majumdar and K. K. Dasgupta
ASI	*The Archaeological Survey of India*
ASI-An. Rep.	*Archaeological Survey of India-Annual Report*
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
CUP	*Cambridge University Press*
DHNI	*Dynastic History of Northern India (Part I)* by H. C. Ray
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*
EITA	*Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture*
ELNI	*Economic Life in Northern India (750-1250 AD)* by Lallanji Gopal
HIED	*The History of India as Told by its own Historians, vol. I*, edited and translated by H. M. Elliot and John Dowson
HS	*Harṣa Saṁvat*
IA	*The Indian Antiquary*
IEG	*Indian Epigraphical Glossary* by D. C. Sircar
IF	*Indian Feudalism* by R. S. Sharma

IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
JBBRAS	*Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JDL	*Journal of the Department of Lettres*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JNSI	*Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*
KE	*Kalacūri Era*
OUP	*Oxford University Press*
PIHC	*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*
PMP	*Paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parameśvara*
Review	*Archaeological Survey of India – A Review*
RTA	*Rajasthan through the Ages* Edited by Dasharatha Sharma
SH	*Studies in History*
SI	*Select Inscriptions* by D. C. Sircar
Sk. Pu.	*The Skanda Purāṇa*
SSED	*The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary* by V. S. Apte
VS	*Vikrama Saṁvat*

Table of Transliteration

Svaras

अ a आ ā इ i ई ī उ u ऊ ū ऋ ṛ ॠ ṝ ऌ ḷ

ए e ऐ ai ओ o औ au

Vyañjanas

क् k ख् kh ग् g घ् gh ङ् ṅ

च् c छ् ch ज् j झ् jh ञ् ñ

ट् ṭ ठ् ṭh ड् ḍ ढ् ḍh ण् ṇ

त् t थ् th द् d ध् dh न् n

प् p फ् ph ब् b भ् bh म् m

Antaḥsthas

य् y र् r ल् l व् v

Ūṣmans

श् ś ष् ṣ स् s ह् h

Visarga

(ः) ḥ

Anusvāra

(˙) ṁ

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Preliminaries

"Good poets use the discriminatory collyrium to purify their *itihāsa-purāṇa* like
eyes to see the subtle and minute facts present in them."

<div align="right">

Kāvyamīmāṁsā of Rājaśekhara
translated by Sadhana Parashar

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The Context

In the past thirty years or so there has been a renewed interest among historians on the
question of origins and structure of state and polity in pre-industrial India.[1] This interest
has been evinced primarily through two major concerns—first, a search for adequate
theoretical frameworks to explain the nature of political formations in early India, and
second, an emphasis on understanding state formation in processual terms. As a result,
the famous (or perhaps infamous) Marxian conceptualization of Indian civilization as
changeless and driven by a specific mode of production has been successfully ripped
asunder. It is now agreed that this period constitutes a distinct phase in the political,

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[1] A major impetus to conceptualizing the Early State in pre-industrial societies in general was, Classen and
Skalnik, 1978, followed by, Classen and Skalnik, 1981. In addition, the second part of the fourth volume of
Studies in History, published in 1982 was devoted to the problem of early state in the Indian context.

socio-economic, and cultural history of India even when considerable difference of opinion still exists on the question of its genesis and structure.[2]

There is no dearth of historiographical essays[3] on the question under consideration. Most of these essays, to a large extent, engage with the problem from the standpoint of different frameworks proposed on the nature of polity and state in early medieval India[4], i.e., in terms of validation or otherwise of one or more of these frameworks.

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[2] Two very important and diametrically opposite positions can be seen in, Sharma, R. S., 1974, pp. 1-9; and Chattopadhyaya, B. D., 1994, pp. 1-37. The second essay has also been reproduced as 'Change through Continuity: Notes toward an Understanding of the Transition to Early Medieval India' in D. N. Jha, ed., *Society and Ideology in India, Essays in Honour of Professor R. S. Sharma*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996, pp. 135-161.

[3] Some of the important historiographical essays on the state and economy of early India in general and early medieval India in particular include: Sharma and Jha, 1974; Chattopadhyaya, 1988, pp. 109-131; Jha, 1993 (According to the Author, this essay was a revised edition of his article which he wrote along with R. S. Sharma in *JESHO*, 1974); Chattopadhyaya, 1995; Champakalakshmi, 1995; Kulke, 1995 (a); Jha, D. N. 'Introduction' in D. N. Jha, 2000; and Jha, Vishwa Mohan, 2002.

[4] For early medieval period, there are at least three frameworks, besides the conventional model of a centralized bureaucratic state, through which the political processes have been sought to be explained. These are: the Indian Feudalism Construct; the Segmentary State Model; and the Framework of Integrative Polity. First of these three frameworks looks at the state in early medieval context as one which came into existence as a result of the political fragmentation of a large centralized state which in early India is generally identified with the Mauryan state. Feudal tendencies are seen to have emerged in the post-Maurya states ultimately crystallizing into a complete feudalization of polity and economy in the post-Gupta period. The second framework locates the state in between complete centralization and a complete fragmentation. A Segmentary state has political sovereignty only in its core areas and its actual control diminishes as one moves to the periphery. In these non-core areas, the state enjoys just ritual sovereignty and this arrangement is replicated, as a pyramidal structure, at the intermediate and the peripheral levels. The integrative polity

The initial strand of writings on state in early India in general and early medieval

India in particular emphasized the centralized, bureaucratic nature of the state.[5] It is

generally believed that such a conceptualization was driven primarily by the need to

glorify the past of India[6] so as to emphasize the malicious British impact. Two important

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framework looks at the genesis of the state structure in early medieval period in terms of crystallization of regional identities as against the fragmentation of the Feudalism construct. Here the emergence of regional (or supra-regional) states is located in the growth of local ruling lineages in certain 'nuclear areas', one of which dominates others and expands its area of influence and actual control by integrating other lineages (or by displacing them) and various pre-state societies in the region at territorial, cultural, social and economic levels. Actual movement of collaterals from one place to another is a part of the process of expansion.

[5] For a centralized and bureaucratic nature of state, see, Majumdar and Pusalkar, 1964 (Second Edition); Altekar, 1958 (3rd edition); Jayaswal, 1943; Ghoshal, 1929; Mahalingam, 1955; Sastri, 1975 (Reprint).

[6] This may be discerned from some of the titles of historical narratives of the period, for example, K. M. Munshi's, *The Glory that was Gurjaradeśa* published in 1944 from Bombay and Majumdar and Pusalkar edited *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*. Kanauj is seen as the seat of 'imperial' kingdoms even when struggle for its control is believed to have continued for around hundred years between the Pratīhāras, the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and during this period the local ruling dynasty was by no means imperial. Later, the Gāhaḍavālas, who ruled from Kanauj, were one among many ruling states in various parts of India. So between 600 AD and 1200 AD, if at all Kanauj had an 'imperial' status, it was only during Harṣa's reign and under the Pratīhāras. In this context, a reference may be made to an interesting point made by D. C. Sircar. He argued that what is generally seen as a tripartite struggle between the Pratīhāras, the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas was in essence an extension of the Gauḍa-Kānyakubja struggle, which in his view was a characteristic feature of the early medieval period starting from the Maukhari-Later Gupta struggle to the conflicts between the Senas and the Gāhaḍavālas. He thus, even if implicitly, rejected the glorification of Kanauj as the political citadel of early medieval north India. The argument gets further credence in the light of the fact that there is nothing to show that the Rāṣṭrakūṭas had any long-term political interests in Kanauj. For reference, see, Ray, Chattopadhyaya, Chakravarti and Mani, 2000.

markers of this strand of thought were: first, a tendency to emphasize continuities, rather than changes, of attributes of the classical period, identified with the Gupta times, in later periods also[7] and second, an endeavour to show the all pervading clout and prowess of the king, executed almost invariably by a strong administrative and judicial machinery deeply entrenched at all levels of territorial control. So, the state was seen as structurally static and changes were only superficial, for example, in the shift of royalty from one dynasty to another. Similarly, structure of state was almost always articulated in terms of administrative set up.[5]

Clearly delineating structural change in Indian history has been an important contribution of the Marxist historiography in India. D. D. Kosambi, despite being a Marxist scholar, questioned the mechanical applicability of Marx's scheme in Indian context and defined, for the purpose of his work, Indian history as 'presentation of

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[7] For example U. N. Ghoshal, who contributed the chapter on economic life in Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan's famous volume on *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, which was the fourth volume of the series titled, 'History and Culture of the Indian People', looked at the economy of the post-Gupta period in terms of continuity of the economic prosperity of the Gupta period. By default, he started almost each new paragraph with this assertion. To look at some of them, "In the records of the present period we have abundant evidence of *that advanced state of agriculture* which we have found to be *a characteristic of the Gupta and the preceding ages.*"(p. 400); "The *progress of this industry* (Textile) in *the Gupta epoch* appears to have been continued in this period."(p. 401); "The working of *metals* was *pursued with as much success* as in the *preceding epoch.*"(p. 401); "The art of *Jeweller* appears to have *maintained its old level.*"(p. 402) (Italics and parentheses added). These statements were followed by data collected from varied textual sources. The organization of economy was explained in terms of only trade and industry and agriculture was kept out. Trade and industry were organized, according to Ghoshal, through guilds, which again were an extension of the glorious past.

successive developments in the means and relations of production' [8] and hence rejected the notion of unchanging Orient. This dynamism is clearly evident in the Marxist historiography of the period under question. Closely following the idea of European feudalism, Marxist scholars in India looked at the emergence of numerous states in the post-Gupta period in terms of successive stages of political fragmentation with Mauryan state as the reference point.[9]

Any engagement with the question of resource mobilization and redistribution would entail examination of two questions—state's endeavour to expand its resource base and mechanism(s) through which it realized various kinds of resources which would have been imperative for its sustenance. This, in turn, is inextricably linked with the question of the nature of state and economy, i.e., whether the state had enough resources to mobilize; whether it controlled them; whether it had the adequate machinery to appropriate and redistribute them; what kind of political relationship

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[8] See, Kosambi, 1975, p. 1. For early medieval context though, R. S. Sharma, another formidable Marxist scholar, was the first to present this structural change through a comprehensive argument in his *Indian Feudalism* (herein onward *IF*), 1980; Idem, 1974; Idem, 1969.

[9] *IF*, p. 4. R. S. Sharma writes, "...as a result of land grants made to the brāhmaṇas, the 'comprehensive competence based on centralized control', which was the hallmark of the Maurya state, gave way to decentralization in the post-Maurya and Gupta periods. The functions of the collection of taxes, levy of forced labour, regulation of mines, agriculture, etc. together with those of the maintenance of law and order, and defence which were hitherto performed by the state officials, were now step by step abandoned, first to the priestly class, and later to the warrior class." For a different conceptualization of the Maurya state which also marks a modification of an earlier view see, Thapar, 1987.

existed between the sovereign and his subordinate rulers; whether the economy was driven primarily by only agrarian or only non-agrarian sectors; and what role did management of resources play in the genesis of new states, more so, when in our period numerous regional states emerged, many of them as a result of horizontal expansion of state societies in the hitherto untouched areas. Most of these questions, in the early medieval context, remain a red herring, essentially because of divergent inferences drawn by historians from almost the same kind of evidence.

As regards the economic context, two aspects have been emphasized. One, that economy of the period came to be dominated by the agrarian sector, something that is seen as a result[10] of decline in the non-agrarian sector. Grants of land made by the ruler, initially to religious and later to secular beneficiaries also, are seen as markers of changing land relations in early medieval India. These are also seen as harbingers of substantial agrarian expansion, as most early land grants were made in outlying and peripheral areas.[11] These grants of land, which are believed to be necessitated by the

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[10] It was initially argued by R. S. Sharma that grants of land to both religious and secular parties were necessitated by the decline in foreign trade and concomitantly in artisanal activities from around the middle of the first millennium A.D. This led to self-sufficient village economy marked by paucity of metallic currency. The argument gave an implicit or tacit approval to the concept of Asiatic Mode of Production, and was modified in favour of the Kali-age concept. See, Jha, 1979, p. 20; Chattopadhyaya, 1995, pp. 329-332.

[11] Jha, 1979, pp. 21-22.

upheaval of the Kali-age,[12] were marked by increasing sub-infeudation of the production

process whereby many landed intermediaries came between the peasant and the state. It

is argued that because these intermediaries appropriated most of the surplus, the

production process was not driven by the idea of market or of economic growth but by

the idea of consumption.[13] This led to the emergence of closed village economy and

collapse of the market system. In this environment, the only possible mode of

remuneration for all kinds of services was further grants of land.[14] Decline in trading

activities and paucity of metallic circulating medium resulted in decline and localization

of artisanal activities on one hand, and in decay of urban centres on the other.[15] As

regards trade, for our concern two points are important, the reference point of both

being the construct of Indian feudalism: first, the conceptualization of decline in trading

activities; and second, the feudalization of trade. Decline in trading activities, both

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[12] D. N. Jha writes, "A close study of the descriptions of the Kali-age indicates that this was a period of sharp social conflict and crisis, largely generated by a two-fold social contradiction: the one between the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas on the one hand and the vaiśyas on the other; the other between the brāhmaṇas and the śūdras". He further argues, "The solution of the sharp class antagonism therefore lay in devising a new mechanism of surplus extraction. Thus, the state gave up the earlier practice of collecting taxes directly through its agents and then distributing them among its priestly, military and other employees. Instead it now began to assign land revenues directly to priests, military chiefs, administrators etc. for their support". See, Jha, D. N., 'Editor's Introduction', in Jha, 2000, pp. 6-7.

[13] *IF*, p. 214.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Sharma, R. S., 1987, pp. 178-185.

internal and external, has been a well-emphasized point in the historiography of Indian feudalism. As early as in 1960, five years before R. S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism*, came B. P. Mazumdar's major contribution.[16] He seems to have been so engrossed with the idea of political feudalism resulting into decline in economy that, did not find it important to incorporate a chapter on trading and commercial activities even when made a rather detailed survey of 'Currency, Banking and Usury'.[17]

R. S. Sharma locates the decline of foreign trade in an almost complete stoppage of silk trade between India and Byzantine and the growing influence of the Arabs under the banner of Islam.[18] B. N. S. Yadava has dealt with various, what he calls, causal factors in the decline in commercial activities in the early medieval period.[19] R. S. Sharma looks

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[16] *The Socio-Economic History of North India (1030 – 1194)*, Calcutta, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960.

[17] Chapter X; without any empirical examination he made the following general statement on trading activities in the period, "The invasion of Sultān Mehmūd and the consequent loss of the major portion of the Punjab to the Turks, their subsequent raids and the interminable internecine wars of the eleventh and twelfth centuries could not but affect the trade of the country most adversely. Disturbed political condition always leads to the shrinkage of the volume of trade. If valuable markets were lost, there must have been less production in those industries, which supplied the principal commodities for the trade and commerce. A considerable number of persons, therefore, had to seek their livelihood by falling back on land" (p. 172).

[18] He points out that silk, which was an important commodity of trade between India and the Byzantine Empire and imported to India through Persian merchants, was introduced through secret means in the empire in the middle of the sixth century and thus adversely affected Indian foreign trade, which, at least in north India, depended almost entirely on silk. He further points out that the chaos that persisted through initial conquests of Islam must have also impeded the trading activities of Indian merchants. *IF*, p. 55.

[19] These include: enhancement in the sea piracy; increasing influence of the Arabs in the north-west with Sindh under their control; increasing inclination of traders to acquire landed property and join ranks of

at comparatively less issuance of copper coins under the Guptas as a marker of decline in money economy mainly in context of local level exchange primarily on the testimony of Fa-hsien.[20] An important marker of this decline is seen in the shift in religious endowments by princes and individuals from cash to land.[21] While in the 'legal texts' and the land charters of the period references are made to coins along with tax in *hiraṇya* and even purchases made in money but in Sharma's view actual finds are hard to come by.[22]

Thus, land grants are seen to have brought about feudalization of production process and, at the same time, expansion of the agrarian sector. As agrarian production was not driven by economic growth, one would ideally construe that what is being emphasized

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ruling aristocracy; internecine warfare between various regional kingdoms; deteriorating law and order with even petty chiefs indulging in robbery and pillaging; increasing financial burden owing to multiple regional states demanding levies and transit duties; decline of the class of merchants and traders suggested by both epigraphical and textual sources which indicate that besides peasants, artisans and other humbler folk, merchants also began to be transferred to religious donees and; imposition of new social values under Purāṇic influence which condemned long journeys and sea voyages as unlawful and forbidden in the Kali-age. See, Yadava, 1973, pp. 271-74.

[20] *IF*, p. 53.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.* At another place he writes, "The absence of gold coins in the post-Gupta times is in sharp contrast with their abundance under the Kuṣāṇas and the Guptas. In the absence of actual coins it is not possible to make much of the references to coins in inscriptions of medieval dynasties. Although gold coins were revived under the Kalacūris, Candellas, and Gāhaḍavālas etc. in the eleventh-twelfth century, it was on a small scale and at any rate in the period c. AD 650-1000 this coinage was almost conspicuous by its absence" (Sharma, R. S., 1969, p. 7).

is an overall decline in economy. The second important marker of early medieval economy is seen in the alienation of resources. Land grants, it is argued, which were already exempted from tax obligations, in successive stages were marked by alienation, on the part of the ruler, of resources, both owned by the ruler and the community, for the enjoyment of the grantee accompanied by conferment of the right of administering the granted area without any external interference.[23] Concomitant with this was the right of sub-infeudation according to which the granted land could be sold, leased out or farmed out by the donee. Sub-infeudation, along with rights of eviction and imposition of non-customary taxes and forced labour, is seen as instrument of subjection of peasantry.[24] At the same time, peasants working in the donated land are explicitly asked not to leave it and comply with the commands of the donee. Terms like *ādi* at the end of the list of taxes diverted to the donee and *sarvva sammeta/sarvvāya sameta* indicate an open space for the donee to enhance taxation any time he deemed fit.[25] While not much empirical work has been done, from the perspective of Indian feudalism, on the

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[23] Supra note 10.

[24] For a rather detailed argumentation from the perspective of feudalism, on the questions of subjection of peasantry, increasing incidence of taxes and sub-infeudation, see Jha, 2000, p. 13-18. This is by far the latest position, from the perspective of feudalism on these topics.

[25] *IF*, p. 55.

mechanism of realization of taxes,[26] there is at least one authority[27] that takes a closer look at the impact of the *sāmanta* system on taxation. Two points have been highlighted: One, a wide variance 'in the nomenclature, number, and also, to some extent, in the rates of taxes' in different kingdoms;[28] and second, that a hierarchized polity rendered it necessary that revenue be shared at different levels which in turn resulted in higher rates, rigorous exaction and introduction of new taxes.[29] It would be an interesting exercise to analyze the regional variation in taxation from the perspective of availability of resources and nature of political arrangement.

Just as the construct of feudalism has been applied thoroughly in the north Indian context, the model of Segmentary State has almost come to be identified with the Coḷa state[30] albeit with clear prognostications of its potentiality of applicability in most early Indian kingdoms especially in south India.[31] In relation with political economy, two important points are discernible in the Segmentary State model—an almost complete

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[26] Some of the important works which deal with the questions of taxation and revenue include: Karashima, 1984; Shanmugam, 1987; Veluthat, 1993; Yadava, 1973; Gopal, Lallanji, *The Economic Life in Northern India (c. AD 700 – 1200)*, Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass, 1989 (Second Edition); Kuppuswamy, 1975; Mazumdar, 1960.

[27] Yadava, 1973, pp. 297-301.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 297

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 298

[30] For the most important contribution on this strand of thought, see Stein, Burton, 1977; Idem, 1980; Stein, 1995, pp. 134-161.

[31] Stein, 1977, pp. 49-51.

absence of central bureaucracy in regions/segments beyond the core region as the segments had there own bureaucratic machinery which were 'the political arm of the dominant peasantry in their respective *nāḍus*'.[32] The second point pertains to centre's control over resources. It has been argued by the adherents of the Segmentary State model, largely in connection with the deconstruction of conceptualization of the Coḷa state as a centralized one, that taxes were predominantly collected and appropriated by the ruling class(es) of respective segments which means that the Coḷa king would not have had any access to resources beyond areas of his actual political control.[33] It is for this reason, it is argued, that warfare and military expeditions of the Coḷa rulers need to be looked as 'the most conspicuous of the devices which kings employed to compensate for their limited control over vital resources within there own sphere of hegemony'.[34] Such military activity is seen as driven more by the idea of plunder than anything else which would have enticed 'the allied chiefs and locality warriors' to participate.[35]

So the two important and dominant historiographical frameworks discussed above conceptualize the typical early medieval state either in terms of collapse of the pan-

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[32] Champakalakshmi, 1995, p. 295.

[33] Stein, 1980, pp. 261-264.

[34] Spencer, 1983, p. 22.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Indian civilizational matrix[36] resulting into a fragmented polity dominated by hierarchized vassal-lord relationship or in terms of replication of political authority, though limited in scope, in the territorial segments which acknowledged the authority of the lord only ritually. Both these constructs are set in the economic context of agrarian expansion, which at least in the feudalism construct is seen as antithetical to the economic activities connected generally with the urban context.

Many questions have been raised, not on the empirical veracity of the construct, but mainly on the understanding of land grants as the dominant marker of the economic context of early medieval India as seen in the historiography of Indian feudalism. Noburu Karashima has shown, on the basis of his studies on the Coḷa state, that the total non-granted agrarian area outnumbered the area under religious grantees.[37] B. D. Chattopadhyaya also points out that there is no indication as to what percentage of total cultivable land was under the control of grantees.[38] John Deyell has raised questions on Sharma's methodology. To him, 'copper plate was a biased sample of revenue relations'

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[36] The term was used by B. D. Chattopadhyaya to highlight the understanding of early medieval India, especially in the Indian feudalism construct, in terms of breakdown of the civilizational matrix of early historical India. See, Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 13.

[37] Karashima, 1984, p. XXXii.

[38] Chattopadhyaya, 1995, p. 334.

which conveyed only the award of revenue or produce for the maintenance of persons or institutions and not 'the surrender of revenue rights'.[39]

There is another problem with equating land grants to brāhmaṇas and temples with the collapse of state structure. The two kinds of grants, i.e. religious and secular, need to be looked separately. Epigraphic references to secular grants come only from the ninth/tenth centuries.[40] Sharma assumes prevalence of such grants even in the earlier post-Gupta centuries on the premise that, 'if priests and temples were maintained by land grants, how could have been officers maintained otherwise?' [41] He corroborates his argument by analyzing etymological meanings of certain territorial and administrative terms.[42] His argument that, as secular grants 'were not expected to endure indefinitely, they were inscribed on palm leaf or cloth and therefore have perished' [43] seems a little too speculative and somehow indicates a tilt towards centralization rather than fragmentation. In the context of *śāsanas* (*rāja* and *tāmra śāsanas*) it is also important to

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[39] Deyell, 1990, p. 11. He writes further, "When considered in toto copper plates naturally give an impression of a cumulative alienation of agricultural rights or trade imposts. They are somewhat an imbalanced sample of such transactions, since we have no commensurate idea of rate of resumption of seized or lapsed grant by central authority. While a copper plate was engraved to confirm the rights of lesser grantees against their superiors, no such imperishable record of the opposite transaction was made. Hence the overall balance of grant/resumption cannot be judged from copper plate grants alone." (*Ibid.*)

[40] Gopal, Krishna Kanti, 1997, pp. 118-141, *passim*.

[41] *IF*, p. 12 and 92.

[42] One such term is *bhogika* or *bhogapatika*. *IF*, pp. 12-13

[43] *IF*, p. 92.

contextualize the idea of sale and gift giving in early India. D. C. Sircar enumerates some

categories of *śāsanas*, which were not typical revenue free gifts.[44] Two categories are

particularly important, *kraya-śāsana* and *kara-śāsana*. The first one, generally known from

early Orissan epigraphy, means, a charter of purchase[45] perhaps from a king. What is

important is that even these conspicuous sale deeds 'quote the usual imprecatory and

benedictory verses meant for the *tāmra-śāsanas* or charters recording revenue free gifts of

land'.[46] The reason for this is located by Sircar in the *Mitākṣarā*, which explains the

penchant of Indians to 'extol the gifts of land and deprecate its sale', and it was due to

this that even sale of land was represented as a gift.[47] The second type of *śāsana*, the *kara-*

śāsana, is known from the early inscriptions of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh and meant, 'a

charter recording a revenue paying grant'.[48] The use of terms like *tṛṇodaka*, *rājakīya-*

pratyāya and *khaṇḍapāla-muṇḍamola* for taxes, instead of usual *kara*, and again, inclusion

of imprecatory and benedictory stanzas usually meant for a rent free gifts are indicative

of 'the eagerness of the ancient Indian rulers to represent even a rent paying holding as a

rent free one' quite in line with the *Mitākṣarā*.[49] A similar trend, if not same, discernible

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[44] Sircar, 1965.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

from two sources in different spatial contexts but located in almost the same period, does give indication of its prevalence at supra-regional level, if not pan-Indian.

Recent researches on various aspects of economy in the period, largely on the questions of metallic circulating medium, trade and urbanization, have challenged the economic context of the period as envisaged in the construct of Indian feudalism.[50] The studies of many regional states in the period have shown that religious land grants reveal dimensions of the legitimation of state structure rather than a collapse. It is for this reason, Chattopadhyaya argues, that they became so numerous in the post-Gupta centuries even when they were present in early historical period also.[51] We will take up this dimension of land grants later in the essay.

The obvious irony with the construct of Indian feudalism is that while it theorizes an important structural change in the transition from early historical to early medieval period, next five centuries are seen not just in terms of changelessness but also of utter decline. In historical context, the study of economy entails an engagement with both, the questions of continuity and quantification but in complementarities and not in isolation. References for trading activities between the sixth and eighth centuries are hard to come

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[50] Some of the important works pertaining to this theme are, Champakalakshmi, 1996 (a); Idem, 1996 (b); Chattopadhyaya, 1994; Chakravarti, 2001 (a); Idem, 1996; Deyell, 1990; Mukherjee, B. N., 'Commerce and Money in the Central and Western Sectors of Eastern India', *Indian Museum Bulletin*, vol. XVI, 1982; Idem, 1992.

[51] Chattopadhyaya, 1995, p. 334.

by but then the question of quantification may not be over emphasized as there are bound to be some periods of slump in say external trade or of scarcity of certain metal. Would this then mean a complete reversion to the state of natural economy or a complete breakdown of economic fabric? One of the biggest handicaps in understanding the nature of trading activities in early medieval India is the little concern shown towards the archaeology of early medieval sites. The need has been forcefully argued in relation with maritime archaeology[52] and needs to be extended to the overall early medieval context. This is also important for two reasons: one, the major source of the economic history of the period are inscriptions, which predominantly being the records of grants of land or gifts of other kinds, provide little information regarding the non-agrarian aspects of economy; and second that the understanding of de-urbanization from the fourth century onwards is primarily based on archaeological sources and so the hypothesis of non-epicentric nature of urbanization can be seen in proper perspective if corroborated by archaeology. The process of third urbanization driven by both, trading activities and establishment of political authority is empirically shown to have crystallized by the beginnings of the ninth century with emergence of such exchange centres as *haṭṭa, haṭṭikā, yātrā, nagara/nagaram/pura, penṭha, pūṭabhedana, maṇḍapikā* etc. in

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[52] Ray, Himanshu Prabha, 'Maritime Archaeology of the Indian Ocean: An Overview', in H. P. Ray and Jean Francois Salles, eds, *Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean*, Delhi, Manohar, 1996.

different regions.[53] There are two other aspects which underline the reasonably well organized nature of exchange activities: one, the existence of hierarchy of exchange centres providing linkages between the rural level exchange centre to large centre/port through intermediate level centres for example *hatta–mandapikā–pattana* hierarchy; and second, an increasing share of non-precious commodities in the early medieval trade scenario.[54] Relative scarcity of sources providing information on exchange activities and centres of exchange indicate that non-agrarian economic activities had touched a low in comparison with early centuries of the Common Era but some of the inscriptions indicate that these were not entirely absent.[55] As regards the question of monetary exchange, two important works have shown the presence of vibrant monetary economy in north India between 700 AD and 1250 AD.[56]

While the model of Segmentary State has rightly questioned the almost Byzantine type of Cola monarchy, at the same time, has derived serious questioning and contestations both on empirical and conceptual levels. Conceptually, the mechanical application of a model, which was applied to a pre-state tribal society in east Africa, to a

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[53] For urbanization and trade in early medieval context, see, Chattopadhyaya, 1994; Chakravarti, 2001 (b); Idem, 1996.

[54] Chakravarti, Ranabir, 'Introduction' in Chakravarti, 2001 (a), p. 62.

[55] One such example is the set of three copper plates from Sanjeli. See, Ramesh, K. V., 'Three Early Charters from Sanjeli in Gujarat', *EI*, vol. XL, pp. 175-86; for two more examples see, Kosambi, 2001, pp. 245-56.

[56] Deyell, 1990; Mukherjee, 1992.

certain state society in south India is problematic. Even more problematic is the understanding of *nāḍu*, the basic unit, as changeless throughout the period of the Coḷa rule.[57] It has been argued that the *nāḍu* did undergo changes through its interaction with such institutions as *brahmadeya*, temple and *nagaram*.[58] In the specific context of bureaucracy and taxation, the Segmentary State model has been contestated on sound empirical ground. Creation of such agrarian, political and/or fiscal units as *valanāḍus* (an artificial revenue/political unit in the Coḷamaṇḍalam and the Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam), *taniyūrs* (revenue unit in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam) and *periḷamai-nāḍu* (villages attached to *taniyūrs*) by the Coḷas is clearly indicative of the fact that they were directly involved in the political and economic restructuring in different regions.[59] On the question of bureaucracy, Champakalakshmi points out after Karashima et. al. that on the basis of the statistical analysis of personal names and designations in the Coḷa inscriptions, it may be inferred that clear distinction was made 'between terms referring to office and status, between officers central and local, between officials and locality leaders pointing out evidence of a hierarchically organized officialdom in revenue administration'.[60] As regards the taxation under the Coḷas, a number of studies have shown that the central government was actively involved in the process of tax collection. State created

[57] Champakalakshmi, 1995, p. 276.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 295.

mechanisms to appropriate its due share as is clearly brought out by 'the references to granaries at different levels (*ūr* and *nāḍu*) and the *nāṭṭumudal* (total revenue from a *nāḍu*) collected by the *nāḍu* and the *valanāḍu* above it'.[61] Moreover both, *sabhā* and *nagaram* had direct revenue settlements with the centre.[62] Shanmugam, in his study on the revenue system of the Coḷas, points out that the most important department of the Coḷa state was the *Puravu-vari* or revenue department, which maintained the land revenue records.[63] He questions Stein's understanding of *kaḍamai* or *kuḍimai* as simply 'terms for taxes' without any reference to the source and provides empirical data to show that the term indeed referred to land tax.[64] He further shows instances of the king personally fixing the taxes and communicating it orally;[65] presence of state official at the time of fixing of the tax by the *sabhā*;[66] and creation of new revenue units by the state.[67] This clearly goes to show that state actively participated in the revenue matters and worked through a network of officers.

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 295; also, Subbarayalu, Y., 'The Cola State', *Studies in History*, vol. IV, No. 2, July – Dec. 1982, p. 300.

[62] Champakalakshmi, 1995, p. 293.

[63] Shanmugam, 1987, p. 141.

[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

Many scholars have looked at the possibility of understanding state formation in early medieval India as a result of 'developments from within',[68] something that has no invariable concomitance or causal relationship with the collapse of either the pan-Indian state structure or a pan-Indian market economy.[69] On one hand there is an emphasis on the emergence of ruling houses from below which enhance their area of political control through integration of the core areas of their control followed by that of the hinterland associated with it, in which process resource mobilization had an integral role to play.[70] At the same time the unique context of trade and non-epicentric nature of urbanization in early medieval period is being probed and their quintessence highlighted in the process of state formation. The argument of decline in foreign trade bringing about the virtual collapse of internal trade and artisanal activities has been problematized and an overbearing influence of foreign trade for the sustenance of urban economy has been questioned.[71] B. D. Chattopadhyaya poses problems at two levels. At one level he moots the point as to whether the decline in Roman trade adequately explains the deterioration in the Indian economy and at another level makes an important argument that 'a decline in foreign trade may not necessarily imply a decline in internal trade or petty-

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[68] The phrase is the title of an important chapter in Champakalakshmi, 1996 (a).

[69] Chattopadhyaya, 1995, p. 332. TH-11966

[70] For this strand of argument see, Chattopadhyaya, B. D., 'Origin of the Rajputs: The Political Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan', in Chattopadhyaya, 1994; Kulke, 1995 (b).

[71] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, pp. 143-46.

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commodity production'.[72] He points out that the economic basis of early urban centres in the Ganga valley was based on agrarian expansion along with gradual crystallization of a power structure, which ensured a sustained surplus production. He thus infers,

> "Trade (and not necessarily foreign trade) and a power structure which needs it, are essential factors in urban growth. If foreign trade did not play a crucial role in the birth of early urban centres, a reduced volume of such trade may hardly be held responsible in the post-Kuṣāṇa and post-Gupta period."[73]

The genesis of trade and urbanization from agrarian base has been argued for early medieval south India through following stages: initiation of *brahmadeyas* and *devadānas* by the Pallavas and the Pāṇḍyas; these grants resulting into extension of agricultural activities; more intensive agrarian organization; evolution of urban centres in the key areas; and emergence of trade networks in the Coḷa period based on agrarian expansion.[74] Crystallization of a similar process has been shown in early medieval Rajasthan.[75] Nandini Sinha Kapur's recent study on state formation in Mewar under the Guhilas brings forth the attempts made by the state in generating resources. It is pointed out that in the initial stages of state formation the Guhilas of Nāgdā-Āhaḍa, by creating 'a workshop-cum-manufacturing' centre at the heart of Bhil territory gave impetus to

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[72] *Ibid.,* p. 147

[73] *Ibid.,* p. 148

[74] Champakalakshmi, 1996 (a), p. 206.

[75] Chattopadhyaya, B. D., 'Origin of the Rājpūts', in Chattopadhyaya, 1994.

mining activities on one hand and created a local level exchange network on the other.[76]

This would have further led to agricultural expansion in neighbouring areas leading to proliferation of state society and peasantization of Bhils.[77] From the tenth century their resource base came to be associated, along with agriculture, with the western trade network, which gained fresh momentum with the emergence of the Caulukyas.[78] Mewar was an important point in the north-western and north-central linkages. Participation in trade would have led to emergence of trade centres.[79] Thus Kapur argues, "The Guhila centres of power had been built on a rural resource base in the seventh century. This material base gradually entered the age of commercial and urban epoch by the tenth century".[80] The role of state in this process is of considerable significance, which needed resources to sustain. Three Sanjeli copper plates and the *ācārasthitipatra* of Viṣṇusena of respectively the early and later part of the sixth century are an important and rather early testimony to this.[81]

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[76] Kapur, Nandini Sinha, 2002, p. 37.

[77] *Ibid.,* p. 38.

[78] *Ibid.,* p. 64.

[79] *Ibid.,* pp. 64-70.

[80] *Ibid.,* p. 65.

[81] For three Sanjeli charters, see, *EI,* vol. XL, pp. 175-186; for an insightful discussion on the *ācārasthitipatra* of Viṣṇusena, see, Kosambi, 2001, pp. 245-256.

Recent studies on state formation especially in peninsular India by James Heitzman[82] and Cynthia Talbott[83] have highlighted the role of temple in economic redistribution and political integration. Talbott points out that under the Kākatīyas, temple emerged as an institution where wealth converged in the form of donations from the propertied classes, which were then diverted to various other individuals, pastoralists and agriculturists. Thus, she argues, 'expanding circles of economic interdependence were created, which brought both, diverse peoples and diverse localities together'.[84] A similar strand of argumentation emerges from Heitzman's study of what he calls, transactional network of the Tanjore temple.[85]

The paradigm of ideology has brought a new dimension to the understanding of political processes in early medieval India essentially in two ways: one, by providing religious underpinnings of the mechanism through which the state derived legitimacy and; second, by highlighting the restructuring of society and crystallization of regional identities through interaction of different (and this includes interaction between the great and little traditions) cultural idioms within which these early medieval states emerged and entrenched themselves. In recent years the themes of state formation and

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[82] Heitzman, James, 1997.

[83] Talbott, Cynthia, 2001.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[85] Heitzman, 1997, Chapter 4, The Transactional Network of a Religious Temple.

the context of ideology have evoked serious academic concern, something that is amply

demonstrated by a recent presidential address at the Indian History Congress.[86]

The ideological context of early medieval period within the construct of Indian

feudalism emanates essentially from the conceptualization of the Kali-age crisis theory.[87]

It is generally argued that the Kali-age descriptions of the Purāṇas highlight a deep

rooted social crisis mainly between the two upper and the two lower *varṇas* which

necessitated devising of 'new mechanism of surplus extraction' according to which,

state, rather than engaging in direct collection of taxes, started assigning 'land revenues

directly to priests, military chiefs, administrators etc., for their support'.[88] There is at

least one authority[89] though, who locates the rationale for composition of the Purāṇas as

a special category of sacred texts in the 'transition from an active market based monetary

economy to a closed agrarian system', which rendered granting of land necessary for the

expansion of the agrarian sector.[90] This made reclamation of virgin tracts crucial.

Indigenous people inhabited these tracts and an encroachment into their domain would

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[86] Sahu, 2003, pp. 1-38.

[87] For a detailed explication of the Kali-age crisis see, Sharma, R. S., 2000(b), pp. 61-77; Yadava, B. N. S., 2000, pp. 79-120; For a debate on the issue see, Jha, D. N., 'Editor's Introduction', in Jha, 2000; Chattopadhyaya, 1994, Chapter 1, Introduction.

[88] Jha, D. N., 'Editor's Introduction' in Jha, 2000, p. 8; see also footnote 16.

[89] Nath, 2001.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. X.

have resulted in obvious friction.[91] It is argued that it was to tide over this impending socio-economic crisis that the Purāṇas had to be composed.[92] The discrepancy notwithstanding, there are direct linkages shown between the Purāṇic tradition, the Kali-age and land grants. Certain innovative ritual formations of the Purāṇic tradition like *mahādāna*, temple worship, *tīrtha*, *pūjā* etc. came to be identified with the feudal milieu of early medieval period.[93]

A powerful theme that was expanded and proliferated extensively through the Purāṇic tradition was *bhakti*. It has been argued by the adherents of Indian feudalism construct that element of *bhakti* worked at two levels: one, it helped in the inculcation of definite moral values in the groups undergoing acculturation;[94] two, through emphasis on 'self-surrender and humility manifesting itself in the servile demeanour of the supplicant' it brought about 'spirit of abject surrender towards the brāhmaṇa beneficiary by the people residing over the donated land'.[95] It is further pointed out that just as *bhakti* was used in the initial stages by elite groups 'to advocate and buttress feudalistic principles of devotion, loyalty and self-surrender', later it 'gave expression to protests

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[91] *Ibid.*

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] *Ibid.*, Chapter 5.

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[95] *Ibid.*,

against social injustice and class exploitation' perpetuated by the feudal social order.[96]

Almost on similar lines, arguments have been put forth in relation with *bhakti* movement in south India.[97] *Bhakti* is seen to have percolated down south from north and given a new identity through 'translation to the Tamil idiom'.[98] The new jargon of *bhakti* literature is seen to be 'suggestive of the new feudal class relationship and corresponding ideology'.[99] While the elaborate parallelism between the deity and the king was directed towards legitimizing the political structure, the connotation was not exactly royal but feudal as, 'the same terminology was used for king and lord in feudal society in spite of the difference in status'.[100]

Another important manifestation of Purāṇic ideology with in the feudal milieu is seen in the nature of art between AD 500 and 1300.[101] It is argued that Rajput chiefs, who emerged in a close relationship with the feudal politico-economic structure, and who were either Hinduized foreigners or Hinduized tribals, looked towards brāhmaṇas and Purāṇic tradition to enhance their social status in the caste hierarchy.[102] Two themes

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[96] *Ibid.*, p. 175-176.

[97] Narayanan and Veluthat, 2000, pp. 385-410.

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 390-392.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 401.

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 402.

[101] Desai, Devangana, 2000, pp. 487-496.

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 488.

were primarily used towards this end: one, practice of extensive gift giving to the brāhmaṇas and; second, adherence to *pūrtadharma* i.e. building of temples, tanks and works of public utility, which 'was emphasized as the highest mode of religion in the Purāṇas.[103] *Pūrtadharma*, it is argued, was the dominant ideology behind the large-scale building of temples. Temple building, along with endowments of land and villages, it was believed, would help these chiefs acquire *puṇya* on one hand and glory as patron on the other.[104] Incorporation of Tāntric elements in the Purāṇic belief system provided a new dimension to art in the feudal set-up.[105]

Segmentary state posits a new framework of ideological idioms through which the Coḷa state reached out to the non-core areas. It is argued that Coḷa inscriptions located far and wide 'over the vast macro region of the southern peninsula', rather than being a marker of a centralized polity need to seen as the instruments of ritual sovereignty.[106] It was through the ritual primacy of the Coḷa kings that the otherwise multiple political units can be seen as segments of a whole.[107] The characteristic elements of this ideological idiom started to take shape under Rājarāja-I and Rājendra-I and were articulated through inscriptions. The dominant chiefs in the intermediate and peripheral

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[103] *Ibid.*

[104] *Ibid.,* pp. 488-489.

[105] Sharma, R. S., 2000 (a), pp. 441-454.

[106] Stein, 1977, p. 17.

[107] *Ibid.,* p. 17.

areas then replicated these.[108] Criticizing the understanding of proliferation of Brahmanical institutions and the royal Śiva cult of the two most important Cola rulers as the achievements of a 'powerful unitary Cola state or alternatively, as the "natural" evolution of Hinduism in south India', the adherents of the Segmentary State model explain this as an effort on the part of Cola rulers to adopt an ideological framework where political power was shared between the king and the local chiefs.[109]

The construct of Indian feudalism is problematic insofar as it looks at religion state relationship completely in negative terms. Decline and conventionalism of the feudal period are seen to have been highlighted through rituals and art forms, which in a sense were a feature of the feudal society. The grants of land to religious institutions are explained only in terms of economic crisis, which later culminated in class conflict (brāhmaṇas – indigenous people conflict). Segmentary state on the other hand explains the ideology of ritual sovereignty, by dichotomizing it from political sovereignty, which, it has been pointed out, is based on erroneous understanding of Hindu tradition of sacred kingship.[110] Moreover it has been pointed out that there is no evidence for the

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[108] *Ibid.*, p. 24. Stein writes, "There is no evidence to suggest that these settlements (*brahmadeyas*) were forced upon local folk by a powerful Chola (sic) government. On the contrary, the locally dominant peasantry provided continuous support for these settlements and their institutions even during periods of weakness of the Chola dynasty and for a considerable time after the dynasty had lost control in the thirteenth century (p. 24).

[109] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[110] Kulke, 1982, p. 249.

brāhmaṇa-peasant alliance on the basis of which adherents of Segmentary State model argued for replication of ritual authority by dominant chiefs in the intermediate and peripheral areas.[111]

There has been an increasing need felt and articulated on understanding ideological paradigms in relation with the 'need for constant validation of power' not only in context of those localities where new states were emerging from the pre-state levels but even in well established state societies.[112] The legitimation process, which was crucial to state formation in early medieval period, is seen here in terms of reciprocal relationship between the temporal and the sacred domain, which are seen as separate.[113] Viewed from this perspective it becomes intelligible that land grants were more like instruments of legitimation and political validation than a forced variant of surplus appropriation mechanism.

Another prominent theme of political validation may be seen in terms of the crystallization of the Purāṇic tradition, articulated essentially through the idiom of *bhakti*. Seen from the standpoint of the state, *bhakti*, along with the institution of temple, provided a much-needed space for integration, more so as it was amenable to process of cultural assimilation. This line of argument has been applied to south India quite

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[111] Ramaswami, 1982, p. 313.

[112] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 196.

[113] *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

cogently. While one hand it has been emphasized that the symbolic and cosmological structure, on which the state rested 'cannot be separated from the social and economic "infrastructures" for they were mutually supportive', the indispensability of a close examination of political iconography i.e. interrelationship between religion and art and politics has been underlined on the other.[114] It has been pointed out that genealogies had their own importance in the legitimation process, but 'were not the major ideological components in establishing sovereignty' in the Cola case. Instead it was *bhakti*, which constituted its dominant component with temples as its material expression.[115] It was essentially through the idiom of *bhakti* and temple that the temporal power was reaching out to its temporal domain. R. Champakalakshmi writes,

> "The temple assumed the character of the chief ideological apparatus for evolving the political iconography of the Colas through the stupendous royal temple projects, marking the apogee of the *dravida* style of architecture and allied arts. A near total identity was established between God and the king, which enabled the temporal and sacred domains to coincide. The *bhakti* ideology assisted in the process of enhancing the power of both the divine and human sovereigns through the symbolism of cosmos/temple/territory."[116]

It has been argued that *bhakti*, by successfully offsetting the influence of 'heterodox' religions and by providing the idea of salvation to the lower orders of society,

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[114] Champakalakshmi, R., 1989, p. 1.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[116] Champakalakshmi, 1995, p. 298.

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established the Brahmanical temple 'as the pivot of the various roles of society'.[117] The

Coḷa rulers on their part used *bhakti*, Śaivism with Śiva in the form of *liṅgam*, and the

temple to expand their political domain through integration of local cults and a

substantial number of *bhakti* centres in the Kaveri region. Further, from Rājarāja's time

attempts were made to collect and organize the hymns under royal initiative and

apotheosize the Śaiva saints and to install their images in the Śiva temples. Nandini

Sinha Kapur's study on the state formation in Mewar under the Guhilas shows how

various ideological paradigms were used by the Guhilas of Nāgdā-Āhaḍa for political

legitimation.[118]

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[117] Champakalakshmi, 1989, p. 10.

[118] According to Nandini Sinha Kapur, in the initial stages brāhmaṇas settled in the areas through land grants legitimized the state power essentially through two mechanisms: one by furnishing the Guhila kings with a long genealogy and introducing the brāhmaṇa status; and second by composing Guhila *praśastis* and providing legitimizing motifs. Even after tenth century when major legitimizing process was taken over by the Pāśupatas, brāhmaṇas were settled in extended areas, which were dominated by non-Guhila Rājpūt chiefs, for validating the rule of the Guhilas. Another paradigm was that of origin myth. Starting with the simple reference to their lineage as *Guhilānvaya* in the seventh century, the Guhilas started to claim brāhmaṇa status by the tenth century mainly to enhance their social status with the expanding political power. In the thirteenth century after shifting their capital to Chittaurgarh they started to claim brahma-kṣatra status along with such new motifs as *Bappā-Hāritarāśi-Ekaliṅga-Medapāṭa*. The former provided them space to interact with the other Rājpūt lineages on equal terms even when it was essentially a 'transitional status' towards a claim to full *nutria* status, and the latter provided them means to legitimize their control over Chittaurgarh and underlined their transformation from 'the rulers of Nāgdā-Āhaḍa to the kings of Mewar'. Most important mechanism though was the integration of local cults and cult centres. This was achieved through royal patronage to the Pāśupatas through the cult of Ekaliṅgaji. The process, it seems, started only from the tenth century. Integration of various goddess cults was achieved through the cult of

Recently R. N. Nandi[119] has mooted questions on the overall framework of Indian feudalism, and has in a sense provided a variant interpretation. While questioning Sharma's understanding of religious grants as a marker of feudalism, he writes,

> "Samanta (sic) or feudatory is an armed person bound to his immediate lord by contractual relations of political interdependence. A Brahmana (sic) priest on the other hand was neither an armed person nor bound by any military or administrative obligations. Further, the fiefs or service tenements were an essential feature of feudal polity whereas a Brahmana free holding was a form of religious charity which could exist irrespective of feudal polity."[120]

He raises two other objections: first, a superior-subordinate relationship may not essentially be same as a lord-vassal relationship and similarly land grant to a subordinate may not by default constitute a fief.[121] He clearly seems to be suggesting the absence of a contractual relationship between the superior and subordinate, a point that was already made by Prof. B. D. Chattopadhyaya in 1983 in his presidential address to

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Vindhyavāsini, which by the fifteenth century seems to have merged with the cult of Ekaliṅgaji. By the late fifteenth century the Guhilas started to declare themselves *Ekaliṅgajisevaka* thus metaphorically submitting temporal power to the regional cult. Kapur, 2002, Chapters IV and VII, *Passim*. This reminds of a similar motif adopted by the Coḍagaṅgas of Orissa in relation with the cult of Jagannātha.

[119] Nandi, 2000.

[120] *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

the Ancient India Section of Indian History Congress.[122] Nandi lays down his own understanding of political feudalism in following terms,

> "In traditional India, where an empire or kingdom has largely been an aggregate of autonomous areas of political and economic authority without any organic cohesion and held together by conquest and coercion, political decentralization would be a recurrent feature but not feudalism. Perhaps the focus should be on political insecurity of an intense nature which would drive two or more armed persons of uneven strength into contractual relationship of aid and protection and develop a hierarchical networking of political interdependence."[123]

He argues that there is no causal connection between 'decline of a market economy of towns, which itself was far from a uniform development and the emergence of a feudal polity and economy'.[124] He questions the linking of decay of towns with subsistence production, which was actually a result of 'a large number of surplus appropriators with various types of chartered entitlements.[125]

This thematic overview of important elements of state formation in the period under consideration provides us with two basic inferences—one, that local or regional state formation needs to be looked at in relation with local or regional contexts. Use of

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[122] Chattopadhyaya, B. D., 'Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India' in Chattopadhyaya, 1994.

[123] Nandi, 2000, p. 18.

[124] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[125] *Ibid.*

theoretical constructs or propositions as the benchmarks to explain the meaning and context of the evidence needs to give way to thorough examination of maximum possible regional (or supra-regional) states in the period before any meaningful generalizations can be made and; two, that even with reference to state formation from below, a standard and brittle theoretical framework may be problematic insofar as the extent to which various elements like economy or ideology become crucial in such process may vary from one case to another depending upon the geographical or geopolitical situation. We intend to make two points, which are not essentially new but nevertheless important—one, that recent studies have clearly indicated the importance of integration at the political, cultural, economic and social levels in the formation of states in early medieval period. It is perhaps because of this that even in Marxist conceptualization of state formation in this period integration of 'baronies' is beginning to be a plausible proposition.[126] Even the argument that state formation in processual

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[126] Jha, D. N., 'State Formation in a Peripheral Region: The case of Early Medieval Chamba', in Jha, 2000, p. 207. Jha refers to 'the initial growth of hill baronies (often consisting of not more than a few villages) controlled by *rājānakas (rāṇās)'* and their subsequent integration with the Chamba state. In this context, it may be interesting to quote a statement made by B. D. Chattopadhyaya in his presidential address of Ancient India Section of Indian History Congress in 1983. "The feudatory and other intermediary strata in the early medieval structures of polity, in the absence of definite correlation between service assignments and the formation of these strata, may thus be seen in terms of an 'integrative polity', with potential sources of tension built into the structures. The early medieval phase of polity was perhaps in a way an intermediate phase – a prelude to the exercise of greater control by the medieval state through its nobility and its regulated system of service assignments, but then if the broad-spectrum *sāmanta* category was a dominant

terms through integration at various levels may lead to feudalization would again take us back to the question of political relationship between the overlord and the subordinate and at the same time would mean a major departure from understanding the emergence of local polities in terms of fragmentation of political authority.[127] Second point pertains to the need to look more closely at ideological paradigms in urban contexts. The point essentially relates to ideological underpinnings of the creation of temples, more often than not by the political authority with in the market places, which were then richly endowed by merchants, through their own volition. Also important in this context is an examination of what B. D. Chattopadhyaya calls 'caste deities'.[128] It will be an interesting exercise to see whether the state was attempting to reach out to the commercial and artisanal classes, in addition to deriving legitimacy, for catering to its resource needs.

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element in the early medieval polity, so did the broad-spectrum categories of 'zamindars' continue as an 'irritant' in the medieval state structure". Chattopadhyaya, 1994, pp. 221-222.

[127] For an argumentation of this view see, Jha, Vishwa Mohan, 'Feudal Elements in the Caulukya State: An Attempt at Relocation', in Jha, 2000, p 240.

[128] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, pp. 135-144.

A Note on the Sources[129]

Inscriptions

Admittedly, a major part of the present study is based on evidence provided by contemporary inscriptions. The earliest known epigraphs in Indian history date to the Mauryan period but their real proliferation seems to have coincided with the emergence of local political formations which also marked the early phase of dissemination of Brahmanical and Purāṇic worldview across major parts of the Indian Peninsula, probably from the Gupta period or thereabouts.

A great deal of our understanding of the early medieval period is based on the grants of land and/or villages to brāhmaṇas and shrines belonging to various sectarian affiliations. It is this preponderance of copper plate grants in the period, along with many other factors, which played an important part in the formulation of the Indian feudalism construct, which, though a bit erroneously, has been, and continues to be, the dominant framework for the history of this period. Notwithstanding the importance of copper plate grants, which is derived essentially from their large numbers, it has to be acknowledged that they are just one kind of sources.

For the Gurjara-Pratīhāras of Kanauj we have forty published inscriptions. Most of these were published in the volumes of the *Epigraphia Indica* and the *Indian Antiquary*. Recently a number of new inscriptions have been published in *Prāgdhārā*, Journal

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[129] For bibliographical details of the references cited in this section see Bibliography at the end.

published by the U.P. Archaeological Department.[130] Of these forty inscriptions, twenty

six are stone or pillar inscriptions and rest, copper plate grants. In fact the first two

records (which are actually full inscriptions) of the Pratabgarh inscription as also the

Rajor inscription, seem to have originally been copper plate grants, only later engraved

on stone. Fourteen of these forty belong to the reign of Mihira Bhoja alone. Among the

stone inscriptions, thirteen seem to have been made as a personal endeavour, six were

made by subordinate rulers, and only six were royal inscriptions. One case is not clear.[131]

Perhaps the most interesting of the Pratīhāra inscriptions are the records of gift or

donation to a beneficiary (mostly a temple or a deity enshrined in a temple not as the

main deity) by merchants and artisans or by towns themselves at some of the most

prominent urban spaces flourishing under the Pratīhāras. Of the copper plate grants,

only four were issued by subordinate rulers and rest, ten, by the Pratīhāra sovereigns.

An understanding of this kind of internal categorization of inscriptions is important to

be able to contextualize them. If one looks at the Pratīhāra state in terms of feudalization

of polity and economy, driven essentially by religious land grants, this external, so to

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[130] Since the last major published work on the Gurjara-Pratīhāras by B. N. Puri, a number of new inscriptions

have been published: An Inscription of Pratīhāra Vatsarāja, Garh Stone Inscription of the time of Mahīpāla,

Mihira Bhoja Kā Nayā Śilālekha, Sanichara Fragmentary Inscription, Badhal Copper plate grant of

Nāgabhaṭa, Surapura copper plate inscription of Nāgabhaṭa, Sambhal Copper plate of Nāgabhaṭa, Badhal

copper plate of Bhoja, Jiragaur copper plate grant of Bhoja and Nohna-Narasingh inscription of the time of

Bhoja.

[131] The Sanichara Fragmentary Inscription.

say, context shows that for the whole span of the Pratīhāra rule, which lasted close to two and a half centuries, we have just seventeen examples of this perceived feudalization.

Table 1: Categorization of the Inscriptions referring to the Pratīhāras

Stone Inscriptions referring to the Pratīhāras			Copper Plate Grants referring to the Pratīhāras	
Royal Inscriptions	**Subordinate inscriptions**	**Personal Inscriptions**	**Royal Grants**	**Subordinate Grants**
Asni Inscription of Mahīpāla – (Vikrama)- Saṁvat 974	The Bayana Inscription of Citralekha: V. S. 1012	Mihira Bhoja Kā Nayā Śilālekha	Badhāla Copper-plate Inscription of Nāgabhaṭa II	A Grant of Dharaṇīvarāha of Wadhwan
Rock Tablet Inscription of Vināyakapāladeva from Chanderi	Buchkala Inscription of Nāgabhaṭa, Saṁvat 872	The Peheva Inscription from the Temple of Garibnath	Newly Discovered Copper Plate Inscription of Nāgabhaṭa II, V. S. 884 (Surapura)	Two Copper Plate Inscriptions of the Time of Mahendrapāla of Kanauj (Una Plates), Grant 1 (of Balavarman)
Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin Temple inscription no. 2	Rajor Inscription of Mathanadeva, [Vikrama-] Saṁvat 1016	Garh Stone Inscription of the Time of Mahīpāla	Copper Plate of Nāgabhaṭa II, Vikrama Saṁvat 885	Two Copper Plate Inscriptions of the Time of Mahendrapāla of Kanauj, Grant 2 (of Avanivarman)
The Gwalior *Praśasti* of the Gurjara- Pratihāra King Bhoja	Pratabgarh Inscription of the Time of [the Pratihāra] King Mahendrapāla II of Mahodaya: Saṁvat 1003, record 2	A Fragmentary Pratīhāra Inscription (Barton Museum)	Bengal Asiatic Society's Plate of Mahārāja Vināyakapāla	Hansot Plates of Cāhamāna Bhārtṛvṛddha

Stone Inscriptions referring to the Pratīhāras			Copper Plate Grants referring to the Pratīhāras	
Pratabgarh Inscription of the Time of [the Pratihāra] King Mahendrapāla II of Mahodaya: Samvat 1003, record 1	An Inscription of Pratihāra Vatsarāja, Śaka 717	Mahāvīra Temple *Praśasti*, V. S. 1013	Dighwa-Dubauli Plate of the *mahārāja* Mahendrapāla	
Kara Stone Inscription	An Undated *Praśasti* from the Reign of Mahendrapāla of Kanauj	Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin Temple inscription no. 1	Bengal Asiatic Society's copper Plate Grant of Trilochanapāla, The (Vikrama) Year 1084	
		Sīyaḍoṇi Stone Inscription	Daulatpura Plate of Bhojadeva of Mahodaya, Samvat 900	
		Deogadh Pillar Inscription of Bhojadeva of Kanauj, [Vikrama] Samvat 919	Badhal Copper Plate of Bhoja, 898 V. S.	
		Kaman Stone Inscription	Barah Copper Plate of Bhojdeva, Vikrama-Samvat 893	
		An Inscription of Bhojadeva in the Indrapat Fort (Delhi)	Jīrāgaur Copper-plate Inscription of Bhoja I	—
		Sirsa Stone Inscription of the Time of Bhojadeva		
		Ahar Stone Inscription		
		Nohna-Narasingh Inscription of the Time of Bhoja		

Even when it holds to some extent that inscriptions provide much more concrete information for the purpose of historical analysis, vis-à-vis early Indian literature, it

needs to be understood that inscriptions themselves were literary compositions. The

praśasti element of early Indian inscriptions needs to be dealt with carefully. Keshavan

Veluthat makes an important point when he says, "It is not altogether unlikely that the

historian is misled going religiously by the statements in the inscriptions: what is

present there could be highly exaggerated vis-à-vis what is not present there."[132] It is

thus important to contextualize the epigraphical data in terms of its purport, nature,

content, patron and provenance.

Literary Sources

Literary sources are only marginal to our study. This is owing to the nature of the

problem undertaken as also of the sources themselves. In this exercise, textual references

have deliberately been avoided to inflate the data and have rather been used in specific

contexts which have been explained wherever they have been invoked. Important texts,

which have been used either as primary material or through secondary publications, are:

the works of Rājaśekhara,[133] the *Skanda Purāṇa*,[134] the *Prabhāvakacarita*,[135] the

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[132] Veluthat, 1993, p. 11.

[133] Much of the information about Rājaśekhara comes from his own works. In the *Karpūramañjarī* he refers to himself as the guru of Pratīhāra king Mahendrapāla-I. The evidence from *Bālabhāratam* suggests that he continued to enjoy the royal patronage during the reign of Mahendrapāla's son Mahīpāla-I. He is also believed to be associated with the Cedi court at some point in time. Of the five extant works of this great dramatist, four, the *Karpūramañjarī*, the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*, the *Bālarāmāyaṇam* and the *Bālabhāratam*, are plays, the first one completely in Prakrit and the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* was 'more in the form of a practical treatise for poets'. Hemacandra, a later authority, in his *Kāvyānuśāsana*, referred to a poem by Rājaśekhara named *Haravilāsa*. Generally it is believed that Rājaśekhara wrote his works between 880 and 920 AD.

Prabandhakośa,[136] Medhātithī's commentary on Manu,[137] and the accounts of Al-Birūnī[138] and other early Muslim writers like Al-Ma'sūdī and Sulaimān etc.

Archaeology

When it comes to archaeology, especially planned horizontal and vertical excavations of sites, the early medieval period certainly qualifies to be lamented as the 'Dark Age.' In the early Indian context, archaeology, in the sense of excavations, ends with the urban

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[134] Both P. V. Kane and R. C. Hazra assign a time span of four centuries between 600 and 1000 AD for the composition of the *Skanda Purāṇa*. The legend discussed in our study though was certainly interpolated after the reign of Kumārapāla Caulukya, who is believed to have ruled between 1143 and 1172 AD.

[135] According to Winternitz, the *Prabhāvakacarita*, written by Prabhācandra or Candraprabha and, subsequently revised in the year 1277 AD by the well-known *kāvya* specialist Pradyumna Sūrī, is a continuation of Hemacandra's (1088-1172 AD) *Pariśiṣṭaparvan* (Winternitz, 1983). J. C. Jain though considers Prabhācandra to be the author of the work (Jain, J. C., 2004, p. 169).

[136] *Prabandhakośa*, also known as *Caturaviṁśati Prabandha*, was composed by Rājaśekhara Sūrī, who completed it in the year VS 1405 (1348 AD) in Delhi. The text contains *Prabandhas* or life stories of twenty-four persons including ten Jaina teachers (Jain, J. C., 2004, p. 169).

[137] P. V. Kane assigns Medhātithī a time span from 825-900 AD (Kane, 1975, p. 583)

[138] The Title of Al-Birūnī's work is *Kitāb fī Tahqiq mā li'l Hind min Maqala Maqbola fi'l 'Aql ao Mardhūla* more popularly known as *Kitābu'l Hind*. Al-Birūnī, a Muslim of Iranian origin, was born in the territory of Khwarizm in the year 973 AD. After Mehmūd Ghazni destroyed the Samanids, Birūnī, along with many other important personages of the Samanid court, was taken to Ghazni, where he lived and worked for most of the time until his death in 1048-49 AD. On his relations with Sultan Mehmūd, Qeyamuddin Ahmad writes, 'Al-Birūnī's position in the court of Sultan Mehmūd is not quite clear. He was some sort of a hostage but an honoured one because of his scholarly attainments, particularly his high reputation as an astronomer and an astrologer. However his relations with Sultan Mehmūd do not seem to have been very close or cordial. His famous work on India was prepared during the reign of Sultan Mehmūd (around 1030 AD) but he refers to the Sultan only on a few occasions and that too very tersely (Ahmad, Q., 1988, p. xviii).

decay of the Gupta period.[139] For the period under consideration archaeology is confined to occasional finds of coins or epigraphs—almost in all cases accidental—and exploratory work to discover and catalogue architectural and sculptural members and standing temples. A recent publication edited by eminent archaeologist K. Paddayya, which brings together studies on recent enquiries into Indian archaeology,[140] may be an appropriate benchmark to assess the state of early medieval archaeology. This, considerably exhaustive, publication does not feature even a single contribution of the period under consideration and just one, that by M. S. Mate, on the medieval archaeology in India.[141]

In the present study we have used data pertaining to shrines, architectural remains and sculptures dating from the eighth to the tenth centuries AD for the purpose of mapping them. For this we have used, besides some secondary material and the Pratīhāra inscriptions, *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* published by the American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon; R. D. Trivedi's *Temples of the Pratīhāra Period in Central India*, published by the Archaeological Survey of India; and *the Annual*

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[139] Recently D. K. Chakrabarti has written, what he convincingly calls, 'a connected account of the History of prehistoric and early historic India primarily, if not exclusively, on the basis of archaeology' (Chakrabarti, D. K., *India – An Archaeological History: Palaeolithic Beginnings to Early Historic Foundations*, New Delhi, OUP, 1999, Preface). From the title of the book, though, it seems that even for an archaeologist of such a fine stature, archaeological history of India ends with the early historic foundations.

[140] Paddayya, 2002.

[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 248-265.

Review of the Archaeological Survey of India, which contains reports of excavations and explorations conducted in a particular calendar year and a brief discussion of the artefacts and inscriptions found. The review has been in publication since 1953-54.

Coins

For numismatic sources we have used the secondary published works especially those by John Deyell, B. N. Mukherjee and Lallanji Gopal. Deyell's contribution is as good as a catalogue since he uses coins, otherwise unknown, and which he has attempted to identify with some of the coins referred to in the contemporary inscriptions.

Method and Plan of the Study

The problem proposed here pertains to an examination of the structure of polity with reference to the Gurjara-Pratīhāras of Kanauj who ruled a major part of north India from around the last quarter of the eighth century to around the end of the tenth. The basic rationale for the present endeavour emanates from the idea that today any attempt in understanding the political processes only in terms of the physical organization of the state would not take us too far. Equally important are the questions of economic sustenance and legitimation. A dynastic perspective has been preferred because—one, in our view paradigms don't become obsolete and their use has to defined by their optimum utility; and two, problems such as legitimation strategies and sovereign-subordinate relations, we thought, in this specific context, would be more cogently explored through a dynastic perspective.

The Gurjara-Pratīhāra being a supra-regional state, it is perhaps important to consider the socio-economic and cultural structures, not as a monolithic or straight jacketed entity, but in their own local or regional contexts. We have, in the present study, tried to bring out the perceptible divergences within the Pratīhāra state structure, and also, wherever possible, a comparative analysis of the Pratīhāra structures with other contemporary ruling houses.

Unless otherwise stated, the term Pratīhāra has been used, throughout this dissertation, for the Kanauj line. I have tried to avoid repetitions in the narrative but have not gone out of the way to do away with them. In an intended intensive study such as this where same references are used for different purposes in different contexts, it is a little difficult to completely circumvent repetitions.

The study is planned in five chapters followed by a Conclusion. Besides the present chapter, which looks at some of the preliminary issues, the next four chapters relate to the problem undertaken.

The second chapter looks at the questions and evidence pertaining to—the origin of various Gurjara and Pratīhāra lineages and their geographical distribution; the dynastic context of the Kanauj line; delineation of the territories under the Pratīhāras of Kanauj based on the find spots of relevant inscription; and question of decline of the Pratīhāra state.

The third chapter looks at the economic context of the state both in terms of organization of resources and control mechanisms; trading activities and urban centres; commodities involved in the exchange processes and artisanal activities; nature and mechanism(s) of state's control over resources; issues pertaining to media of exchange and monetization of economy, and linkages.

The fourth chapter deals with the nature of polity under the Pratīhāras and includes engagement with questions such as organization of officialdom and the hierarchies involved therein; nature of sovereignty of the Pratīhāra overlord; structure of administration; extent of uniformity of political control of the sovereign in various parts of the state; and relations between the Gurjara-Pratīhāra sovereign and his subordinate rulers.

The fifth chapter examines the ideological structures, legitimation strategies and forms of patronage that evolved as the Pratīhāra state grew more and more powerful. It tries to explore—the ligitimation motifs used by the Pratīhāras in their formative period and changes that were carried out later, and the reasons for these changes; the construction of the origin myth and its transmission; the impact of the Arab raids on the way the Pratīhāras tried to project a specific image; state's patronage to brāhmaṇas and religious institutions; and divergences, if any, between the nature of patronage extended by the sovereign and his subordinate rulers.

2

The Gurjaras, the Pratīhāras and their Territory

The Gurjara-Pratīhāras emerged as the most formidable political power in north India in the second half of the eighth century. Since there is not much positive evidence available about the early rulers of the dynasty, any statement on their nativity and early political growth would largely remain conjectural, though still backed by some arguments of merit. The number of inscriptions attributable directly to the Pratīhāras or to their subordinates is incredibly low in proportion to vastness of the area that they are believed to have ruled. The *praśasti* content of a number of inscriptions provides genealogical details but the extent of the kingdom under each of the Pratīhāra rulers is rather difficult to ascertain. The problem becomes much more magnified in the light of the fact that very few inscriptions of the early and later rulers are known; thus creating difficulties on the questions of origin and decline.

For long the question of the origin of Rajputs as an important ruling group in early medieval period remained in the confines of the theory of *agnikula*, even when in the historiography of the period, which largely comprised of the accounts of individual Rajput dynasties, the Rajput phenomenon was taken as something that appeared suddenly. They were variously identified as the descendants of 'foreign invaders' or as

'foreigners', or as descendants of the pure kṣatriya lineages of the Vedic period.[1] B. D. Chattopadhyaya's path breaking study on the origin of Rajputs[2] has helped us understand, in processual terms, as to how in the specific context of Rajasthan the expansion of state society in the tribal areas led to the transformation in the settlement pattern, subsistence strategies and concomitantly to the emergence of local ruling · lineages with essentially tribal background. It may be pertinent here to sum up Chattopadhyaya's arguments to comprehend the process of creation of the Rajput identity.

Chattopadhyaya locates the emergence of Rajputs from around the seventh century AD in two, largely simultaneous, processes. First was colonization of new areas of Rajasthan[3], amply demonstrated by such records as the Nadol fragmentary grant and the two Ghatiyala inscriptions of Kakkuka by which process hitherto tribal areas were brought into agrarian fold suggesting a significant transformation of economic base.[4]

Almost parallel to this was the process of political ascendancy of certain lineages seemingly from tribal background. An attempt to obtain a social status which was

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[1] For a detailed discussion on the topic see, Sharma, D., 1966; Idem, 1959; Asopa, J. N., *Origin of the Rajputs*, Delhi, 1976.

[2] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, pp. 57-88.

[3] Early phase of this process is discernible in the Samoli (646 AD) and the Vasantagarh (625) inscriptions discussed later.

[4] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, pp. 61-62.

congruous to the political status of these lineages is clearly, though with limited

evidence, demonstrated by Chattopadhyaya, where these lineages initially claimed a

brahma-kṣatra status which was only transitional towards a full kṣatriya status.[5]

Politically, these genealogical claims supplemented the upward mobility from an

initially 'feudatory' position. Chattopadhyaya thus argues that 'the emergence of early

Rajput clans took place within the existing hierarchical political structure' and not as a

sudden and brilliant debut.[6]

Another important aspect of this process was the attempt by the newly emerging

ruling lineages towards clan exclusiveness which was achieved through the dual process

of land distribution to clan members and construction of fortresses which functioned as

foci of control for their rural hinterland. These were important constituents of the

endeavour for consolidation of position, as was the increasing penchant for inter-clan

marriages.[7] Gradually with proliferation of clans, the Rajput phenomenon also

expanded in the wider social milieu. The process, Chattopadhyaya points out, which

began essentially as a 'feudatory-overlord' relationship gradually 'appears to have

spread to other levels of polity.' Clan proliferation seems to have got the necessary

impetus as a result of the emergence of various minor clans and subdivisions of major

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[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 64-72.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 74-79.

clans.[8] So, the emergence of Rajputs was as much relevant as a social phenomenon as it was in terms of polity.

It is in this backdrop that one may comprehend the origins of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras even when there is not much evidence to demonstrate this empirically. It comes through quite clearly, though largely from the inscriptions of their adversaries that the Pratīhāras of Kanauj belonged to the Gurjara stock. Contemporary Muslim chroniclers also refer to them as 'Jurz'/ 'Juzr', which have been taken to mean 'Gurjara'.[9] Much has been written about their foreign origin, something that was subsequently rather severely contestated by those who adhered to the theory of their indigenous, kṣatriya roots.[10] Similarly, there has been an enriching debate on the question as to whether the term Gurjara was originally associated with a region or with an ethnic identity. Reproducing the debates would be rather superfluous, suffice it may be to say though that the dearth of direct evidence indeed led to some fascinating conjectures, none of which is beyond dispute.[11]

B. N. Puri, the last major contributor on the subject, has rather painstakingly analyzed the question from various vantage points and has presented arguments which seem

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[9] *HIED*, vol. 1, pp. 9-25.

[10] For relevant Bibliographical details as well as for an apt summary of the debate see, Puri, 1975, pp. 1-14; *RTA*, pp. 109-119.

[11] R. C. Majumdar and B. N. Puri believed that the Gurjara denoted an ethnic identity, while Dasharatha Sharma argued that the term originally meant a territory and was used for centuries for geographical entity and only later came to be associated with the people inhabiting there. See, *RTA*, pp. 113-119.

more acceptable than others for the present. It has been pointed out that 'Gurjaras formed a group or tribe representing people of different castes (sic). They, like so many others, were living in obscurity somewhere in Rajputana from where they emigrated and established themselves at different places which came to be named after them'.[12]

There is an unmistakable association of the Gurjaras with the Arbuda Mountains (Aravalis of southern Rajasthan around Udaipur and Mount Abu) as reflected in some later inscriptions.[13] Besides this, Hsüan-tsang also mentions the country named Ko-Che-Lo (Gurjara) of which Pi-Lo-Ma-Lo (Bhinmal) was the capital.[14] The area seems to have been inhabited largely by people belonging to the Gurjara stock which perhaps drove him to identify it as the Gurjara country. Quite possibly, the region came to be known after the predominant Gurjara population. One of the earliest such references is the term Gurjaratrā which seems to have denoted the core region inhabited by the Gurjaras. The Daulatpura record of Mihira Bhoja (843 AD) 'places Deṇḍavānaka *viṣaya* and its village Sivā in the Gurjaratrā *bhūmi'*.[15] Kielhorn brought to notice an unpublished record from Kalinjar noticed by Cunningham which speaks of a person who had gone there from

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[12] Puri, 1975, pp. 6-7.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[15] *EI*, vol. V, ll. 6-7.

Mangatanāka situated in the Gurjaratrā *maṇḍala*.[16] The record is undated but has been

palaeographically placed by Kielhorn in about the eighth century AD. Deṇḍavānaka

viṣaya has been identified with modern Didwana in the Nagaur district of Rajasthan

while Mangatanāka has been identified with Maglona, 28 miles south-south east of

Didwana.[17] The Rajor (in Alwar district) inscription of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra ruler

Mathanadeva refers to the land cultivated by the Gurjaras.[18] Besides this Al-Birūnī

speaks of Jodhpur-Alwar-Bharatpur region of Rajasthan as Gujarāt i.e. Gurjaratrā.[19]

According to D. C. Sircar, Al-Birūnī mentions Bazana (Bayana in the Bharatpur district

of Rajasthan) as the old capital of Gūrjaratrā and Jadura (perhaps Rajor in the Alwar

district) as its new capital.[20] This identification gets further credence from the Ghatiyala

(near Jodhpur) inscription of Pratīhāra Kakkuka, dated [V] S 918.[21] In this inscription

Kakkuka claims to have won the love of people in the following regions: *marumāḍa-valla-*

tamaṇī-pariankā ajja-gujjarattāsu.[22] The Sanskrit rendering of the last mentioned Prakrit

term would be Gurjaratrā. It seems the whole region comprising of the districts of

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[16] *Ibid.,* pp. 208-213.

[17] *Ibid.,* p. 210.

[18] *EI,* vol. III, pp. 263-67.

[19] *EI,* vol. XXXII, p. 59.

[20] Sircar, D. C., 'Note on the Nesarika Grant of Govinda III, Saka 727', *EI,* vol. XXXIV, p. 138.

[21] *JRAS,* 1895, pp. 513-523.

[22] *Ibid.,* p. 520, verse 16.

Jodhpur, Nagaur, Ajmer, Sikar, Dausa, Bharatpur, Jaipur and Jalor or a part of it might have been inhabited by the people belonging to the Gurjara tribe and hence the name Gurjaratrā. The use of this term to denote modern Gujarat is certainly a later development under the Caulukyas who are styled in their inscriptions as Gurjaras and the country under their rule is named Gurjaradeśa. Quite possibly, various Gurjara ruling lineages disseminated to different regions from here, with the Pratīhāras of Mandor being the earliest rulers of the areas of their origin.

Table 2: Main Gurjara Ruling Houses of Early Medieval Period and their Geographical Distribution

Ruling House	Time Span/Known Dates	Find spots of Inscriptions	Remarks
Gurjaras of Nandipuri	629 AD - 738 AD	Kaira (Kheda in Kheda district of Gujarat), Sankheda (district Vadodara, Gujarat), Nausari (district Navsari, Gujarat), Kavi (district Bharuch, Gujarat)	The Gallaka's inscription of the time of Vatsarāja, dated 795 AD, credits victory over the invincible Gurjaras. Quite possibly the reference was to the Gurjaras of Nandipuri. Hansot plates of Cāhamāna Bhārtṛvṛḍḍha, dated 756 AD, which refer to Nāgāvaloka-I as the overlord of the issuer comes from this area.
Gurjara-Pratīhāras of Mandor	837 AD and 861 AD	Jodhpur and Ghatiyala in the Jodhpur district	The family traces its origin from Haricandra who had a brāhmaṇa and a kṣatriya wife. The family claims to be a progeny of Haricandra and his kṣatriya wife. The Inscriptions of Kakkuka and Bāuka, who seem to be cousins belonging to this family, also refer to Māṇḍavyapura, modern Mandor, as the capital pf the Pratīhāras of Mandor.

Ruling House	Time Span/Known Dates	Find spots of Inscriptions	Remarks
Gurjara-Pratīhāras of Bhinmal and Kanauj	756 AD - 1036 AD	See Map 1	The first known ruler of the family is associated with Jalor and Bhinmal who then took control of Malwa and mainland coastal Gujarat. Under Nāgabhaṭa-II, the family shifted its base to Kanauj as the most powerful ruling house of north India.
Gurjara-Pratīhāras of Alwar	759-60	Rajorgarh in the Alwar district of Rajasthan	The inscription refers to *Parameśvara Mahārājādhirāja* Mathanadeva, son of *Mahārājādhirāja* Sāvaṭa, who claims to have belonged to the Gurjara-Pratīhāra *vaṁśa*. The family seems to be a collateral branch of the Kanauj line.
Pratīhāras of Lalitpur area	984 AD and 998-99 AD	Siron Khurd in the Lalitpur district of U.P., Kadwaha in the Guna district of M.P. and Thauban, near Chanderi in the Guna district	Harirāja, a major ruler of this family is known from five inscriptions (Bharat Kala Bhavan plates, Second part of Sīyaḍoṇi stone inscription, Kadwaha and Thubaun inscriptions and an unpublished inscription from Chanderi) and these inscriptions remain the only source of the history of this family.

There is no direct evidence for early or original territorial association of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj as no inscription of the earliest mentioned ruler Nāgabhaṭa-I has been found as yet. The Gallaka's inscription of the time of Vatsarāja (795 AD),[23] as well as the Gwalior *praśasti* of Mihira Bhoja,[24] refers to him as the first ruler of the dynasty.

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[23] *EI*, vol. XLI, pp. 49-57.

[24] *EI* vol. XVIII, pp. 99-114.

Nāgabhaṭa-I is clearly associated with Jābālipura (Jalor).[25] In the opinion of Dasharatha Sharma, he was perhaps a 'feudatory' of the Cāpas of Bhillamāla and gained ascendancy as a result of the end of the Cāpa rule when he successfully fought against the Arabs.[26] He has also, on the basis of a medieval Jaina *Prabandha*, tried to show that Nāgabhaṭa-I defeated a Muslim ruler and established his kingdom in Jābālipura.[27] Some scholars have attempted to associate Nāgabhaṭa-I with Ujjain on the basis of the Sanjan Plates of Amoghavarṣa,[28] an argument that gained strength from the famous verse of the Jaina *Harivaṁśa* associating Vatsarāja with Ujjain. Besides this, the Hansot plates of Cāhamāna Bhārtṛvṛddha, who styles himself as *mahāsāmantādhipati*, who had received the five musical instruments, records a grant that was made at Bharuch, in the increasing reign of the victory of glorious Nāgāvaloka in the year 756 AD.[29] D. R. Bhandarkar identified this Nāgāvaloka with Nāgabhaṭa-I Pratīhāra.[30] The identification seems apt as some of the later inscriptions call Nāgabhaṭa-II as Nāgāvaloka. The Vatsarāja's inscription of 795 AD extols Nāgabhaṭa-I for having scored victory against the invincible

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[25] *RTA*, pp. 121-123.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[27] Sharma, D., 1958, pp. 74-78.

[28] *ACHI*, pp. 616-17.

[29] *EI*, vol. XII, p. 202, ll. 10-11 and p. 203, l. 34.

[30] Puri, 1975, p. 36.

Gurjaras (*durjjayo-gurjjar-ārjjita-jayo*).[31] It is quite possible that the reference was to the Gurjaras of Bharuch who seem to have preceded the line of Bhārtṛvṛddha in the area. So we have clear evidence of his control over areas of southern Rajasthan, Lāṭa and also over western Malwa around Ujjain. As regards his original home one may not be very categorical but in all likelihood, he started his career somewhere in Rajasthan. It seems the Pratīhāras extended their rule from southern Rajasthan to the Bharuch area and western Malwa. This initial control over the ports of Gujarat and important trade routes would have given some leverage to the newly emerging dynasty. In any case, what is important here is to understand that both the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pratīhāras gained political ascendancy in the second quarter of the eighth century and R. C. Majumdar seems to be correct in saying that the Arab raids in the first half of the eighth century gave a major impetus to the process.[32] Both Dāntidurga and Nāgabhaṭa seem to have fished in the troubled waters and made use of the political void created by the Arab incursions. Al-Balādhūri's account of the destruction of some of the smaller kingdoms of Rajasthan and Gujarat under Junaid, the governor of Caliph Hashim, and their rapid decline under Tamim, the successor of Junaid is a clear testimony to this.

A serious endeavour towards extending dominions in all directions was made by one of Nāgabhaṭa-I's successors, Vatsarāja. The only known inscription of Vatsarāja, dated

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[31] *EI*, vol. XLI, pp. 49-57, l. 3.

[32] *ACHI*, pp. 617-18.

Śaka Saṁvat 707 (795 AD),[33] issued by one of his subordinates Gallaka, records the completion of the blueprint of a proposed temple dedicated to Caṇḍikā. Unfortunately the provenance of the inscription is not known but since it was submitted to the headquarters of the North-Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India at Srinagar, it seems the record was found somewhere in the north or north-central Rajasthan or Haryana or the Punjab. Vatsarāja's association with all or some of these regions may tentatively be assumed on the basis of this inscription.

Uddyotanasūri in his *Kuvalayamālā* says that the work was composed in the *Śaka* year 700 (778-9 AD) at Jābālipura during the reign of *Raṇahastiṁ* Vatsarāja.[34] A tenth century inscription at the Mahāvīra temple at Osian (dated VS 1013 = 956 AD) refers to Vatsarāja as a just ruler. The Daulatpura copper plate grant of Bhoja refers to Vatsarāja as the original issuer of the grant.[35] Both Osian and the Daulatpura copper plate inscriptions indicate that Vatsarāja was definitely ruling over modern Jodhpur and Jaipur areas.

Perhaps the most intensely debated reference of Vatsarāja comes from the Jaina *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* (composed at Vardhamānapura – modern Wadhwan in Kathiawar) which says that in the *Śaka* year 705 (783 AD) when this work was completed, following rulers were ruling in various parts: in the north, Indrāyudha, in the south, *śrī* Vallabha,

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[33] *EI*, vol. XLI, pp. 49-57.

[34] *RTA*, p. 124.

[35] *EI*, vol. V, pp. 208-13.

in the east, Vatsarāja, king of Avanti, and in the west, Varāha or Jayavarāha in the territory of the Śauryas.[36] Both B. N. Puri[37] and R. C. Majumdar,[38] based on this translation, have argued for Avanti being the original home of the Pratīhāras. But Dasharatha Sharma and many other scholars reject the use of *bhūbhṛt* and *nṛpa*, both synonyms, for the same person Vatsarāja and translate the relevant portion of the verse as '*Avanti-rāja* as the master of the east and Vatsarāja as the lord of the western quarters'.[39] One has to consider two points. First, that Vatsarāja's association with Avanti in the verse may not necessarily mean that it was the original home of the Pratīhāras. Second, that Nāgabhaṭa-I had gained control over the Bharuch area and it would have been quite logical both politically and in terms of controlling the lines of communication that Malwa be brought under control, either direct or indirect. Interestingly an inscription, discovered in Mahua in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh[40] and paleographically assigned to the later half of eighth century AD, refers to one Vatsarāja who, as the genealogy shows, is certainly different from the Pratīhāra Vatsarāja. The editors of the inscription suggest that it may well be possible that the Vatsarāja referred to in the Jaina *Harivaṁśa* is in fact this Vatsarāja.

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[36] Puri, 1975, p. 35.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 35-36.

[38] *ACHI*, pp. 619-620.

[39] *RTA*, pp. 125-130.

[40] *EI*, vol. XXXVII, pp. 53-55.

The Gwalior *praśasti* of Bhoja claims the victory of Vatsarāja over the Bhaṇḍi clan[41] by which he is said to have wrested the *sāmrājya*. The identification of this Bhaṇḍi clan has remained obscure. They have variously been identified with the descendants of Bhaṇḍi, the maternal uncle of Harṣa (by G. H. Ojha), Bhaṭṭis of Jaisalmer (by R. C. Majumdar and R. S. Tripathi) and the Pālas (by Dasharatha Sharma). In his inscription of 795 AD, Vatsarāja claims to have gained decisive victories against the rulers of Karṇāṭa and Lāṭa, against Jayāpīḍa (of Kashmir), against the lord of Gauḍa, the *Mlecchas* (Arabs) and the Kīra rulers.[42] These claims bring out the fragility of using *praśasti* claims for the reconstruction of the actual events. For long we have been made to believe, on the basis of the claims made in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscriptions, mainly those of Govinda-III, that Vatsarāja was completely annihilated by Dhruva, but problems with such claims are clearly brought out by the fact that Dhruva died before 794 AD and in 795, a subordinate of Vatsarāja was glorifying his decisive victory over the Vallabharāja. In any case, it seems that Vatsarāja was making deliberations in all possible directions to enhance his clout. Further, the mention of Lāṭa and Karṇāṭa together and Vatsarāja's conflict and claimed victory against them, if seen in the light that Nāgabhaṭa-I had controlled Bharuch, shows that either the region slipped out of the hands of the Pratīhāras or the local ruler turned hostile and aligned with the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. Control over Lāṭa and the

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[41] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 108.

[42] *EI*, vol. XLI, p. 52.

lower Malwa, instead of Kanauj, seems to be a much logical reason to explain the repeated conflicts between the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pratīhāras. It seems by the late eighth century, Vatsarāja was already in control of much of Malwa to emerge as a formidable adversary of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. The reference that one of Vatsarāja's subordinates reinstated Indrabhaṭa on his own throne[43] and reference to fight with the Gauḍa ruler indicates that Vatsarāja was a dominant player in the Ganga valley.

From the time of Nāgabhaṭa-II, we get a clearer idea of his dominions through the distribution of his inscriptions. The Buchkala inscription (dated VS 872 = 815 AD), which was found incised on a pilaster of a temple now dedicated to Pārvatī at Buchkala near Bilara in the Jodhpur district of Rajasthan, refers to Nāgabhaṭa as the reigning monarch.[44] The agency was queen (*rājñī*) Jāyāvalī, the daughter of Jajjāka, who was the son of Pratīhāra Bapuka. Jāyāvalī was married to Bhumbhuvaka, son of Haragupta of the family called Avāṅgānaka. The inscription is interesting insofar as it refers to village Rājyaghaṅgakaṁ, the site of the temple, as situated in Nāgabhaṭa's own *viṣaya* (*svaviṣaye*).[45] To us it seems that *sva-* would indicate that the Pratīhāras of the family of Nāgabhaṭa-I originally hailed from the area in the vicinity of Jodhpur. R. C. Majumdar translated the term *svaviṣaya* as 'dominions proper' perhaps because he had already

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[44] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 198-200.

[45] *Ibid.*, p 200, l. 7.

committed himself to the hypothesis of Ujjain being the original home.[46] The translation to us seems problematic. There are many other Pratīhāra families known to us from the region. One of them was that of Pratīhāra Bapuka, father of Jāyāvalī, mentioned in the inscription. Kakkuka and Bāuka, in their inscriptions, issued from Ghatiyala[47] and Jodhpur[48] respectively, claim to have belonged to the Pratīhāra family. One may be tempted to believe that all these families were related to each other through a common ancestor. As regards the term Pratīhāra, its use as an administrative position is found in sources from the Gupta period onward but the earliest epigraphic reference of its use, perhaps as a family name, comes from an inscription, undated but palaeographically assigned to the 5th century AD, which was originally found in Besnagar near Vidisha.[49] The inscription mentions Bhūtimitra, his son whose name is lost, and his grandson Droṇa as Pratīhāras. It is difficult to ascertain as to how this term came to be used as a family or a clan name but as we shall see in relation with the Dharkkaṭas and the Dhūsaras that many of these rubrics came to denote *jāti* status. Similar seems to have been the case of the Pratīhāras. B. D. Chattopadhyaya, in his study of the hero-stones in Rajasthan, has cited two references from Cherai, Jodhpur dated 936 AD and 1015 AD

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[46] *ACHI.*, p. 628.

[47] *JRAS*, 1895, pp. 513-523; *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 210 ff.

[48] *EI*, vol. XVIII, pp. 87 ff.

[49] *EI*, vol. XLI, pp. 186-188.

and mentioning Pratīhāra *jāti* and Pratīhāra *gotra* respectively. It seems the term was being used interchangeably both for *jāti* and *vaṁśa* as in the case of the Dharkkaṭa.[50]

The Badhal Copper Plate inscription of Nāgabhaṭa-II[51] (dated VS 872 = 815 AD)[52] refers to grant, reconfirmed by Nāgabhaṭa, of village Lambakūpa. This is the earliest known copper plate grant issued by any Pratīhāra ruler (besides of course the reference to Vatsarāja in the Daulatpura copper plate inscription of Mihira Bhoja as the original issuer of the grant) and the only one which was issued from the royal camp located at the village Bhadrāsana (identified with modern Badhal in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan) as against all other grants which were issued from Mahodaya (Kanauj).[53] Quite clearly, Nāgabhaṭa-II was not in possession of Kanauj in 815 AD. Vatsarāja may

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[50] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 127, fn. 39 and 40.

[51] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, 1998-99, pp. 145-150; Mishra, 1990, pp. 43-47; Varadā, vol. 28(3), 1985, pp. 2-13.

[52] D. P. Dubey, who has edited the inscription in the pages of *Prāgdhārā*, dates it in *Saṁvat* 882 = 825 AD based on the general identity of the term *vra* with the integer 8, hence the date 882 instead of VS 872 given by Rawat Sarasvat. Since the year 882 did not experience any solar eclipse as mentioned in the inscription, and which actually took place in S 872, the discrepancy was thus explained by Dubey – 'it would appear that the donation was made in *Saṁvat* 872, but the charter was dated on the day on which it was actually handed over to the donee about ten years later. Such discrepancy is not unknown to the students of Indian epigraphy' (p. 146). It is difficult to be categorical about such inferences and for the present, we shall adhere to *Saṁvat* 872 primarily on the premise that solar eclipse is much clear evidence than *vra*, which has remained a little problematic.

[53] Inscriptions of the last two rulers of the dynasty, Trilocanapāla and Yaśaḥpāla, were issued from around the Allahabad-Kaushambi areas and they were not in control of Kanauj. Their inscriptions do not mention any royal camp.

have fought against the Pālas but his own inscription of 795 AD says that Gallaka, his subordinate, installed Indrabhaṭa (Indrāyudha of Kanauj) as the master of his own kingdom. The same inscription mentions that Vatsarāja attained the status of a sovereign ruler after defeating the Gauḍa king which would suggest that both Vatsarāja and Dharmapāla took sides with the contestants for the Kanauj throne and fought with each other and as a result of Vatsarāja's victory Indrāyudha accepted his suzerainty but it was only under Nāgabhaṭa-II that the Pratīhāra royal base shifted to Kanauj. The Barah copper plate inscription of Bhoja,[54] which mentions Kānyakubja *bhukti* under Pratīhāra control, refers to a grant, originally issued perhaps by Sarvvavarmma Maukhari later endorsed by Nāgabhaṭa. This indicates, though only tangentially, that actual political control over the Kanauj area was established only under Nāgabhaṭa-II.

A Copper Plate inscription of Nāgabhaṭa-II (827 AD)[55] has been recently found in private possession in Allahabad but the plates were originally obtained from the village Surapura in the *tehsil* Kadipur of Sultanpur district, Uttar Pradesh.[56] The Sambhal Copper Plate of Nāgabhaṭa-II (828 AD) was recovered from Sambhal in Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh.[57] It seems Nāgabhaṭa captured the kingdom of Kanauj between

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[54] *EI*, vol. XIX, pp. 15-19.

[55] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 8, pp. 199-201.

[56] At the time of publishing the inscription, its original provenance was not clearly known. It was subsequently noted by the editor in a subsequent publication. See, *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, 1998-99, p. 148.

[57] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, pp. 104-110.

815 AD and 827 AD. The Gwalior *praśasti* credits him with victories over both Chakrāyudha and the Pāla ruler Dharmapāla.[58] There are three epigraphic references which have been used by scholars to corroborate this point. Kakka of the Jodhpur inscription of Bāuka (837 AD), Vāhukadhavala of the Una Plates of Mahendrapāla's subordinate Avanivarman-II Yoga (899 AD) and Śaṅkaragaṇa of the Chatsu inscription of Balāditya have been credited in these inscriptions with victory over the king of Gauḍa. Based on the chronology and the political status of these rulers it has been suggested that these were the subordinate rulers of the Pratīhāra king Nāgabhaṭa-II. If this holds then besides confirming the Pratīhāra victory over Dharmapāla, these references also show that Nāgabhaṭa's dominions included Kathiawar peninsula, or at least a part of it, Jodhpur and Jaipur region. Further north, the areas of the present districts of Sikar and Jhunjhunu also seem to have been under his control as the Harṣa inscription of Cāhamāna Vigraharāja refers to one of his ancestors, Gūvaka, as one who was famous as a hero in the assembly of Nāgabhaṭa.[59] It seems even with emerging challenges as a result of the conflicts with the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pālas, Nāgabhaṭa was able not only to keep the dominions inherited intact but to extend them up to eastern Uttar Pradesh.

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[58] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 108, ll. 7-8.

[59] *IA*, vol. XLII, p. 61, l. 12.

It is believed, primarily on the basis of a later Jaina text *Prabhāvakacarita* that

Nāgabhaṭa died in VS 890 = 833 AD[60] and was succeeded by Rāmabhadra who seems to

have ruled for a short duration but certainly not more than three years. Scholars have

attempted to show, mainly on the basis of the Gwalior *praśasti*, Barah and Daulatpura

copper plate inscriptions that under Rāmabhadra, the Pratīhāras sustained serious

military reverses but we cannot be sure of that. The Barah Copper Plate inscription,

dated 836 AD, provides us the first date of the next and perhaps the most formidable of

the contemporary rulers, Mihira Bhoja. The following inscriptions of Bhoja provide

information about the extent of the Pratīhāra kingdom during his rule.

Barah Copper Plate of Bhoja,[61] dated 836 AD, provides the earliest date for him. The

inscription was found in a house in the village Barah which is located four miles to the

east of Akbarpur in Uttar Pradesh. Another important copper plate inscription of Bhoja,

dated in the year 841 AD, has been recovered recently from the village Badhal in the

Phulera *tehsil* of the Jaipur district of Rajasthan.[62] Daulatpura Plate of Bhoja[63] dated 843

AD, was found among the ruins of an ancient temple near village Sivā, about seven

miles east-north east of Didwana in Rajasthan. It refers to the grant of village Sivā in the

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[60] Puri, 1975, pp. 47-48.

[61] *EI*, vol. IX, no. 2, pp. 15-19.

[62] Mishra, 1990, pp. 47-50.

[63] *EI*, vol. V, no. 24, pp. 208-213.

Deṇḍavānaka *viṣaya* (identified with Didwana) of the Gurjaratrā *bhūmi*. Deogarh Pillar inscription of Bhojadeva,[64] dated 862 AD, was found engraved on one of the four massive pillars of the famous Śāntinātha temple at Deogarh near Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh. In April, 2002, a copper plate inscription of Bhoja, dated in 862 AD, was found in course of excavation for laying the foundation of a school at Jiragaur, a village near Kamalganj, about 17 kilometres from Farrukhabad in U. P. The first record dated 865 AD, of the Ahar Stone inscription[65] refers to Bhoja as the reigning king. The inscription is stated to have been discovered in a ruined house in the ancient town of Ahar (referred to as Tattānandapura in the inscription) situated on the banks of Ganga at a distance of seven miles north of Anupshahr and twenty one miles from Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh. Two inscriptions of the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple,[66] dated respectively 875 and 876 AD, were found in a small monolithic temple, called Caturbhuja, at Gwalior. The first inscription was engraved over the front door and the second one was found inside the temple on the left wall. In the first of these inscriptions, Bhoja has been addressed as *Ādivarāha*. The Peheva (Pehowa) inscription[67] from the temple of Garībanātha, dated 882 AD, and referring to Bhoja as the reigning king was found engraved on the said temple situated in Pehowa in the Kurukshetra district of Haryana.

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[64] *EI*, vol. IV, pp. 309-10.

[65] *EI*, vol. XIX, pp. 52-62.

[66] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 154-162.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 184-190.

Besides this, there are some other inscriptions, referring to Bhoja, which are either undated or are fragmentary so that the date has been lost:

• Sirsa Stone inscription[68] was found at Sirsa in Haryana. The extant portion of the inscription bears no date but mentions a *Pāśupata* saint Ratnarāśi who lived during the reign of Bhojadeva.

• A fragmentary inscription, preserved in the Barton Museum at Bhavnagar,[69] informs us of two men—one, who was known to people as [Va] or [Ādiva]rāha and the second, king Kṛṣṇarāja. The former has been identified with Bhoja[70] and the second with the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king of Gujarat line. The available portion of the inscription bears no date and its provenance is also not known but reference to river Rewā (Narmada) indicates that it was found somewhere in central India or Gujarat.

• Another inscription of Bhoja, without date, has been recovered from the Indrapat fort in Delhi[71] and confirms that before the advent of the Tomaras, the area was under the control of the Pratīhāras.

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[68] *EI*, vol. XXI, pp. 294-296; Phogat, S. R., *Inscriptions of Haryana*, Kurukshetra, Vishal, 1978, pp. 28-30.

[69] *EI*, XIX, pp. 174-77.

[70] Bhandarkar believed that the word Mahāvarāha suited the metre better than Ādivarāha and in this context Mahāvarāha has been identified as a successor of the king Jayavarāha mentioned in the Jaina *Harivaṁśa* as ruling the Sauryya *maṇḍala* in the year 783 AD. See, *ACHI*, p. 685-686, fn. 12.

[71] *ASI-An. Rep.*, 1925-26, pp. 182-83.

- Quite recently, a stone inscription, referring to Bhoja, has been found in village Jhinjhauta,[72] eight kilometres from Kapil Nagar (ancient Kāmpilya) near Kanauj in the Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The inscription is undated.

- Some fragments of one or more records, possibly of Mihira Bhoja, were recovered from the vicinity of the Ṭhākurbābā temple at a place called Sanichara in the *tehsil* and district of Sultanpur.[73] One of the fragments refers to *śrī* Bho[jadeva] in line 1 and to Maho[daya], perhaps a reference to Kanauj, in line 4.

- A Stone inscription of the time of Bhoja-I was found lying on a mound near the village Nohna-Narasingh in Kanpur district. The inscription is fragmentary at the top and sides. The extant portion of the inscription bears no date.

- Among the most prominent of Bhoja's inscriptions is his Gwalior *praśasti*[74] which was engraved on a stone and was found half a mile west of Gwalior town, at Sagartal.

There are some more sources, mainly of a later period, which refer to Bhoja largely in relation with his subordinates who belonged to the line of the issuer:

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[72] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 1, pp. 1-2.

[73] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 2, pp. 118-122.

[74] *EI*, vol. XVIII, no. 13, pp. 99-114.

- The second record of the Pratabgarh inscription,[75] of the time of Mahendrapāla-II (dated?), begins with a panegyric in praise of the Cāhamāna family of kings, which is spoken of as having been the source of great pleasure to the king Bhojadeva.

- The Chatsu inscription of Bālāditya[76] mentions one of his ancestors who is said to have conquered kings of the north and presented horses to Bhoja.

- The Kahla Plate of *paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parameśvara* (herein onward *PMP*) Soḍhadeva,[77] dated 1077-78 AD, mentions that a prince of this line, ninth in ascent from the issuer, named Guṇāmbodhideva received a piece of land (*bhūmiḥ*) from Bhoja, undoubtedly Mihira Bhoja. Most of the scholars have used this information to show the extension of the Pratīhāra kingdom under Bhoja up to the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh. While this may be true, but one has to be careful as nowhere in the inscription is it mentioned that the land was given in or around the same area from where the Kahla grant was issued. Moreover Guṇāmbodhideva was among the early rulers of the family which, it seems, initially consolidated its position in central India and only later migrated to Gorakhpur area.

An important indication of the extent of the Pratīhāra kingdom under Bhoja to areas contiguous to the Jammu region comes from Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*. It refers to the

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[75] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 184, l. 14

[76] *EI*, vol. XII, p. 15, l. 14.

[77] *CII*, vol. IV, pt. 2, p. 387, l. 8.

Kashmir prince Śaṅkaravarman (c. 883-902 AD) who is said to have attacked the dominions of Alakhana, king of Gurjara, presumably a subordinate of Bhoja. Alakhana, to save his own country, gave to the Kashmir prince, the Ṭakka land the sovereignty of which had been seized by Bhoja. It seems Alakhana was ruling on the Ṭakka land as a subordinate of Bhoja. The event might have taken place after the death of Bhoja. The Ṭakka land has been identified on the testimony of Hsüan-tsang. It embraced whole of the plains of the Punjab from the Indus to the Beas and from the foot of the mountains to the junction of five rivers below Multan.[78]

So the Pratīhāra territorial strength under Bhoja at its maximum stretch reached areas of the Punjab in the north to perhaps Narmada in the south and from Gujarat and central Rajasthan in the west to the western fringes of Bihar in the east.

Bhoja was succeeded by Mahendrapāla, between 882 AD and 893 AD, whose earliest date comes from one of the two copper plate grants which were found at Una[79] in the southernmost part of the Kathiawar Peninsula in Gujarat. The plate of Balavarman of the Cālukya lineage, which refers to Mahendrapāla as Mahendrāyudha, meditating on the feet of Bhojadeva, is dated in 893 AD. The second set of plates of Avanivarman-II Yoga, son of Balavarman, is dated in 899 AD. It refers to Mahendrapāla as meditating on the feet of Bhojadeva. From the geographical terms mentioned in the inscription it becomes

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[78] Puri, 1975, p. 57.

[79] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 1-10.

clear that the plates belonged to the Saurashtra region of Gujarat. The Dighwa-Dubauli Plate of Mahendrapāla,[80] dated 898 AD, was found in a private possession at Dighwa-Dubauli, a village about 25 miles to the south-east of Gopalganj in north Bihar. Two records, dated 903-4 AD (l. 1) and 907-8 AD (l. 4), of the famous Sīyaḍoṇi Stone inscription[81] found in the village Siron-Khurd in the Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh refer to Mahendrapāla as the reigning monarch.

Till about 1987 it was believed that the Pratīhāra dominions reached modern Bengal on the basis of as many as nine small image or pedestal inscriptions found from various parts of Bengal and Bihar. These inscriptions contained the name of Mahendrapāla along with his reigning year, something that typologically very different from other inscriptions of Pratīhāra Mahendrapāla in specific and of the Pratīhāras in general which were usually dated in *Vikrama Saṁvat*. But the said identification of Mahendrapāla got the general approval in the light of an almost complete absence of the records of the contemporary Pāla ruler Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 861-917 AD), who, it was believed, conceded vast areas in Bengal and Bihar to Mahendrapāla-I. In 1987, as a result of an important discovery, the first ever detailed copper plate grant of the hitherto known, though with mistaken identity, Pāla ruler Mahendrapāla was recovered near Jagjibanpur in the Malda district of West Bengal. Pāla Mahendrapāla was the son of Devapāla and brother

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[80] *IA*, vol. XV, pp. 105-113.

[81] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 162-179.

of Śūrapāla-I and ruled sometime in the middle of the ninth century between these two.[82] In the light of this discovery, it is clear that under Mahendrapāla-I the eastern limits of the kingdom had reached maximum up to western fringes of Bihar as indicated by the Dighwa-Dubauli copper plate inscription.[83]

Mahendrapāla seems to have been succeeded by Mahīpāla but the Bengal Asiatic Society's plate of Vināyakapāla omits his name and refers to Bhoja-II, evidently former's elder brother, as his predecessor.[84] Both Vināyakapāla and Bhoja-II were sons of Mahendrapāla (as was Mahīpāla) through different wives. It seems that Bhoja-II, if he was different from Mahīpāla, ruled for sometime before or after Mahīpāla. Some friction between the two is clearly discernible from Mahīpāla's omission from Vināyakapāla's inscription. Mahīpāla is known to us from following records:

* The Asni copper plate inscription[85] of Mahīpāla dated 914 AD was found from Asni, a village situated ten miles to the north of Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh. The inscription furnishes genealogy in which *PMP* Mahīpāladeva is shown as the successor of *PMP* Mahīsa(ndra)pāladeva, i.e., Mahendrapāladeva.

[82] For detailed discussion on the discovery and text see, Bhattacharya, Gaurishwar, 'A New Pāla Ruler Mahendrapāla', *Pratna Samiksha*, vol. 1, 1992, pp. 165-170; *EI*, vol. XLII, pp. 6-29.

[83] The Itkhori stone inscription of the time of Mahendrapāla though is undated; see *ASI-An. Rep.*, 1920-21, p. 35.

[84] *IA*, vol. XV, pp. 138-141.

[85] *IA*, vol. XVI, pp. 173-175.

- The Wadhwan copper plate grant of Cāpa Dharaṇīvarāha[86] (also dated in 914) mentions that he was ruling in Vardhamānapura (modern Wadhwan) in Gujarat 'by the grace of the feet of *rājādhirāja parameśvara śrī* Mahīpāladeva'.

- Another stone inscription referring to Mahīpāla was found at Garh in the Alwar district of Rajasthan. The inscription, recording the construction of a Jaina temple in 921 AD by the architect Sarvadeva at the behest of a great king Pulindra, prays for victories for Mahīpāladeva 'at whose feet all the feudatories had respectfully placed their services'.[87]

So while we have only three records referring to Mahīpāla as the reigning monarch, the geographical location of these records willy-nilly suggests that the dominions that he had inherited were kept intact. At the same time he seems to have received serious reverses at the hands of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Indra-III. Both, the Cambay plates of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Govinda IV and the *Vikramārjunavijaya* (also called *Pampa-Bhārata*) of the Kanarese poet Pampa, composed in about Śaka 863 (941 AD) seem to indicate this. H. C. Ray rightly places the event between 915 and 918 AD. But Mahīpāla seems to have regained the supremacy of north India as is indicated by the Garh inscription and the location of the records of Mahīpāla's successors.

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[86] *IA*, vol. XII, pp. 190-195. Buhler who edited the inscription read the date as SE 839 = 917 AD which was corrected by Fleet in *IA*, vol. XVIII, p. 90. See also *DHNI*, p. 583.

[87] *EI*, vol. XXXIX, pp. 189-98.

The genealogy of the Pratīhāra rulers becomes quite confusing after Mahīpāla-I. There are also clear signs of internal dissensions which proved rather costly for the state. Concomitantly, centrifugal tendencies started laying platform for new powerful Rajput kingdoms in north India. It may not be possible to deal in great details about the identity or sequence of rulers after Mahīpāla. Sīyaḍoṇi and Rajor inscriptions mention Devapāla and Vijayapāla respectively as meditating on the feet of *śrī* Kṣitipāladeva. This Kṣitipāla is generally identified with Mahīpāla-I but we do not have any positive evidence to show either that he was same as Mahīpāla or, if not, then whether he preceded or succeeded Mahīpāla. Vināyakapāla-I, son of Mahendrapāla and brother of Bhoja II, is known from two inscriptions. The exact provenance of the Bengal Asiatic Society's plate,[88] dated 931 AD, is not known but the mention of Vārāṇasī *viṣaya* in the tenth line seems to indicate that it may have originally belonged to this area. The second record yielding the name of Vināyakapāla-I is the Rakhetra rock tablet inscription,[89] dated 942-43 AD, which was found from village Rakhetra near Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh, and refers to some irrigation project being financed by Vināyakapāladeva with a huge cost. Vināyakapāla seems to have been succeeded by his son Mahendrapāla-II who is known from a stone inscription, dated 946 AD, found at Pratabgarh in the Pali district of

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[88] *IA*, vol. XV, pp. 138-141.

[89] *ASI-An. Rep.*, 1924-25, p. 168.

Rajasthan.[90] An undated *praśasti* of the Tomara family[91] referring to Mahendrapāla as the sovereign was found at Pehowa in the Kurukshetra district of Haryana. While the inscription is believed to have referred to Mahendrapāla-I, primarily on the basis of similarity of the script of this inscription with that of the Garībanātha temple inscription of the time of Mihira Bhoja, dated 882 AD, we believe that there is a great deal of possibility of its being of the time of Mahendrapāla-II. First, the inscription mentions the name of Mahendrapāla without any epithets and pedigree. There can be no substantial change in the script in a span of fifty years so as to enable us to make very categorical distinctions. Moreover, the Garībanātha temple inscription of horse dealers (882 AD) refers to both Rāmabhadra and Bhoja but not to any local authority or subordinate ruler. It seems Pṛthūdaka was under the direct administration of the crown. There is no reason why a centrally administered territory would have been given to a subordinate ruler at the height of Pratīhāra power under Bhoja and Mahendrapāla. Besides, the tenor of the inscription seems to suggest that the Tomaras were in reckoning for quite some time when the *praśasti* was composed. If this was true then their omission in the horse dealers' inscription is difficult to comprehend. Line 28 of the Sīyaḍoṇi stone inscription[92]

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[90] *EI*, vol. XIV, no. 13, pp. 176-78.

[91] *Ibid.*, pp. 242-250.

[92] *EI*, vol. I, p. 177.

refers to *PMP śrī* Devapāladeva, meditating on the feet of *PMP* the illustrious Kṣitipāladeva, as the reigning monarch in 948 AD.

A bit of confusion has been created about the genealogy of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras as a result of two references in two different inscriptions. The Khajuraho inscription of Ḍhaṅga, dated 954 AD, refers to the illustrious Vināyakapāladeva as protecting the earth (*vināyakapāladeva pālayati vasudhāṁ*). It is generally believed that the said reference was made to a Gurjara-Pratīhāra overlord of Ḍhaṅga. This Vināyakapāla was certainly different from the one mentioned in the Bengal Asiatic Society's Plate or the Rakhetra Rock Tablet inscription as we have two more rulers Mahendrapāla-II and Devapāla between them. Any information regarding his accession or pedigree, however, is not known.[93] The second reference comes from the Ukha-Mandir Stone inscription,[94] dated in VS 1012 = 956 AD, i.e. two years after the Khajuraho inscription, which was discovered at Bayana in the Bharatpur district of Rajasthan. The inscription records the construction of a Viṣṇu temple by a queen named Citralekhā during the reign of *mahārājādhirāja* Mahīpāladeva. B. N. Puri considers him to be subordinate ruler as in his view the title of *mahārājādhirāja* was no longer a marker of sovereign status as in the case of Mathanadeva of the Rajor inscription who in spite of being a subordinate used the

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[93] Puri, 1975, p. 96; *ACHI*, p. 645.

[94] *EI*, vol. XXII, pp. 120 ff.

title of *mahārājādhirāja*.[95] Identifying the status of a ruler on the basis of titles can be very deceptive. The Pratīhāras of Kanauj never claimed a *PMP* status in their own copper plate inscriptions. Moreover, Mahīpāla-I in the Garh inscription of 921 AD has been mentioned without any titles. We tend to agree with H. C. Ray that since the sovereignty of the Pratīhāras was still acknowledged in 960 AD in the neighbouring Alwar area and the fact that it is difficult to identify this Mahīpāla with the Pāla or the Paramāra ruler of the same name, it seems quite probable that he belonged to the family of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj.[96] If this be the case then we are looking at two rulers, unknown from the Pratīhāra inscriptions, who ruled in quick succession between Devapāla and Vijayapāla.[97] The Rajor inscription of Mathanadeva,[98] dated 960 AD, which was found near village Rajor or Rajorgarh in the Alwar district of Rajasthan, mentions *PMP* Vijayapāladeva, son of *PMP* Kṣitipāladeva as the Pratīhāra sovereign of Mathanadeva, who calls himself as belonging to the Gurjara-Pratīhāra lineage.

There are no known records of Rājyapāla but the Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla informs us that he was the son of Vijayapāladeva (known from the Rajor inscription dated in 960 AD) and the father of Trilocanapāla. His date of accession is not known. Some more

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[95] Puri, 1975, p. 97.

[96] *DHNI*, p. 574.

[97] Puri, 1975, pp. 96-97; *DHNI*, pp. 574, 591.

[98] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 263-267.

information about him is also forthcoming from Utbi's account of 1018 AD when as a result of Mehmūd's expedition he deserted Kanauj and escaped further to the east.[99] The Dubkund inscription of Kacchapaghāta Vikramasiṃha dated VS 1145 = 1088 AD refers to the fact that his great grandfather's overlord Vidyādhara had killed the illustrious Rājyapāla in a battle for his cowardice shown against the Turks.[100] The event seems to have taken place between 918 and 919 AD as Utbi refers to the defeat of Barujaybāl by Mehmūd in his second expedition to the Ganges valley in 1019 AD. That Barujaybāl was used for Trilocanapāla has been convincingly shown by H. C. Ray.[101] A further corroboration of this event is found in *Tā'rikh ul-Kāmil* of Ibn ul-Athīr (died. 1234 AD) (cited by H. C. Ray[102]), who refers to Rājaypāl as the Rāy of Kanauj. The Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla dated 1028 AD and referring to both Vijayapāla and Rājyapāla as predecessors was found at Jhusi near Allahabad on the opposite bank of Ganges.[103] We know virtually nothing about Trilocanapāla's successors but the Kara inscription, dated 936-37 AD and found from roughly the same area as the Jhusi grant, records the gift made by *mahārājādhirāja śrī* Yaśaḥpāladeva. There is no positive evidence to link him to Trilocanapāla but he is generally believed to be the successor of Trilocanapāla and the

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[99] *DHNI*, pp. 598-599.

[100] *EI*, vol. II, p. 237, l. 10.

[101] *DHNI*, p. 602.

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 604.

[103] *IA*, vol. XVIII, pp. 33-35.

last known ruler of the Pratīhāra dynasty of Kanauj.[104] A tentative post-Mahendrapāla-I

genealogy may thus be reconstructed as shown in the figure 1 at the end of this chapter.

So, as we have seen, the lineage of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras of Kanauj continued at least

up to 1028 or 1036 AD, but at the fag end their political influence was confined to the

areas around Allahabad. In fact the territorial decline of the Pratīhāra state had already

started by the middle of the ninth century. In this period the erstwhile subordinate

lineages that had once announced their services to the Pratīhāra overlord with great

pride, were gaining in strength and were making serious endeavour to enhance their

political influence.

In the Khajuraho inscription dated VS 1011, the Candela ruler Ḍhaṅga, even while

acknowledging a nominal overlordship of the Pratīhāra ruler Vināyakapāla-II, claims to

have controlled areas up to Kālañjara, Bhilsā, Gopā mountains and river Kālindi in the

north. The nature of the inscription indicates that for all practical purposes Ḍhaṅga was

a free sovereign ruler. Even this robe of formality seems to have been thrown away soon

after as a later inscription of Madanavarman from Mau says that *narendra* Ḍhaṅga

defeated the king of Kānyakubja and obtained the *sāmarājya*.[105] It thus seems that the

Pratīhāras lost to the Candelas, vast areas in central India which once, as a part of the

Kālañjara *maṇḍala*, constituted very core of the state.

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[104] Puri, 1975, p. 104; *ASI-An. Rep.*, 1923-24, pp. 122-124.

[105] *DHNI*, pp. 593-594.

Similar seems to have been the case of militarily and economically crucial areas around modern Gwalior and Lalitpur. The Sās-Bahū inscription of Kacchapaghāta Mahīpāla says that one of his ancestors Vajradāman (one of whose known dates is 977 AD) put down the raising valour of the ruler of Gādhinagara (identified as Kanauj) and his proclamation drum resounded in the fort of Gopādri.[106] The Gwalior museum inscription of Vacchilla, dated VS 1038 = 981 AD, also refers to his great-grandfather as the *mantri* of rulers of the Kacchapa dynasty.[107] It seems that the Kacchapas started their career as the subordinates of the Pratīhāras in areas around modern Gwalior. By the third quarter of the tenth century, the Pratīhāras of Kanauj seem to have lost the areas around Sīyadoṇi also. The second part (undated) of the Sīyadoṇi stone inscription,[108] as also the Bharat Kala Bhavan Plate[109] (VS 1040=983 AD) and the Kadwaha inscription[110] refer to one Harirāja, belonging to the Pratīhāra family, as the ruling monarch without acknowledging anyone's sovereignty. He seems to have been a member of a collateral line of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj as is indicated by his genealogy which is different from that of the Pratīhāras. We shall be discussing more about this family later.

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[106] *Ibid.*, p. 594.

[107] *EI*, vol. XL, p. 194, l. 8.

[108] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 179, l. 42.

[109] *EI*, vol. XXXI, pp. 309-313.

[110] *EI*, Vo. XXXVII, pp. 117 ff.

The Harṣa inscription of Cāhamāna Vigraharāja[111] dated VS 1013=957 AD clearly shows that he was independently ruling the area traditionally known as Śākambharī. The tendency towards independence seems to have started already during Vākpati's time who was in all probability a subordinate of Mahīpāla-I. He is said to pave put to flight the *tantrapāla*, who was coming towards the Ananta country to deliver a message of his overlord.[112] A nominal acceptance of the Pratīhāra suzerainty though seems to have continued under his son Siṁharāja. Harṣa inscription states that Siṁharāja had defeated and captured the Tomara chief Salavaṇa along with many other kings who were fighting alongside him. He liberated them only when his overlord, the universal sovereign of the family of Raghu (i.e. the Pratīhāra king), came in person and requested him.[113] Vigraharāja though seems to have completely abjured the overlordship of the Pratīhāras. In southern Rajasthan also which was increasingly coming under the control of the Guhilas, we neither come across any inscription of the Pratīhāras after the Pratabgarh inscription nor any evidence of the acknowledgement of their sovereignty by the local dynasties. By the third quarter of the tenth century Malwa and Gujarat had come under the independent rule of the Paramāras and Caulukyas respectively.

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[111] *IA*, vol. XLII, pp. 57-64.

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 62, l. 15

[113] *Ibid.*, l. 17

It seems from the time of Rājyapāla onward, the Pratīhāras consistently conceded areas to local states so that ultimately their dominions became confined to areas between Kanauj and Varanasi. Later as a result of Mehmūd's invasion they were further divested of their control over Kanauj. Al-Birūnī, writing in 1030, informs us that Kanauj was a political centre and in former times it was the residence of 'most famous heroes and kings'.[114] It was also a very large town, in ruins, when he was writing, as the capital had been shifted to Bāri, to the east of Ganges.[115] The last of the two inscriptions of the Pratīhāras came, as we have seen, from the Allahabad area.

In the recent past during the exploratory work done in the hilly regions of Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal, a large number of temples dating to late eighth century and the subsequent period, and bearing striking resemblance to the Pratīhāra style temples of central India, have been found. There are many *praśasti* portions of inscriptions and textual references which talk of Pratīhāra victories in this region and this includes the inscription of Vatsarāja, but *praśasti* or textual sources have to be corroborated by more concrete inscriptional or numismatic references. Two things are important:

- The Style-Dynasty exclusivity is perforce problematic. There was not one but many regional styles of temple building under the Pratīhāras and were continuously undergoing change.

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[114] Ahmed, 1988, p. 94.

[115] *Ibid.*

- The dissemination of such traits as language, food habits or temple styles does not necessarily indicate actual political control or hegemony. Movements of people, traders or even conflicts would have resulted in interaction and hence dissemination of ideas and creative motifs.

Thus, in the want of actual inscriptional reference, it would be difficult to argue that the Gurjara-Pratīhāras controlled these hilly areas.

Figure 1: Genealogy of the Pratīhāras from Mahendrapāla-I's Reign Onward

8. Mahendrapāla-I
(893-907 AD)

9. Mahīpāla-I or Kṣitipāla
(914 & 921 AD)

10. Bhoja-II

11. Vināyakapāla-I
(931 & 942-43 AD)

13. Devapāla
(948 AD)

16. Vijayapāl
(960 AD)

12. Mahendrapāla-II
(946 AD)

17. Rājyapāla
(1018 AD)

14. Vināyakapāla-II (?)
(954 AD)

18. Trilocanapāla
(1019 & 1027 AD)

15. Mahīpāla-II (?)
(AD 956)

19. Yaśaḥpāla
(1036 AD)

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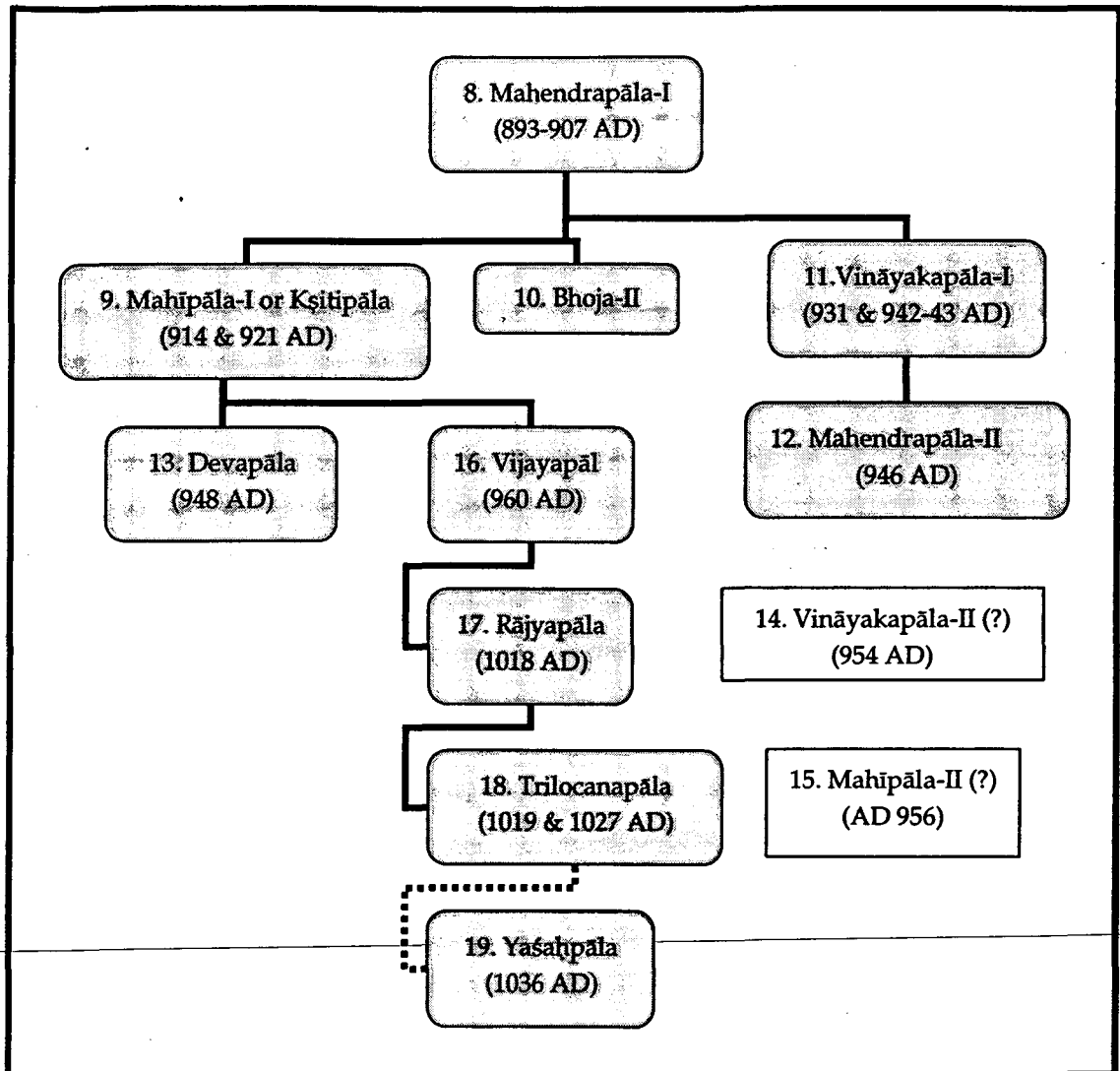
Economic Resources and their Socio-Political Organization

Resource Mobilization in the Early Growth of Local Polities

The post-Gupta period in north India was marked with some important changes with reference to the immediately preceding early historical period. A seeming decline in foreign trade, decay of erstwhile urban centres, localization of polity and thereby of resources and an increasing dialogue between the Brahmanical and local customs gave this period an identity which was distinct in its own right. With these, another cardinal feature was the expansion of agrarian economy which was by no means exclusive for the period but we come across large numbers of copper plate grants which give the impression of an 'unprecedented' agrarian growth in early medieval India. Equating agrarian growth with rural growth in a specific historiographical context is something that needs closer examination. Similarly an understanding of agrarian expansion only in terms of rural expansion (and vice-versa) just as urban decline seen as primarily in terms of decline in trading (especially foreign) and artisanal activities needs a look afresh.[1] One has to understand that the needs of an ambitious local ruler would have been two fold—

first, stabilization of his rule, politically, economically and ideologically and second, to be a part of the supra-local political arrangement for the purpose of both security and further political ascendancy.

In this context any engagement with the question of resource production would have to be located in the context of agrarian production at local levels, which was then made a part of exchange processes, as also the goods that were exchanged but not produced locally. In addition, the process of creation of exchange centres in early medieval period was deeply embedded in the expansion of the agrarian sector along with the proliferation of various centres of power. It has been shown, on the basis of empirical data for early medieval Rajasthan, that, 'clusters of exchange centres seem to occur in areas which were essentially agrarian settlements and that agricultural items entered the centres perhaps with as much regularity as did other items'.[2] Moreover, in the light of relative decline in the non-agrarian sector, the importance of agricultural commodities as a resource base of early medieval states may not be lost sight of.

There is some inscriptional evidence to show the efforts made by newly emerging lineages to enhance their resource base by setting up new localities and by bringing newer tracts under cultivation; at the same time politically accepting subordination of a powerful ruling house. In Rajasthan the Samoli inscription of the Guhila ruler Śilāditya, dating as early as 646 AD, 'records the opening of a mine at a place called

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[2] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 106.

Araṇyakūpagiri by a migrating community (*mahājana*) headed by *mahattara* Jentaka'.[3]

This presumes creation of an agricultural pocket at Araṇyakūpagiri 'necessitating some

degree of deforestation'.[4] The Ghatiyala inscriptions of Kakkuka[5] (dated 861 AD) are

even more significant in this context. They refer to the establishment of a market

settlement along with houses[6] by Kakkuka, scion of the Pratīhāra family of Mandor and

perhaps a subordinate of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj, at village Rohinsakūpaka (modern

Ghatiyala) that had formerly become unsafe because of Ābhīras.[7] Besides this, he is also

said to have settled merchants at the said site (*sthāpitotra mahājanaḥ*). In another

Ghatiyala inscription of the same ruler[8] (dated VS 918 = 861 AD) in Prakrit, he claims to

have taken away the herds of cattle followed by destruction, by fire, of villages in the hill

in the inaccessible Vaṭanānaka district.[9] Later he made this land fragrant with leaves of

blue lotuses, pleasant with groups of mango and *madhūka* trees and covered it with

excellent sugarcane.[10] The reference clearly shows that endeavour was being made to

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[3] Kapur, 2002, p. 37.

[4] *Ibid.*, 2002, p. 38

[5] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 277-281.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 280, no. II, l. 5, *vicittra-vīthi-sampūrṇṇam haṭṭaṁ kṛtvā grahāṇi ca.*

[7] *Ibid.*, l. 4, *asevya sādhulokānāṁ ābhīrajanadāruṇaḥ.*

[8] *JRAS*, 1895, pp. 513-523.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 520, verse 17.

[10] *Ibid.*, verse 18.

clear areas inhabited by tribals, predominantly pastorals, by creating exchange centres

and by bringing new tracts under cultivation, if required by the use of force, which

would have certainly given an impetus to the emergence of local level resource

producing and exchange centres. A similar process is discernible, though indirectly, in

the Pratabgarh inscription of the time of Mahendrapāla-II[11] dated 942-46 AD. The first

record of this inscription refers to grant of a village to goddess Vaṭayakṣiṇidevī whose

shrine was connected with the *maṭha* of Hari-Ṛṣiśvara who belonged to the *Cāturvvedya*

(*Cāturvvaidya*) community (a community of brāhmaṇas) of Daśapura.[12] The shrine is said

to have been located at the site of Ghoṇṭāvarṣikā and besides the chief deity

Indrādityadeva (Sun god) there were many other deities enshrined in the temple.

Vaṭayakṣiṇidevī is extolled as Durgā in the first record.[13] The whole scenario (and this

includes granting of land) indicates, though only as a gradual process, agrarian

expansion through cultural assimilation, by which process a seemingly tribal goddess

was incorporated into the Brahmanical pantheon. Also important in this context is the

grant made of a *kacchaka*[14] (*kachaḥ*), for sure an agricultural field near the bank of a river

(or a rivulet),[15] along with the *arahaṭa*, which was used for irrigating this field, in the

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[11] *EI*, vol. XIV, pp. 176-188.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 184, l. 12.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 183, ll. 3-4.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 186, l. 26.

[15] *SSED*, s.v.

second record which is undated. With reference to the boundaries of the village granted

in the third record (dated 942 AD), mention of *sīmāyāṁ kṣetrāṇi*,[16] in plural, as also

another reference to a *kacha*[17] (agricultural field near a water body) seem to indicate

rather brisk pace of agricultural activities. The reference to an unidentified river Nandyā

(*nandyānadī*)[18] points to its being a crucial factor in local agriculture.

The Rajor inscription of Mathanadeva of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra family[19] dated VS 1016

= 959-960 AD refers to the grant of village Vyāghrapāṭaka, together with all the

neighbouring fields cultivated by the Gurjaras.[20] The Gurjaras, it is now believed,

originally belonged to a tribal stock and while tribe and agriculture are not essentially

mutually exclusive categories,[21] there is still a great deal of probability that at some point

in time they adopted a sedentary life and took to agriculture. In this context, a reference

from an inscription of a local ruler Vacchilla,[22] dated 981 AD, is interesting. The

provenance of this inscription, now in the Gwalior museum, is not known but it seems

to have been associated with the Gwalior region where the Kacchapaghātas are known

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[16] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 187, l. 29.

[17] *Ibid.*, l. 28, *palāsakūpikāgrāme vamvvuliko nnāmā kacha.*

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *EI*, vol. III, p. 263-267.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 266, l. 12, *aitat-pratyāsanna-śrī-gurjjara-vāhita-samasta-kṣetra-sametaśca.*

[21] Nathan, 1997, pp. 4-5.

[22] *EI*, vol. XL, pp. 191-196.

to have ruled. One of the ancestors of Vacchilla is stated to have served the

Kacchapaghātas as *mantri*. The inscription refers to another ancestor of Vacchilla, named

Mādhava, as an incarnate of Kṛṣṇa who made the jumping (nomadic) Ābhīras,

sedentary,[23] by making them *drāṅgika* by granting them *uddraṁga*.[24] *Uddraṅga* (or

uddraṁga) is a term that commonly occurs in the contemporary land grant inscriptions

as a fixed tax (or rent) perhaps on land or tax on permanent tenants[25] while *drāṅgika* is

usually explained as an officer in charge of collecting custom duties.[26] In our inscription

drāṅgika seems to have been responsible for the collection of *uddraṁga*. At any rate, the

reference, however indicative, is clearly symptomatic of the process whereby members

of a nomadic tribe (Ābhīras have traditionally been known as cow-herds) were

established as sedentary agriculturists probably in their own locality by restructuring

the economic and subsistence base by which process it could now pay regular taxes. The

reference also gives an indication as to how local, and in this case tribal, element was

being incorporated into the local level administration. Another reference comes from the

Vasantgarh inscription of Pūrṇapāla[27] dated VS 1099 = 1042 AD. The inscription was

recovered from a tank at Vasantgarh situated five miles to the south of Pindwara in the

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 194, l. 6, *ābhīrāḥ khalu valagan-aika-caturā ye- sya sthitāḥ.*

[24] *Ibid.*, ll. 6-7, *sannidhāv- uddraṁgair- akarot- sa dāna-vibhavais- tān- drāṅgikān.*

[25] *IEG*, s.v.

[26] *Ibid.*, s.v.

[27] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 10-15.

Sirohi district of Rajasthan.[28] It refers to the restoration of an ancient Sun temple along with a tank, apparently the same tank which yielded the inscription, at a place called Vata, identified with Vasantgarh, by Lāhiṇi, a younger sister of Paramāra Purṇapāla,[29] referred to as the ruler of the Arbuda territory.[30] In verses twenty through twenty five the place has been glorified. With regard to the establishment of the place, which is attributed to Vasiṣṭha, it is said that he caused to be built (*kṛtavān*) in this forest (*vane-smin*), a town (*nagara*) named Vata (*vaṭākhyaṁ*).[31] The town was beautified with enclosure, rampart, gardens and tanks along with palace and residential houses which were both dense and elevated.[32] The place was known in the eleventh century as Vaṭapura[33] which is clearly symptomatic of its urban character. In this context it may be interesting to look at another inscription from the same place, Vasantgarh,[34] which was issued in VS 682 = 625 AD and recorded the construction of a temple dedicated to Kṣemāryyā Kṣemakarī[35] (probably a local goddess associated with peace and security

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15, ll. 18-19.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 13, l. 6, *bhūmaṇḍalam arbbudasya*.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 14, ll. 13-14.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 14, l. 14, *prākāra-vapr-upavannais- taḍāgaiḥ prāsāda-veśmaiḥ sughanaṁ sutuṁgaiḥ*.

[33] *Ibid.*, l. 15.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 187-192.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 191, l. 3.

who came to be identified as a form of Durgā) by the *goṣṭhī* of the temple during the rule

of Rajjila under the overlordship of Varmalāta. The place where the temple was

constructed was referred to as Vaṭa[36] or Vaṭākara (*vaṭākarasthāna*).[37] The combination of

vaṭa (forest) and *ākara* (mine) clearly demonstrates that the early growth of this place was

driven by the establishment of a mine (Udaipur area is famous for its natural especially

mineral resources) by clearing of forests just as in the case of Araṇyakūpagiri of the

Samoli inscription of Śilāditya. Interestingly the *mahājana* headed by *mahattara* Jentaka,

who established the mine at Araṇyakūpagiri are stated to have migrated from Vaṭa.

These references help us comprehend the process by which new centres were being

established sometimes by the endeavour of the local mercantile and artisanal groups.

Some of these centres seem to have consistently grown to become urban centres of

considerable importance by the tenth-eleventh centuries, just as Vaṭa or Vaṭākarasthāna

of the early seventh century became Vaṭapura or Vaṭanagara of the eleventh century.

The process in the Udaipur and Jodhpur areas of Rajasthan was certainly on in the early

seventh century.

Closely associated with the expansion of the agrarian resource base was the question

of irrigation facilities. An important contribution on irrigation in early medieval

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 192, l. 8.

[37] *Ibid.*, l. 9.

Rajasthan[38] has driven home essentially two important points: first, from the nature of evidence available, it seems references to artificial methods of irrigation especially *arahaṭa* (*araghaṭṭa* or *arahaṭṭa*), *vāpi* and *ḍhimaḍa* (*ḍhiku* or *ḍhivaḍa*) in the early medieval period mark a departure from the early historical period when such references are virtually non-existent;[39] and second, most references point to a predominantly political (and not essentially royal) endeavour towards the grant or construction of irrigation facilities.[40] It seems, in a specific political and economic context in the early medieval period, methods and sources of artificial irrigation became germane to sustain a predominantly agrarian resource base which had to be facilitated by increasingly intensive agriculture. Apart from the references mentioned in the aforementioned contribution some more, relevant references may now be examined especially from the cis-Vindhyan central India. An early inscription from Kanakhera near Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh, dated *KE* 102 = 351-52 AD which was inscribed on a stone fixed in a well informs us of the construction of a well by *mahādaṇḍanāyaka* Śaka Śrīdharavarman.[41] The term used for well (as translated by editor V. V. Mirashi), *koyaṁ (?)* is rather intriguing.[42]

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[38] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, pp. 38-56.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-41.

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-56.

[41] *CII*, vol. IV, pt. 1, pp. 15-16.

[42] *Ibid.*, l. 4.

It was possibly a variant of *kūpa*. The main purport of the inscription of Vacchilla[43] was to record the construction of large and beautiful tanks (*taḍāgāṇi*) with tasteful water, a pond (*vāpi*), a well (*kūpa*) and a temple of god Viśvamūrtti surrounded by twelve other temples.[44] There is no explicit mention of the use of these in irrigation or for that matter for rituals but the ninth verse of the same inscription records acts of pious liberality (*pūrta*) by his father Kakkuka which included temple and tank building activities. These activities delighted the earth so much that 'she appeared as if horripilated with the sprouts of his (Kakkuka's) fame'.[45] Yet another inscription[46] unfortunately the text of which, in our knowledge, has not been edited and published to date, is quite conspicuous in its reference to construction of some kind of reservoir(s). The inscription is incised on a rock tablet on the right bank of river Orr within the village named Rakhetra, near the site of Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh. Two dates, VS 999 and VS 1000, along with reference to Vināyakapāladeva shows that he was in all probability, Pratīhāra Vināyakapāladeva. The inscription apparently records the construction of some sort of waterwork(s) connected with river Orr, by Vināyakapāladeva, with a huge cost (95 or 96 crores?). The grant of the *kachah* in second record of Pratabgarh inscription, referred to above, was being irrigated by *arahata*.[14] The village Dhārāpadraka, in the northern part

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[43] *EI*, vol. XL, pp. 191-196.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 195, ll. 22-23.

[45] *Ibid.*, ll. 14-15.

[46] *ASI-An. Rep.*, 1924-25, p. 168

of which this field was situated, seems to have been under the enjoyment of *śrī* Vidagdha, an important official (*śrī vidagdhabhogāvāptye dhārāpadrakagrāme*)[47] who also ratified the grant. This suggests that such instruments were still out of common folk's reach. A more widespread mode of irrigation would have been with leather buckets as is indicated by the expression *kosavāhe*,[48] translated as 'land irrigated by one leather bucket'.[49] Such an expression for measuring land points to wide prevalence of this method.

These kinds of evidences help us discern dimensions of how a number of mechanisms were being employed to bring about expansion in the resource base. The process, by all standards, was not confined only to a specific region; rather it was an important identifier of numerous regional states that were emerging at pan-Indian level in the early medieval period. This would also justify our use of such evidences which fall beyond the Pratīhāra sources even when care has been taken in choosing references so that only those sites which were at some point in time certainly a part of the Pratīhāra dominions, have been discussed. The next step, which shaped the contours of the economy of this period, was what has been referred to as the third urbanization.[50]

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[47] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 186, l. 21.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 187, l. 31.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[50] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 155-182.

Central to this conceptualization is the emergence of certain local level exchange centres, which, through a process of further evolution, became nodal centres for exchange with clusters of adjoining villages contributing to the process. Two terms, *haṭṭa* and *maṇḍapikā* are the most common in relation with such exchange centres in early medieval context.[51] It was through this process of urbanization that some considerably large urban centres emerged in the period. Some of these centres were located within the dominions of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras. These centres seem to have been of a diversified nature ranging from a *skandhāvāra* (like capital Mahodaya) to a fort town, *koṭṭa* (like Gopagirī or Rājyapura) to a *paṭṭana* (like Tattānandapura or Sīyaḍoṇi) to a *adhiṣṭhāna*, politically important centre (like Pṛthūdaka or Sīyaḍoṇi), but almost all of these provide us some information on exchange.

Exchange processes and centres, especially in relation with those societies which were more or less entrenched in agrarian bases, would have been of great importance. These were the places where resources exchanged hands; those in surplus were sold off, while those not available locally could enter the domain. It was through such centres that liquid assets could enter into the local exchange network and wealth of different forms could be created. For a state, it would mean expansion and diversification of resources and enhanced revenues.

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[51] For a detailed discussion on *haṭṭas* and *maṇḍapikās* in the early medieval context see, Chakravarti, 1996, pp. 69-79; Idem, 2001 (b), pp. 99-119.

Market Centres in Urban Domain

A possible starting point in understanding the nature of exchange processes within the areas controlled by the Gurjara-Pratīhāras would be to analyze the references to market centres, commodities and groups engaged in such processes. Evidences for this kind of exercise, though, may vary from very explicit to rather tangential ones.

Three inscriptions of the Pratīhāras come from Gujarat,[52] all copper plate grants, recording donation of a village each to a Śaiva teacher in one case and to a temple of Sun god, Taruṇāditya in two others. In none is there any direct reference to exchange centres and one would have to look at some other, only marginal, references. Among the benefits, both resources and revenues, listed in the copper plate grant of Cāpa Dharaṇīvarāha of Wadhwan[53] is the term *dāṇī-bhoga-bhāga*,[54] which seems to be an intriguing expression. Bühler, while editing the inscription, explained the term as *dāṇī*, *bhoga* and the share of the produce.[55] B. N. Puri understood the whole phrase as 'share of the produce'.[56] *Bhāga-bhoga* or *bhoga-bhāga* is a common term found in the inscriptions of our period. It has been explained as the share of the produce due to the king and

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[52] *IA*, vol. XII, pp. 190-195; *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 4-10.

[53] *IA*, vol. XII, pp. 190-195.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 193, plate II, ll. 10-11.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

[56] Puri, 1975, p. 133.

periodic contributions by the tenants to the king.[57] *Dāṇi* (or *dāṇī*) has been explained variously as 'king's dues' or 'perquisite of the collector of the duties called *dāṇa* or *dāna'* (road cess or custom duties).[58] Taking into account the tenor of the inscription, we believe, the said expression could mean both, incentive against collection of the cess on goods going through the village and share in agricultural produce. Going by this, one may construe that the said village was a cess collection centre on the communication lines and perhaps also a local level exchange centre.

Besides this, Balavarman's copper plate grant dated 893 AD, recovered from Una, refers to four brāhmaṇas, four *vaṇiks* and four *mahattaras* as witnesses to the grant.[59] This, in addition to showing the presence of local level merchants, also speaks of their reasonably high social status. Interestingly though, *vaṇik* as a category is not mentioned in the list of officials and other persons addressed at the time of making of the grant.

The inscription from the temple of Garībanātha at Pehowa or Peheva[60] in the Kurukshetra district of Haryana records the voluntary imposition of a fixed cess by some horse dealers on the sale of horses and other animals at the horse fair held at

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[57] *IEG*, s.v.

[58] *Ibid.*, s.v.

[59] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 6, ll. 29-34.

[60] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 184-190.

Pṛthūdaka. The expression *ghoṭakayātrāyāṁ samāyāta*[61] clearly points out that the said

dealers met to sell their horses at a fair which seems to have been some kind of periodic

or occasional cattle fair. The inscription does not refer to any settled market place, but

the place Pṛthūdaka is addressed as an *adhiṣṭhāna*,[62] which points to its urban character

as a politically or administratively important place.[63]

As regards the horse dealers, it has been pointed out that all of them had typical

Hindu names and a few had brāhmaṇa names and titles,[64] which highlight the fact that

too literal interpretation of normative texts for historical purposes may be problematic.

The dealers, it is mentioned, were natives of places located in various countries

(*nānādeśāgata*),[65] one of which has been tentatively identified with Lahore. These traders,

it seems, served as intermediaries in the import of horses possibly from the north-

western sectors. The reference to *deśī* of the dealers[66] would indicate that these traders

were organized through a guild. The inscription provides some interesting information

on *yātrās* (fairs) in early medieval India. Two points may be noted; one, besides a specific

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 187, l. 3.

[62] *Ibid.*, *Shripṛthūdakādhiṣṭhāne*.

[63] *Adhiṣṭhāna* has been explained as 'the capital or headquarters of an administrative unit; a city or a town; the chief city.' See, *IEG*, s.v.

[64] See for example, *bhaṭṭa* Veeruka's sons Vanda, Rājyavala and Valluka, *EI*, vol. I, p. 187, l. 3.

[65] *Ibid.*, l. 8.

[66] *Ibid.*

date, the record says that the dealers met on the *piśācīcaturddaśī*.[67] Bühler, the editor of

the inscription identified the term with 'the fourteenth lunar day of the dark half of

vaiśākha or *caitra*'. Devender Handa informs us that 'a huge fair is still held at Pehowa on

the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of *caitra* every year. Thousands of people from

far and near come to Pehowa to bathe in the Sarasvatī and the holy ponds to earn *merit*

and *money*' (emphasis added).[68] The term in our view, rather than pointing to a date,

signifies an occasion, which certainly had a religious connotation.[69] The provenance of

the inscription being a temple would further endorse this. Second, the inscription points

out that the arrangement to divert certain cess to various listed temples and other

beneficiaries from both sellers and buyers would extend in addition to Prthūdaka, to

traighāṭakādisthāneṣu.[70] This points to a few inferences; one, at least Traighāṭaka, which

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[67] *Ibid.*, l. 3.

[68] Handa, 2004, p. 120, fn. 78.

[69] Fairs or *yātrā* kind of markets were distinguished from such economic spaces as *haṭṭas* in their essentially religio-economic characteristics. Elements of this religio-economic category, as pointed out by Binod Agrawal, cannot be clearly separated in either category of "religion" or "economy" but at the same time these elements are inter-related, diffused and inseparable (Agrawal, 1980, pp. 4-6). Further, the religio-economic network can be conceptualized as 'a set of "religious locales" distributed in a given space which are connected with each other in such a way that they form a cycle in terms of scheduling of times. So movements of goods, traders and sometimes the movement of visitors from one religious locale to another religious locale can be made possible within that spatial boundary' (p. 8). The context of Pehowa becomes that much intelligible if comprehended through this paradigm.

[70] *EI*, vol. I, p. 187, l. 11.

also features among the nine places from where these merchants came,[71] seems to have been either geographically close or administratively linked to Pṛthūdaka. Two, while *sthāna* literally means a place, it is sometimes also used for a shrine or a temple and if one adheres to the editor's translation of it as 'sacred place',[72] then it would point to prevalence of such cattle or animal fairs at places of religious sanctity probably at specific occasions of religious importance. The reference though certainly points to the mobile nature of such dealers.

A great deal of information regarding exchange processes, with all their complexities, comes from the famous Ahar stone inscription[73] which was recovered at a place called Ahar near Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh. The inscription is a collective public copy of a series of ten separate documents dating to between 864 AD and 904 AD and spanning through the reigns of Bhoja-I and Mahendrapāla-I, the former, explicitly named in the first document,[74] The site of the inscription is referred to as Tattānandapura, repeatedly addressed as a *pattana*[75] which indicates that it was an important urban centre.

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[71] *Ibid.*, l. 6.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[73] *EI*, vol. XIX, pp. 52-62.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 58, l. 1.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 58, l. 3-4, l. 4, l. 5; p. 59, l. 12; p. 60, l. 15, l. 18; p. 61, l. 23, l. 25.

From the point of view of exchange, the main market area referred to in the inscription is *pūrvva haṭṭa,* the eastern market. It is with this market, or rather with the middle area of this market (*pūrvva haṭṭa madhya pradeśe*)[76] that most of our documents are related. The boundary descriptions repeatedly refer to such terms as *haṭṭamārga,*[77] *bṛhadrathyā*[78] and *kurathyā.*[79] *Haṭṭamārga* would perhaps mean, the main market road i.e. road which had shops and residences on both sides. *Bṛhadrathyā* and *kurathyā* were, in all probability, bigger and smaller lanes respectively, linking the market area with other parts of town. Reference to the market place as eastern market, that is, with direction as a locational marker, points to possibility of other market areas within the main town.

The market place seems to have contained both shops (*āvārī*)[80] as well as residences (*gṛhabhūmi*[81] or *gṛha*[82]), almost all of which were made of burnt bricks (*pakveṣṭakaṁ*).[83] While the inscription, by its very nature, does not refer to any commodities that might

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[76] *Ibid.,* p. 58, l. 4; p. 60. l. 15, l. 18. Line 23 on page 61 mentions a clearer reference, *pūrvva haṭṭe madhya pradeśe* (in the central portion of the eastern market).

[77] *Ibid.,* p. 58, l. 4; p. 60, l. 15, l. 19.

[78] *Ibid.,* p. 60, l. 13; p. 61, l. 23, l. 27.

[79] *Ibid.,* p. 59, l. 9; p. 60, l. 13, p. 61, l. 27.

[80] *Ibid.,* p. 58, l. 3, l. 4, l. 5; p. 59, l. 12; p. 60, l. 15, l. 16, l. 18, l. 19; p. 61, l. 23, l. 27.

[81] *Ibid.,* p. 59, l. 9, l. 10, l. 12; p. 60, l. 13; p. 61, l. 26.

[82] *Ibid.,* p. 58, l. 4; p. 59, l. 10, l. 12; p. 60, l. 15, l. 19; p. 61, l. 23, l. 27.

[83] *Ibid.,* p. 58, l. 4; p. 59, l. 9, l. 12; p. 60, l. 18; p. 61, l. 23, l. 26.

have been traded in the market, a number of merchant groups are clearly mentioned which would be dealt with in some details later in this chapter.

The next epigraphic reference comes from Bhilsa near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh.[84] The inscription is dated to AD 878 and does not mention any Pratīhāra overlord or any subordinates as it was meant to be a record of personal donation. In all probability, the area would have been under Bhoja in whose reign the date of the inscription falls. The inscription records the donation of three *vīthīs* (a stall or a shop in a market) to the temple of Bhaillasvāmin as a permanent endowment (*akṣayanikā*, perhaps a variant of *akṣayanīvikā*).[85] The donor of the endowment was a merchant belonging to Pāravāḍa *jātī*.[86] Interestingly, the inscription inscribed on a stone was recovered from Mahalghāṭ, a *ghāṭ* and the donation seems to have been made at this *ghāṭ* itself. In case of first and third *vīthīs*, the names of market place(s), where these would have been located, are not mentioned. The second *vīthī* is said to have been located at Khahanāsithi.[87] Possibly, the first and the third *vīthīs* were located in the local market while the third may have been situated at another settlement nearby.

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[84] *EI*, vol. XXX, pp. 210-215.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 214, l. 3.

[86] *Ibid.*, l. 2.

[87] *Ibid.*, l. 6.

The second inscription from the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple at Gwalior (876 AD) is significant insofar as it provides a rare epigraphical reference from north India to town administration. The inscription is concerned with a place, which also has a seemingly important fort, Gopagirī (modern Gwalior). The administration of the town was carried out through a council called *vāra*. The reference to the *vāra* is also important as all the four donations recorded in the inscription were made by the whole town (*samasta sthānena*).[88] It is quite possible that it was at the behest of *vāra*, as a representative body of the whole town, that these donations were made. Besides this, the inscription also refers to six settlements which were the property of the town.[89] Two of these are referred to in relation with donation to the temple; Cūḍāpallikā, from where a measured piece of land was given to the temple for a flower garden[90] and Jayapurāka, from where a piece of land, held in common, was given.[91] This piece was surrounded by a number of other fields which were clearly under cultivation. Adjoining one of the fields was a water channel (*vāhaka*)[92] which may have been used for irrigation of these lands. Four other settlements are mentioned as inhabited by oil millers. Two of them, śrī Sarveśvarapura

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[88] *Ibid.*, l. 3.

[89] *Svabhujyamāna, Ibid.*, ll. 4-7.

[90] *Ibid.*, ll. 4-5.

[91] *Ibid.*, ll. 7-11.

[92] That is how the editor of the inscription has translated it in the specific context. The dictionary meaning of the term *vāhakaḥ* is 'a porter', 'a coach driver' or 'a horseman', see *SSED*, s.v.

and Śrī Vatsasvāmipura, it seems, might have been towns of some kind and the other

two, Caccikā-haṭṭikā and Nimbāditya-haṭṭikā, were certainly market centres, even if

small.[93] There is also a reference to a community of gardeners who are mentioned as

living at the top of Śrī Gopagirī, which would perhaps indicate that they had their own

residential locality somewhere in the town. What is significant is that as a part of the

donation, the whole guild of gardeners[94] was supposed to give to the donee temple,

everyday fifty *yathā-kālo(au)payika-haṭṭa-puṣpairmmālāḥ*[95] (garlands made of seasonal

flowers which could be sold in the *haṭṭa*). The expression points to two inferences; one,

that garlands were an important saleable commodity and; two, seasonal flowers were

sown and sold as garlands. A few more, rather important inferences may be drawn from

this engagement. First, that Gopagirī, chiefly a fort town, was surrounded by a

reasonably fertile hinterland with a few natural sources of irrigation. Second, the town

apparently had, in its vicinity, some small markets and craft centres, dominated by oil

millers (at least the inscription gives this impression) which further points to; one,

existence of at least a local cluster level exchange network with Gopagirī as the possible

nodal point and; two, oil milling being by far the most important craft activity in the

area. Garland making also seems to have been an important occupation at least in the

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[93] *EI*, vol. I, p. 160, ll. 12-14.

[94] *Samasta-mālika-śreṇyā, Ibid.,* l. 19.

[95] *Ibid.,* ll. 19-20.

town. Both, oil milling and garland making, essentially as economic activities, are inextricably linked with agriculture. The reference to donation of a field for flower garden points to the fact, in addition to our other inferences, that cultivation of seasonal flowers through creation of orchards was seen as suitable, as also profitable economic activity. Same may be true for oil milling, which might have given impetus to cultivation of mustard or other oil giving crops. The last inference, though, is only speculative.

The Sīyaḍoṇi stone inscription, which provides us with by far the longest list of records of donations, was recovered from Siron Khurd near Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh.[96] The records of donations, which were almost entirely made by merchants and artisans, date to a time span ranging between (*Vikrama*) year 960 = 903 AD and (*Vikrama*) year 1025 = 968 AD. The inscription is flooded with vernacular terms which pose difficulty at times.

For the place Sīyaḍoṇi, we come across two specific terms of reference – *pattana* and *adhiṣṭhāna*. The term *pattana* is mentioned in five records, the two earliest (dated VS 960[97] and VS 964[98]) and the three latest (dated VS 1005[99], VS 1008[100] and VS 1025[101]) while the

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[96] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 162-179.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 173, l. 3.

[98] *Ibid.*, l. 5.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 29.

[100] *Ibid.*, l. 30.

term *adhiṣṭhāna* is mentioned in two later records (dated VS 1008[102] and VS 1025[103]). Two

points are important here. First, that, both the terms are used only in such records where

the political authority, mainly the local ruler under whose enjoyment the place is said to

be, along with other units of administration, is introduced. Second, that, in the record

dated VS 964, the place is introduced as Sīyaḍoṇi,[104] which was under the enjoyment of

mahāsāmanta Undabhaṭa and the term *pattana* is used to denote either the location or the

existence of the temple in Sīyaḍoṇi (*pattanasya dakṣiṇadigvibhāge*[105] or *asmin-pattane*[106]). In

the later records though the place is introduced as 'in the Sīyaḍoṇi *pattana*' (*adyeha*

śrīmatsīyaḍoṇipattane[107] or *adyeha sīyaḍoṇipattane*[108]) while the temples in question are

stated to be situated 'in this *adhiṣṭhāna*' (*ihādhiṣṭhāne*).[109] While not much can be deduced

from these references, there is for sure a subtle change in the way that the identity of the

place was made to reflect at least in the official records. The use of the term *sthāna*[110] with

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[101] *Ibid.*, p. 178, l. 36.

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 31.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 178, l. 36.

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 173, l. 5, *adyeha sīyaḍoṇisamāvāsita...*

[105] *Ibid.*, l. 3.

[106] *Ibid.*, l. 5.

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 177, ll. 28-29.

[108] *Ibid.*, l. 30.

[109] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 31 and p. 178, l. 36.

[110] For more on the term and its relation with the municipal administration of the town see the next chapter.

reference to local administration, which was perhaps taken care of by the *pañcakula* and the *vāra*, is clearly distinguishable from the *pattana* and *adhiṣṭhāna* which are invoked only in relation with the political authority.

The town seems to have a number of market areas at least four of which viz. *caturhaṭṭa*[111] (possibly same as *catuṣkahaṭṭa*[112]), *dosihaṭṭa*,[113] *prasannahaṭṭa*[114] and *mahattakahaṭṭa*[115] are mentioned in the inscription. Besides this, there are repeated references to *haṭṭarathyā*[116] (market road), *rathyā* [117] (general road), *vanijo nijarathyā*[118] (road owned by a merchant) and *dvāroṣṭha-niṣkāsapravesaka*[119] (or *niṣkāsapravesaka-dvāroṣṭhakaṁ*[120]), probably meaning entry and exit gate chambers (of the market area?). That Sīyaḍoṇi was an important centre for collection of all kinds of duties on goods is

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[111] *EI*, vol. I, p. 175, l. 5.

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 178, l. 31.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 12; p. 175, l. 16, l. 20; p. 176, l. 31; p. 177, l. 29.

[114] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 13.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 179, l. 45, l. 46.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 12; p. 175, l. 14, l. 15, l. 16, l. 18; p. 176, l. 21, l. 22, l. 23, l. 26, l. 27; p. 178, l. 35, l. 38.

[117] *Ibid.*, p. 174, ll. 7-8; p. 178, l. 32; p. 179, l. 46.

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 179, l. 45.

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 32.

[120] *Ibid.*, l. 33.

clear both from its identity as a *maṇḍapikā*[121] in relevant records and from the tenor of the

records also. With regard to the structures in the town, we come across some terms of

reference. *Avāsanikā*[122] seems to have been a larger structure than a *gṛha* and a *vīthī*.

Record 3[123] refers to the grant of an *avāsanikā* consisting of four *gṛhas*, record 24[124] refers

to the grant of an *avāsanikā* containing three *gṛhas* and record 25[125] refers to the grant of

an *avāsanikā* along with all the constituent *gṛhas* and *vīthīs*. *Gṛha*,[126] which was another

item granted frequently meant, in all probability, a residential house but *vīthīs* [127] were

the most granted item, which, in the present context, uniformly seem to have meant, a

shop. In clear distinction to Tattānandapura there is not a single reference to *āvārī*. Some

other terms which were almost always mentioned along with the structures granted

were *apasarakasahitā* (or *apasaraka-prāṅgaṇasahitā*), *uvaṭakasahitā* and *avaliptā* (or *avalipta* or

avatiptācchannā).[128] While the terms *apasaraka* and *uvaṭaka* have been explained as a porch

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[121] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 19; p. 176, l. 29, l. 30; p. 179, l. 45; record 3 mentions the term *siyaḍoṇi-satka-maṇḍapikāyāṁ* which would mean 'in the *maṇḍapikā* associated with or belonging to Siyaḍoṇi', p. 173, l. 6.

[122] References for the grant of *avāsanikā, Ibid.,* vol. I, p. 174, l. 7; p. 177, l. 32, l. 33. Besides this the term finds frequent mention in the boundary descriptions of the granted structures.

[123] *Ibid.,* p. 174, ll. 7-8.

[124] *Ibid.,* p. 177, ll. 31-33.

[125] *Ibid.,* ll. 33-34.

[126] *Gṛhas* as a grant item is mentioned in, *Ibid,* p. 174, l. 7, l. 12; p. 176, l. 24; p. 177, l. 32, l. 34.

[127] *Ibid.,* p. 175, l. 13, l. 15, l. 16, l. 17; p. 176, l. 21, l. 22, l. 23, l. 27; p. 177, l. 34; p. 178, l. 35, l. 38.

[128] These terms are mentioned almost always along with *avāsanikā, gṛha* or *vīthī*.

or a veranda but the third term has remained unexplained. One of the meanings of

avalipta is 'anointed or smeared',[129] which would mean that these structures were

smeared with some material. But even more interesting is the term *cchannā* which seems

to be a variant of *channa*, meaning covered or concealed.[130] One of the record mentions

the term *avaliptasilācchannāni*,[131] which, in our view, should mean 'smeared, and covered

with stones'. This, seen along with the grant[132] made by the stone cutters (*silākuṭānāṁ*)

associated with some quarry (*āhāḍasambaddha*), surely indicates, even if with a limited

evidence, that as against frequently mentioned *pakveṣṭakaṁ* of Tattānandapura, stone

seems to have been a more popular material used in masonry at Sīyaḍoṇi.

Another point relates to merchants and artisanal groups mentioned in the inscription.

Merchant groups include, *nemakavaṇik* (salt merchant) and *tāmbolika* (seller of betel

leaves) while artisanal groups include *kallapāla* (distiller of spirituous liquor), *kaṁsāraka*

(brazier?), *tailika* (oil miller), *sūtradhāra* or *silākuṭa* (stone cutter) and *lohavāna* (perhaps

blacksmith). Besides these, one more group is mentioned; that of *kandukas* (sugar boilers

or perhaps sweet makers). Reference to *mahājana*, which may have been an organization

of merchants or perhaps even bankers, is too nebulous to be speculated. Few more

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[129] *SSED*, s.v.

[130] *Ibid.*, s.v.

[131] *EI*, vol. I, p. 174, l. 7.

[132] *Ibid.*, p. 177, ll. 29-30.

merchants are mentioned as individual donors but we do not know as to what commodities they traded in.[133] Nevertheless, even the present data gives a clear indication that Sīyaḍoṇi had more diversified range of occupational groups than any other site that we have discussed. That the markets and groups engaged in both, inbound and outbound trade is amply brought out by the presence of *maṇḍapikā* at the site.

The Kaman stone inscription[134] was recovered from Kaman near Bharatpur in Rajasthan. The inscription, like Sīyaḍoṇi or Ahar inscriptions, is a collective copy of a number of deeds recording donations and endowments made from time to time in favour of deity Kāmyakeśvara, identified with Śiva.

Kaman seems to have been predominantly a fort centre with some political importance as is clearly indicated by the identity of the place as a *koṭṭa*.[135] The inscription neither informs us of any local level administrative body, if there existed one, or about any political representative of the royal authority. The inscription refers to a number of occupational groups or guilds of artisans. These include potters, gardeners, masons or architects and a worker of conch shells. One of the distinguishing features of the Kaman inscription is that most of the endowments are attributed to guilds of artisans. Only one

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[133] For references see infra

[134] *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 329-336.

[135] The place is referred to as *śrīkāmyakīyakoṭṭa*, *EI*, vol. XXIV, p. 335, ll. 12-13.

inscription refers to a merchant making an endowment.[136] Only two records mention

shops; in one case two *āvārīs* are said to have been donated by a *Śāṁkhika* Bhadra

through a written deed[137] and in another, the *goṣṭhika* of the temple of Kāmyakeśvara is

said to have purchased two *āvārikās* which contained *vīthīs*.[138] The editor seems to be

correct in identifying *āvārī* as an enclosure. It seems *āvārīs* or *āvārikās* meant bigger

commercial spaces containing *vīthīs* (shops). This is rather interesting especially in the

light of the fact that in the Ahar inscription, we have references only to *āvārī*, and in

Sīyaḍoṇi, only to *vīthī*. This inscription though clearly suggests that the two terms, even

when associated with a commercial space, had different meanings. Two aspects are

clearly discernible in relation with this settlement. One, that there is only one market

mentioned—a cattle market (*kambalihaṭṭa*).[139] It seems a regular *yātrā* kind of a market

gradually culminated into a settled cattle market. There are no other markets referred

where agricultural goods or artisanal commodities could be exchanged even when the

records predominantly refer to grants of land and endowments made by artisans. Quite

possibly, Kāmyaka, besides being a fort centre also developed into an important centre

of artisanal activities which might have supplied commodities to such bigger mercantile

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[136] *Ibid.* The record is fragmentary but it seems some permanent endowment given by *vaṇik* vajraṭa was recorded.

[137] *Ibid.*, p. 336, ll. 21-22.

[138] *Ibid.*, ll. 22-24.

[139] *Ibid.*, l. 23.

centres as Sīyaḍoṇi or Ahar. Such a possibility may also get some weight if one takes

account of the fact that Kāmyaka was located only around eighty-five miles south-west

of Ahar. The economy of the town seems to have been dominated by land and craft.

Another important inscription coming from Alwar-Bharatpur area is the Rajor

inscription of Mathanadeva, dated 959-60 AD.[140] The inscription was recovered from

near the temple of Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva, among the ruins of Parānagar, south of village

Rajor near Alwar. The inscription refers to the grant of a village by *mahārājādhirāja*

parameśvara śri Mathanadeva of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra lineage to the temple or image of

Lacchukeśvara Mahādeva (Śiva).

The inscription provides us with one of those instances where economic sustenance is

underlined by a convergence of local agricultural goods and those not available locally.

The economic basis of the area was predominantly agrarian. There is a reference of fields

being given along with the grant, which were tilled by the Gurjaras.[20] Perhaps the area

was inhabited by the Gurjaras who had taken to farming. Another underpinning to our

point may be seen in the exaction of taxes over and above the normal share. Such taxes

as *khalabhikṣā*,[141] explained as the cess paid at the threshing floor[142] and *prasthaka*,[143]

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[140] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 263-267.

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 266, l. 11.

[142] *IEG*, s.v.

[143] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 11.

identified as the cess at the rate of a *prastha*[144] (measure equivalent to 1/16 of a *droṇa*),[145]

suggest, even with coercion, state's reliance on agricultural resources. Reference, in the

address of the grant, to *inter-alia, vaṇik-pravaṇi-pramukha*[146] would suggest on one hand

presence of local merchants at the site and even more importantly, as suggested by the

term *pravaṇi,* explained as a banker,[147] perhaps some, even if marginal, use of currency in

the exchange processes. The inscription makes an explicit reference to movement of, at

least, agricultural goods in and out of the site. It refers to *skandhaka* and *mārggaṇaka*[148]

which would endorse this. But even clearer is the reference to a cess, of three *viṁśopakas*

per sack (of agricultural produce), which was brought to the market for sale, to be paid

at (or as) the *haṭṭa-dāna;*[149] a cess of two *viṁśopakas* per month on every shop;[150] and of

fifty leaves from every *collikā* (of betel (?) leaves) brought from outside to the site.[151]

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[144] *IEG,* s.v.

[145] *Ibid,* s.v.

[146] *EI,* vol. III, p. 266, l. 6.

[147] *IEG,* s.v.

[148] *EI,* vol. III, p. 266, l. 11.

[149] *Ibid.,* p. 267, l. 22. D. C. Sircar has explained the term *haṭṭa-dāna* as a tax or tolls collected at the market place. Equally plausible though is the explanation given by Kielhorn, the editor of the inscription, who believes that the term, used here in singular locative (*haṭṭa-dāne*), may have meant some kind of cess or toll
· collection centre similar to a *maṇḍapikā*.

[150] *EI,* vol. III, p. 267, l. 23, *dve 2 vīthīṁ prati māsi [2?] viṁ 2.*

[151] *Ibid.; tathā vāhiḥ praviṣṭa-collikāṁ prati parṇṇānāṁ.*

Rajor, it seems, represented a stage, somewhat intermediate, in the evolution of an urban market centre, the substructure of which was deeply embedded in agrarian settings.

Socio-Political Organization of Resources – The Agrarian Context

There has always remained a curious dichotomy between the agrarian and non-agrarian resources which to us largely seems to be a misplaced one. Perhaps because of less emphasis on analytical research on the rural context, any attempt to conceptualize resources has been largely only in terms of non-agrarian context. The dominant historiography for the post-Gupta centuries which emphasizes the genesis of feudal social formation works with the basic premise of decline of trade and craft activities as also of metallic circulating media of exchange leading to urban decline and a concomitant process of agrarian expansion through extensive land-grants given to brāhmaṇas, temples, *maṭhas, vihāras* etc., which resulted in an unprecedented rural expansion.[152] While on a conceptual level one may or may not have any problems with these two concomitant processes (though at empirical level this has been challenged), a serious rethinking is required on the perceived superstructures of these seemingly antithetical processes—a strict, rigid comprehension of mutually exclusive vibrant economy and economic decline.[153] Rural expansion explicated in terms of closed village

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[152] See, Jha, 1979; Idem, 1993, pp. 1-31; Nandi, 1984, pp. 25-91.

[153] See, Sharma, R. S., 1987. Recently Vishwa Mohan Jha has argued that nowhere in the narrative of Indian feudalism does Sharma even once refer to an overall economic decline in the early medieval period thereby

economy and economic decline negate the possibility of, one, looking at rural resource

production in a more systematic way and two, their organization and movement (except

in case of land) through local, supra-local, regional and supra-regional levels.

In the present section we look precisely at this; resources in the agrarian context and

their organization both at social and political levels during the spatial-temporal context

of the Pratīhāra rule. There are two vantage points from where the question may be

seen:

- Land relations including the complex question of land ownership

- Kinds of agrarian resources and the agencies controlling them

Notwithstanding the fact that land has always been conceived as a rather coveted

resource, a clear idea of its ownership pattern has remained quite oblivious. Lallanji

Gopal, after analyzing a number of epigraphic and textual sources inferred that land in

early medieval India was individually owned. At the same time he argued for the king

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implying that decline in trade and minted metallic coins was offset by a phenomenal expansion in agrarian sector (Jha, 2002). This essentially semantic proposition is problematic. One, that agrarian expansion was not exclusive to the post-Gupta centuries and so its implications may not be blown out of proportion. Second, an economic environment is comprised of a number of activities viz. production, infrastructure, labour, exchange and creation of wealth. All these activities may complement and supplement but cannot replace each other. More production by itself may not result in vibrant economy if the surplus produced is not used for creation of wealth, which may be used for fulfilling needs beyond subsistence. Thus it may be erroneous to argue that the role of trade as a contributor to the economic growth may be replaced by an expansion in the agrarian production. Prof. B. D. Chattopadhyaya, in a personal communication emphasized, that Sharma's conceptualization of urban decay was, in a sense, a restatement of economic decline as in his narrative urban decline does not seem to have been adequately compensated by the rural expansion.

making many claims over village land and so quite possibly, he claimed a theoretical ownership of land. This is indicated by the transfer of other village resources like pasture land, trees, mines, reservoirs etc.[154] R. S. Sharma problematizes the general tendency among scholars to think only in terms of absolute rights in land and their unchanging nature.[155] He further points out that the royal ownership of land may not be applicable to the whole period of early India and that 'most law-books which stress royal rights belong to early medieval times'.[156] Thus it is only in the early medieval period that a king claims ownership rights over individually and communally owned land. He further emphasizes that royal ownership should not be construed as state ownership. Kings made land grants in their personal capacity in the initial period as a representative of the community and later for their own merit.[157] He accentuates the possibility of 'varying rights of various grantees based more on custom than on any well-established law'.[158]

We have tried to analyze the land grants under the Pratīhāras under two heads: the grants issued directly by the Pratīhāra sovereign and other references of grant or

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[154] Gopal, 1989, pp. 5-24.

[155] *IF*, p. 111.

[156] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 117. Sharma thus considers 'growth of individual ownership of land at the cost of royal and communal ownership' an important development of early medieval economy (*IF*, p. 109).

[158] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

donation of land. Table 3 (see at the end of this chapter) contains the land-grants which were issued or reconfirmed by the Pratīhāra sovereign. These copper plate grants are interesting insofar as unlike the lengthy grants issued by other contemporary ruling houses like the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the grants issued by the Pratīhāras were short and free from verbiage. We find a standard pattern of their composition from Nāgabhaṭa's time to that of Vināyakapāla. It is only in the later grants especially those of Trilocanapāla and Yaśaḥpāla, who were clearly not in control of Kanauj and were ruling perhaps in a very small area around Allahabad,[159] that we find marked departures from the earlier pattern. There are two points which may be noted: first that all the grants issued directly by the Pratīhāras known till date, were gifts of village or *agrahāra*, and second that none of these grants except the Pratabgarh grant of Mahendrapāla II, mentions anyone as possessing, owning or enjoying the village in question. These are the instances where the grant or reconfirmation of an earlier grant was being made by the sovereign to the donee without making reference to anyone. The Pratabgarh record though says that the village granted was under the enjoyment of *talavarggika* Hariṣaḍa.[160] The latter, perhaps an official, may have been given an area of which the granted village constituted a part, for his maintenance. These grants are clearly symptomatic of the fact that the sovereign indeed had superior rights over land when it came to gifting or

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[159] See Chapter 1.

[160] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 183-184, l. 9-10, *talavarggika-hariṣaḍa-bhujyamāna-kharparapadrakagrāme.*

reconfirming them. The question though is what was being gifted away; ownership rights or rights to enjoy the resources otherwise due to the state.

One needs to understand that these charters carried the words of the monarch and would have been composed with some care. In this case it may be interesting to see as to how the act of granting was articulated in these records. Five of these grants— Nāgabhaṭa's Badhal grant, Bhoja's Badhal grant, Bhoja's Jiragaur grant, Mahendrapāla's Dighwa-Dubauli grant and Vināyakapāla's Bengal Asiatic Society's grant—which were issued for the first time mentioned the act of grant as *pratigraheṇa pratipādita*[161] i.e. given or granted by gift. As against this the three later grants—Mahendrapāla-II's Pratabgarh record, Trilocanapāla's Jhusi grant and Yaśaḥpāla's Kara stone inscription—contain terms, though slightly different in each case, but essentially meaning 'given or accomplished by a charter'.[162] This subtle shift in the way that the grants were projected was, in our view, symptomatic of an intrusion of formality and legality in the later grants, which would possibly suggest that not every thing mentioned in the charter would have come under the enjoyment in reality. A possible generalization though would require a much wider statistical study. More important is the context of the reconfirmation of previously made grants.

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[161] Mishra, 1990, p. 45, l. 10; *Ibid.*, p. 48, l. 9; *Prāgdhārā*, no. 13, p. 176, l. 10-11; *IA*, vol. XV, p. 113, l. 12; *IA*, vol. XV, p. 141, l. 14.

[162] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 184, l. 12, *śāsanatvena pratipāditaḥ*; *IA*, vol. XVIII, p. 35, l. 11, *śāsanatvena pradattaḥ*; Ghosh, N. N., 1985, p. 100, l. 10-11, *śāsana—tvaṁ prasādhīkṛtya*.

Both Sambhal[163] and Surapura[164] copper plate grants of Nāgabhaṭa-II inform that the sovereign, after having seen the charter and apprised of the (element of) bhoga......gave consent to its continuation as in the past. To this effect these two copper plates were not fresh grants but a reconfirmation for previously made grants.[165] The Barah copper plate grant states that the sovereign, after having seen the charter issued by *parameśvara śri* Sarvvavarmmadeva and the consent by *mahārāja śri* Nāgabhaṭadeva and after being apprised of its (element of) bhoga[166] and obstruction for some time because of *vyavahāriṇa's* negligence during the reign of *mahārāja-śrī* Rāmabhadra ......discontinued the obstruction and re-established it as a continued enjoyment from the past.[167] The Daulatpura copper plate of Bhoja states that the sovereign, after having been apprised of the charter, the permission and the deed of donation and after having known the (element of) bhoga...... gave consent to the said grant as a continued enjoyment from the past.[168] The context of this regrant is important. The record says that *bhaṭṭa* Harṣuka informed Bhoja of the grant of the *agrahāra* in question by his great-grandfather

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[163] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, p. 201, ll. 7-9.

[164] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 8, pp. 107-108, ll. 8-11.

[165] This point seems to have been either considered too conspicuous to be noted or was missed by the editor in his notes even when it is clearly mentioned in the text.

[166] The editor of the inscription had mistakenly read the expression as *bhāga* (*EI*, vol. V, p. 18, l. 10). It was later corrected to *bhoga* by C. R. Krishnamacharlu in *EI*, vol. XXIII, pp. 242-43.

[167] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 18, ll. 10-14.

[168] *EI*, vol. V, pp. 212, ll. 12-14.

Vatsarāja to former's grandfather Vāsudeva through a charter. The latter in turn gave

sixth part of this *agrahāra* [169] to *bhaṭṭa* Viṣṇu through a *pratigraha-patra* (deed of donation)

which arrangement was given due permission by *mahārāja* Nāgabhaṭa.[170] In Bhoja's reign

though, both the charter and the permission had fallen into abeyance.[171]

These evidences clearly demonstrate that a gift of village or an *agrahāra* did not

constitute conferment of rights which were inalienable and in that sense they were not

ownership rights. Nāgabhaṭa seems to have this curious distinction of giving consent to

as many as four grants (out of the five that he is known from) even when there is no

reference to any obstruction in any of these. Three of these references come from present

Uttar Pradesh where Nāgabhaṭa was the first ruler of his dynasty to have ruled. This is

clearly symptomatic of, even with limited evidence, the endeavour on the part of

Nāgabhaṭa, as the first ruler of the newly established dynasty in the region, to look

afresh at the grants made by previous regimes. In the fourth case (the Daulatpura copper

plate) the donee was seeking permission to part with sixth part of the *agrahāra* granted,

which required a formal deed subject to the consent of the sovereign. In the first record

of the Pratabgarh inscription, the sovereign granted a village out of the holding of an

official and there is no reference to his consent to that effect in the record. If

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[169] *Ibid.*, p. 212, l. 10-11, *asya ṣaṣṭhāṁśo bhaṭṭa viṣṇave pratigraha pattreṇa dattaḥ.*

[170] *Ibid.*, l. 11, *mahārāja śri nāgabhaṭadeven-ānumartir-ddattā.*

[171] *Ibid.; deva rajye tu tac-chāsanaṁ-anumatiś-ca vigatim-upagate.*

Sarvvavarmma of the Barah copper plate is identified with Sarvavarman Maukhari,[172] who ruled in the later half of the sixth century, as the editor of the inscription believes,[173] it would then mean that Nāgabhaṭa ratified or reconfirmed the grant after more than two centuries.[174] It seems both religious and secular grants in this period were subject to superior rights of the sovereign and since they could be obstructed due to negligence of the concerned officer or could require ratification with the establishment of a new dynasty, it is indicated that they were not the rights of absolute ownership and the donee was consistently dependent on officials for the enjoyment of the gift. The other facet of this question is whether ingrained in the superior rights of the sovereign was the authority to alienate one's right of absolute ownership. There are no direct evidences to disprove this but since the grant of village as a gift did not constitute conferment of absolute ownership, the answer should ideally be in the negative. But as we shall see soon there are some aberrations to this pattern in the specific context of the grants to state officials. Also important in this context is the complete silence in these grants about the existing owner(s) which in a way would tantamount to a status-quo or perhaps even a negation of ownership rights being alienated. There is though no doubt that

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[172] R. S. Sharma considers this Sarvvavarma as a feudatory of Nāgabhaṭa, *IF*, p. 65.

[173] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 16.

[174] The reference is also indicative of the diligence and seriousness with which records of land transaction were maintained and kept under state control. This also highlights the extent of state control on land grants through administrative machinery.

simultaneous, multiple superior rights in land existed in addition to that of the absolute

owner.

We may now expand the canvas of our discussion to include references from table 5,

which shows the grants other than the royal grants, of both villages and pieces of land.

Most of the references to the grants of villages are attributed to the local subordinate

rulers/officials with or without the permission of the sovereign. The Una grants, dated

893 AD and 899 AD, of two contiguous villages to the temple of Sun god, Taruṇāditya

by the local Cālukya rulers Balavarman and his son Avanivarman-II Yoga respectively,

seem to have been made by the prior approval of the sovereign or his representative in

the local court. In the first grant, sign manual of one śrī Dhīika appears at the end along

with those of Balavarman.[175] The second grant is much more explicit. It clearly mentions

that the said grant was made after due permission of śrī Dhīika, the *tantrapāla*.[176] The

latter was, for certain, a royal official serving as the governor or the warden of the

marches in the outlying Gujarat area. Dharaṇīvarāha's Wadhwan grant, of 914 AD,[177]

though does not mention of any royal consent. Reference from Pehowa[178] is not very

clear. There is only a cursory mention of the assignment of three villages to the temple(s)

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[175] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 6, l. 36; *sva-hastotra śrī balavarmmaṇaḥ sva-hastaḥ śrī dhīika*.

[176] *Ibid.*, p. 9, l. 52-53; *tanniyukta-traṁdrapāla śrī-dhīika pratibaddhaistad-anumatyā*.

[177] *IA*, vol. XII, pp. 190-195.

[178] *EI*, vol. I, p. 247, ll. 19-20; *yakṣapālakanāmaiko dvitīyo gejjarābhidhaḥ pāṭalākhyastṛtīyopi grāmo bhogāya kalpitaḥ*.

of Viṣṇu erected by three Tomara brothers. The assignment would have been made, in all probability, by the three brothers, but we do not know whether any prior approval was sought from the sovereign, in this case, probably Mahendrapāla-II. One of the brothers is addressed as *bhūnātha* which points to the fact that possibly the family had some political clout locally. The Bayana inscription dated in 955 AD,[179] of the time of Mahīpāla-II, refers to grant of two villages and some fields by the local queen Citralekhā to the temple of Viṣṇu, which she herself had got constructed. In the neighbouring Alwar district in 960 AD, we find a local, seemingly powerful ruler Mathanadeva of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra family granting a village, evidently under his own enjoyment, along with the neighbouring fields which were being cultivated by the Gurjaras[180] to the temple of Lacchukeśvara Mahādeva. Both these inscriptions nominally invoke the name of the sovereign but there is no element of any permission being sought or granted. At the same time, it is important to note that there are instances where the sovereign or even the subordinate ruler/official granted land/fields in areas which were under their own enjoyment or were being enjoyed by other subordinates. While the context of such references, especially in relation with the political situation, are germane to comprehending such aberrations, R. S. Sharma made a valid point by highlighting the prevalence of varying rights over land which in our view would have been quite fluid

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[179] *EI*, vol. XXII, p. 124, ll. 22-23.

[180] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 12; *śrī-gūrjjara-vāhita-samasta-kṣettra-sametaśca.*

depending upon the political situation. Significantly though, such references come only

in relation with the secular official grants. One of the records of the Kaman inscription

dated 826 AD,[181] which would have fallen in the reign of Nāgabhaṭa-II, refers to a grant

of land being tilled by three ploughs (*trihaliṁ bhūmimeka*),[182] by a person named Untaṭa

in a village (name lost), which was under his own enjoyment, to the temple of

Kāmyakeśvara. The fragmentary portion at the beginning of the inscription mentions

one *bhaṭṭa* Untaṭa whose ancestors belonged to Rohitaka (modern Rohtak in Haryana)

and who apparently got constructed the Kāmyakeśvara temple. The military attributes

of one of his ancestors[183] seem to indicate that the family may have been of some political

importance at the local level. At the same time it is important to note that there is a

difference of forty years between the earliest record of gift to the temple and the gift in

question. The record further says that the gifted land was previously tilled by

brāhmaṇas Sāhulla, Jajja and others and at the time of making of the gift was being tilled

by one Eḍuvāka. This clearly seems to be a grant where the donor gifted the land owned

by him in the village which was under his enjoyment and which he was not personally

tilling. To that effect it also points to a tenant status of the present and the previous

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[181] *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 329-336.

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 336, l. 20.

[183] *Ibid.*, p. 334, l. 4.

tillers.[184] The record ends with an interesting note unfortunately an important part of which has been lost. The extant portion says that whatever was produced in all these permanent endowments (perhaps land tilled by one plough was considered one endowment) would be added to something (which word has been lost) as this is what the *Śastras* advocate.[185] Not much can be made out of this line in the want of the fragmentary portion, but if the lost portion meant the land itself, which is not entirely illogical, then it would mean that the donor was making explicit his complete abjuration of the claim over land and the production wherefrom. In that case the present tenant would now deal with the temple, the new owner of the land.

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[184] *Ibid.,* p. 336, l. 20, *yā kṛṣṭā dvijasāhullājjajjādibhiralaṁ purā eḍuvākodhunā yāñca vāhatyeva hālikaḥ.* Use of terms like *kṛṣṭā* and *hālikaḥ* would perhaps indicate a tenant status for the tillers. Similarly use of the term *vāhita* in the second Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple inscription at Gwalior also seems to have been in the same sense. In the contemporary inscriptions associated with the urban context the sense of belongingness or ownership is generally conveyed through the use of genitive case or by the use of term *satka*. For example in the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription (*EI,* vol. I, pp. 162-179) we come across such terms as *Sīyaḍoṇi-satka-maṇḍapikā* (*maṇḍapikā* associated with Sīyaḍoṇi) (l. 6), *Vāmana-satka-vīthī* (l. 12), *Caṇḍu-satka-avāsanikā* (l. 32) and the Ahar inscription is also abound in references to ownership of *vīthīs* expressed through the term *satkā* (*EI,* vol. XIX, pp. 52-62, *passim*). D. C. Sircar also, in relation with the Bhilsa inscription (*EI,* vol. XXX, pp. 210-215), has shown quite convinsingly that *satka* stood for ownership (p. 212). In relation with land (also a kind of non-liquid asset like *āvārī, vīthī* or *gṛha*) though we have no explicit reference to show the term used for ownership except for a record in the Pratabgarh inscription where a field is stated to be owned by brāhamaṇa Keśavāditya (*brāhamaṇa keśavādityasya kṣetraṁ*) (*EI,* vol. XIV, p. 187, l. 32). Also the reference in the Gwalior inscription of grant of a field in the chief grain land held in common (*hār*) and tilled by Dallaka is surely suggestive of the tenant status, at least of Dallaka, but probably also of other tillers mentioned in the records.

[185] *EI,* vol. XXIV, p. 336, ll. 20-21.

The second record of the Pratabgarh inscription refers to the grant of village

Dhārāpadraka, which was under the enjoyment of *śrī* Vidagdha,[186] along with a *kacchaka*

situated in the northern part of the said village,[187] by *tantrapāla-mahāsāmanta-*

mahādaṇḍanāyaka śrī Mādhava on the request of *mahāsāmanta* Indrarāja of the Cāhamāna

family.[188] The grant was confirmed (in the official capacity as in the first grant) by *śrī*

Vidagdha as his sign manual appears at the end.[189] Here it is important to note that if the

grant of the said village meant transfer of ownership rights then an additional grant of a

field within the precincts of the same village in the said record would not have been

required. It may be argued here that a field granted, in all probability conferring

ownership rights, by an authority who was clearly not the owner of the land would have

meant encroachment into the rights of the owner. In the light of the fact that the said

field was irrigated by *arahaṭa*, for sure an expensive mode of irrigation as against the

more popular and cheap leather buckets, it is quite possible that the field was owned by

Vidagdha himself. The contention while speculative still is within the realm of

possibility in the light of general ownership pattern. The two instances discussed above

highlight the possibility that officials of the state were given, besides the share of the

produce from a specified area, some land with absolute ownership which they could

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[186] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 186, l. 21; *śrīvidagdhabhogāvāptye dhārāpadrakagrāme.*

[187] *Ibid.*, l. 26; *aparaṁ caitasminnaiva grāme uttarato digbhāge sādhāraṁ kacchakannāma.*

[188] *Ibid.*, l. 21; *cāhamānānvayamahāsāmantaśrīindrarāja śrīdurlabharājasutasya prārthanayāḥ.*

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 187, ll. 26-27; *svahastoyaṁ śrīmādhavasya svahastoyaṁ śrīvidagdhasya.*

part away or get it gifted through their own volition. Since the tillers mentioned would have been be working as tenants it is difficult to ascertain as to how the fields in question were procured; through the superior rights of the sovereign, by other legal means or by bringing hitherto untilled area under cultivation. The references of the grant of fields from the Rajor[190] and Bayana[191] inscriptions suggest that with a weak sovereign, the subordinates were taking over such royal privileges which were till now confined to the Pratīhāra sovereign and also that the practice which was perhaps limited to the grants to officials was beginning to encroach into other domains.

We may now move on to the references of grant of fields or land. Two records from Pushkar area in Rajasthan are particularly interesting. First of these inscriptions, which was discovered from Pushkar itself and bears a date 926 AD,[192] states that *bhaṭṭa* Malhana purchased a Khāta *kṣetra* within the Khaḍḍhara *kṣetra* situated in the village Nandā (*nandāgrāmabhūmyāṁ*)[193] from Savatuka and Pama, sons of brāhmaṇa Maināga and gave it to the god Viṣṇu at Pushkar with the exception of a portion which was already under the enjoyment of a deity and looked after by Vāmana (perhaps an official

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[190] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 263-267.

[191] *EI*, vol. XXII, pp. 120-127.

[192] *EI*, vol. XXXV, pp. 241-244.

[193] *Ibid.*, p. 242, ll. 3-4.

associated with the beneficiary temple).[194] Khaddhara seems to be a proper name of the

field, which as we shall see soon was not uncommon in the area, while Khāta *kṣetra*

would perhaps mean that the purchased field was brought under agriculture after

digging out the trees etc. The inscription is a bit confusing. It states that the said Khāta

kṣetra was purchased by *bhaṭṭa* Malhaṇa from the two brāhmaṇa brothers but the very

next line says that one third of this very field was purchased from Savatuka, one of the

brothers, alone.[195] This would mean that either the said field was divided in two-thirds –

one-third between the brothers or one of the brothers had additional land which

constituted one-third of the whole field. It seems a part of this Khāta *kṣetra* had already

been assigned to a temple. The second part of the inscription, dated 938 AD,[196]

introduces a person named Durgarāja as a *bhūpa*[197] (a local chief or, according to D. C.

Sircar, a landlord) and says that whatever gifts were offered by the pilgrims visiting

Puṣkara, became the gifts of Durgarāja himself[198] when he took bath in the Puṣkara Lake

and offered libations to the god.[199] The next line says that for this reason, the gift was

offered to the god Puṇḍarikākṣa. Purpose of the second record is not clear. D. C. Sircar,

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[194] *Ibid.,* p. 243, ll. 7-8.

[195] *Ibid.,* pp. 242-243, ll. 4-6.

[196] *Ibid.,* p. 244, ll. 22-31.

[197] *Ibid.,* l. 26.

[198] *Ibid.,* ll. 28-29; *puṣkara pathikaiḥ nikhilaṁ janaiḥ prattaṁ dānaṁ ca bhavati durgarājasya.*

[199] *Ibid.,* ll. 27-28.

the editor of the inscription, does not consider the second part as a separate record but some sort of a ratification of the first record by the local political authority that may have controlled areas around Pushkar.[200] Another inscription from Thanwala near Pushkar, and dated in 956 AD,[201] addresses Durgarāja as the *mahantaka* of Siṁharāja,[202] the Cāhamāna ruler of Śākambharī. It further says that Durgarāja made a grant of a field situated in the village Nandā in favour of Raṇṇāditya (in all probability a Sun god). Then follows a list of as many as eleven grants, seemingly all of fields having proper names, by individuals (see table 5) the first of which mentions a grant made by Durgarāja himself. It is then mentioned that all these gifts were added by Durgarāja to his own gift.[203] We do not know whether the gift by Durgarāja mentioned at the beginning of the record was same as the one mentioned in the list. The cumulative evidence of the two Pushkar inscriptions though suggests some important points:

(1) There is an explicit claim on the part of Durgarāja to show all the gifts, which in the present inscriptions only relate to fields, as his own by virtue of being a *bhūpa*. This may be, in the present context, construed as an implicit claim of superior rights over all the fields gifted.

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[200] *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

[201] *EI*, vol. XXXV, pp. 244-246.

[202] *Ibid.*, p. 245, l. 2; *mahārājādhirāja śrī siṁgha(ha)rāja satka mahantakaḥ durggarājaḥ.*

[203] *Ibid.*, p. 246; *sarvvaṁ durggarājena dānena yuktam.*

(2) It seems the gifts mentioned in the second inscription were made sometime earlier and only later incorporated in the inscription which was meant to be a grant by Durgarāja as in the case of first inscription. The question though is whether the claim made by Durgarāja after as many as twelve years after the actual grant in one case, and probably also in the second, carried along with it some change in the status of the grant.

There can be no doubt that all these grants were acts of personal donation and included transfer of ownership rights. In that case the taxes due to the state would have remained intact. D. C. Sircar makes an important point that it may well be possible that Durgarāja as the 'landlord' of the Pushkar area staked a superior claim over the gifts which carried along with it the element of exemption from the taxes that were due to the state.[204] The point though is not explicitly brought out in these inscriptions. The evidence demonstrates the exercise of superior rights over gifts, predominantly of land in this case, by a local political authority and perhaps an official of the Cāhamāna ruler who, even if only superficially, is known to have acknowledged the sovereignty of the Pratīhāras.[205]

The third important aspect of land relations pertains to communal ownership. While it has been argued in relation with communal ownership of the village resources by the village community, there are other kinds of evidences also. The second record of the

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[204] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[205] See, supra Chapter 1.

Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple inscription from Gwalior[206] refers to the grant of land by the whole town (*samastasthānena*) in villages which are stated to be under its own enjoyment (*svabhujyamāna*). According to one grant the whole town gave, to the temple of the Navadurgās, built by Alla, the *koṭṭapāla*, a measured piece of land in the village Cūḍāpallikā, which was under the enjoyment of the town, for the purpose of construction of a flower garden.[207] According to another grant,[208] a field named Vyāghrakeṇḍikā, under cultivation in the chief grain land (*mūlavāpa*) held in common (*hāra?*) in the village Jayapurāka, under the enjoyment of the whole town[209] and another field in the same village, to the north of the first one, was given to the temples of Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin and Navadurgās by the whole town. The first of these fields is said to have been cultivated by one Dallaka, son of Saṅgaḍāka (*saṅgaḍāka-suta-dallaka-vāhita-kṣetraṃ*)[210] and the second, by Memmāka, son of kṣatriya Devavarma (*kṣatriya-devavarmma-suta-memmāka-vāhita-kṣatraṃ*).[211] The boundary description of these two fields says—on the east, the field cultivated by Nauḍāka (*nauḍāka-vāhita-kṣetra*).[212] In the

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[206] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 154-162.

[207] *Ibid.*, p. 159, ll. 3-5.

[208] *EI*, vol. I, p. 159, ll. 5-11.

[209] *Ibid.*, l. 7.

[210] *Ibid.*, l. 8.

[211] *Ibid.*

[212] *Ibid.*, l. 9.

same context the first record of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription refers to a grant of a measured piece of land, attached to the boundaries of the town (*svakiyatalasīmā-pratibaddha-kṣetraṁ*),[213] with the consent of the whole town (*sakala-sthanānumatena*), possibly through the *vāra*, to the temple of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭāraka set up by Caṇḍuka.[214]

There are two possibilities in case of the Gwalior records. One, that the element of enjoyment in the villages in question was to the effect that the state's share in produce had been diverted to the town. In that case grant of the field would have constituted diversion of only taxes from the town to the temple. Alternatively, it may well be possible that the town collectively through the *vāra* owned some units of fields in the nearby villages, which were being tilled by tenants, and to that extent the gift would have meant transfer of ownership. The case of Sīyaḍoṇi though clearly suggests that the granted field was the property of the whole town as there is no village mentioned and there is no element of enjoyment involved. If this holds then it would provide us with a rare evidence of communal ownership from early medieval north India where towns owned fields in the nearby villages. Also important in this context is the fact that if taxes due to the state were being diverted to the donee, why then there is no mention of any taxes in relation with those fields which were donated by towns like Gopagirī and Sīyaḍoṇi. The explanation perhaps lies in the fact that such donations were being made

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[213] *EI*, vol. I, p 173, l. 3.

[214] *Ibid.*, ll. 1-4.

by committees like *vāra*. It might have been an important municipal authority but certainly not the highest political authority of the place. So, while the *vāra* could give away land in the areas owned by the town, it was not entitled to alienate taxes, if any, appropriable by the state. Alienation of taxes would have been a prerogative of the Pratīhāra sovereign. This is further endorsed by the nature of political organization at the town which suggest that it was under the direct administration of the Pratīhāras.

A considerable number of inscriptions of Kalacūri-Cedi era in Gujarat, central India and Maharashtra, and dating from the fourth century AD refer to the grant of land and villages according to the *bhūmicchiddranyāya*,[215] i.e., according to the maxim of the waste land, perhaps indicating that whosoever brings waste land under cultivation comes to have the ownership over it. Since most of these inscriptions pertained to the grant of villages which seem to have been already settled, it seems the term was used in the grants more as a 'legal fiction', to use R. S. Sharma's phrase.[216] In Gujarat, for example, all the grants of the Gurjaras of Bharuch refer to this term.[217] The tradition was still visible in the late ninth century grants of Cālukya Balavarman and his son Avanivarman-II Yoga. These inscriptions mention the grant as according to

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[215] *IF*, p. 30; *CII*, vol. IV, pt. 1.

[216] *IF*, p. 30.

[217] See, *CII*, vol. IV, pt. 1, pp. 57-67, l. 34; pp. 67-72, l. 34; pp. 75-78, l. 15; pp. 78-81, l. 13.

bhūmicchiddranyāya[218] even when the said village as also as many as nine villages mentioned in the boundary descriptions are addressed as *grāmas*. Having said that, one has to understand that conceptually the use of the term in the grants, and its subsequent use as a formal reference carries some significance and is indicative of the fact that grant of waste land was an important constituent of the strategic grants made at least in the initial phases of this format of extending patronage. It is important that the use of the term is not uniform through out north India. It is first discernible in the inscriptions of western India, lower Madhya Pradesh and upper Maharashtra[219] and later we find the term in the Pāla inscriptions. It seems the use of the term in its initial phases, which would roughly coincide with the Sātavāhana-Gupta-Vākāṭaka period, was determined by the nature of landscape, especially in the outlying areas with reference to the Ganga valley, and the requirements in the wake of expanding state societies.

Another term that finds mention in all the three inscriptions of the Pratīhāras from Gujarat—Wadhwan grant of Dharaṇīvarāha and the two Una plates—is *bhuṁjato (bhuñjato) bhogāpatayaḥ*,[220] meaning to enjoy or caused to be enjoyed. In addition to this,

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[218] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 18; p. 10, ll. 59-60.

[219] The term finds early mention in the inscriptions of the Maitrakas of Gujarat, Kaṭacūris of central India and those of the Traikuṭaka family of central India in the areas around Pardi and Surat. See relevant inscriptions in *CII*, vol. IV, pt. 1.

[220] *IA*, vol. XII, p. 194, l. 17; *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 19; p. 10, l. 63.

the two Una plates also mention the term *kr̥ṣataḥ karṣāpayato*,[221] meaning to cultivate or caused to be cultivated and the Rajor inscription refers to *kurvataḥ kārayato*, probably in the same sense as *bhuñjato bhogāpatayaḥ*.[222] These terms clearly give an impression that the donee was being conferred the right which would have enabled him to create intermediaries with regard to cultivable fields within the villages in question or to displace the existing tillers with others. Notwithstanding the fact that this interpretation is in clear contradiction to the general argument presented here (or for that matter to the general conceptualization of land relations in the granted villages) insofar as it points to sub-infeudation of the production process, two points are important: one, that the reference comes from a limited geographical context and second that, the said expression may alternatively be inferred as an exhortation on the part of the donor, in these cases the local political authority, against any obstruction in the production process.[223] Here it is important to note that these references come from Gujarat where conferment of forced labour was an important privilege granted to the donee. One may also note that contemporary literary sources are replete with references which emphasize the importance of sustained production even in the granted area.

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[221] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 19; p. 10, l. 63..

[222] *EI*, vol. III, p. 267, l. 16 and p. 264, fn. 6.

[223] Gopal, 1997, p. 103.

The above discussion on the question of land relations clearly brings out the dichotomy between the pattern of grant of villages and fields or pieces of land. We find that virtually all the references for grants of village show the sovereign or the local subordinate political authority as donors. Most of the gifts of land were obviously given by individuals. The pattern is significant specifically in the spatial-temporal context of the Pratīhāra rule insofar as it reaffirms the point that while the political authority had superior rights over village land, they were only confined to the granting of taxes and share of the produce. There are very few references of gifts of fields by seemingly important local political personages but the brevity in which they have been documented seems to indicate that these were acts of personal donation. The inscriptions of Durgarāja though clearly indicate that there was a general attempt on the part of the local ruler or 'landlord' to claim superior rights over personal gifts of land perhaps by exempting them from taxes. But the rights of local or subordinate rulers were subject to the superior rights of the sovereign at least up to the time of Mahendrapāla-I. Within the feudalism construct the grants of villages by subordinates of the Pratīhāras have been seen as an important bulwark of the feudalization of polity in its formative stages.[224] It is important to note in this context that the available sources clearly demonstrate two points:

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[224] *IF*, Chapters II and III.

(1) The first evidence of a land grant made by a subordinate under the Pratīhāras comes in the reign of Mahendrapāla-I.[225] His predecessor Bhoja-I (Mihira Bhoja) ruled for over a good half a century over virtually the whole of north India up to at least eastern Uttar Pradesh and we have not a single grant of land being made by any subordinate. Both the Una plates which fall in the reign of Mahendrapāla-I clearly show that these grants could be made only after the permission of the *tantrapāla*, perhaps the governor and the royal representative in the region.[226] We have already commented upon the attempts made by Nāgabhaṭa-II to reconsider the grants made by previous regimes; perhaps an attempt towards consolidating his control over newly acquired areas.

(2) First references of grants by subordinates without any prior approval by the sovereign come from the time of Mahīpāla-I which also marks the phase when first cracks, both because of internal dissensions owing to a possible conflict between Mahīpāla-I and Bhoja-II and also as a result of serious Rāṣṭrakūṭa challenge under Indra-III,[227] appear in the political structure of the Pratīhāras. By the time of Bayana and Rajor inscriptions, the Pratīhāra state was, for all practical purposes, in shambles. Making sweeping generalizations would be undesirable but even from this limited evidence it

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[225] The only exception to this is the Hansot Plates of Cāhamāna Bhārtṛvṛddha who was perhaps a subordinate of Nāgabhaṭa-I. The reference in any case comes from the very early days of the Pratīhāra rule and is also tentative to some extent. For Mahendrapāla's rule, see *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 1-10.

[226] Supra, notes 175 and 176.

[227] See the relevant passage in the Chapter 2.

seems, as the political relationship between the sovereign and his subordinates became more and more nominal, the subordinates increasingly tended to ignore the superior rights of the sovereign over land. Interestingly we do not have any grant issued directly by the Pratīhāra sovereign between the first record of the Pratabgarh inscription of Mahendrapāla II (946 AD) and the Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla (1028 AD), i.e., for a long span of eighty two years. We do not have even a single inscriptional reference of Rājyapāla as the ruling king. Any inference drawn on the basis of absence of evidence though would remain subject to discoveries in the future.

Besides recording gifts of villages or land, copper plate inscriptions of the period also mention the taxes diverted to the donee and transfer of state's superior rights over village resources in favour of the beneficiary. The latter has been seen, within the historiography of Indian feudalism, as an encroachment of the king in the areas, within villages, which were owned collectively by the village community. To begin with it needs to be understood that in the early Indian *Śāstric* literature or in the epigraphs of the period, the idea of communal ownership of land or resources within villages does not figure as predominantly as the concept of individual proprietorship or royal ownership.[228] At any rate, there is a clear indication that the king (or state) was giving away resources, as a part of the enjoyment, within the boundary of the granted village, which were not under any kind of absolute ownership and in that sense, were a

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[228] Gopal, 1997, p. 95.

property of the state. Besides this, the divergence in the lists of taxes and resources sometimes in the case of grants of contiguous villages, or in case of two separate grants made by the same ruler would perhaps tend to show that they were not just cosmetic epithets. At the same time, these references were subject to such factors as evolution of a standard pattern of composition of grant as in the case of the Pratīhāras. Also, as we shall try to show, there is a considerable difference between the grants of a territorially expansive state and a small, local or sub-regional and developing political entity.

All the known land-grants of the Pratīhāra sovereigns up to the time of Vināyakapāla mention the term *sarvvāya sametā*[229]/*sarvva samaita*[230] meaning 'all inclusive'. This to us seems an adherence to a specific format which evolved under Nāgabhaṭa-II and continued till the Pratīhāras held intact vast dominions up to about the middle of the tenth century. In this light it seems erroneous to think that there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the donor to leave space for the enhancement of taxes in future. At any rate, it is not clear as to what was being included in the said expression, i.e., whether it included village resources other than taxes or not. The first tangible departure from this expression comes from Mahendrapāla-II's grant of a village dated 946 AD in the first record of the Pratabgarh inscription. It refers to the grant of 'all tax obligations

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[229] Mishra, 1990, p. 45, l. 7; *Prāgdhārā*, vol. 8, p. 201, l. 6; *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, p. 107, l. 7; *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 18, ll. 8-9; *EI*, vol. V, p. 211, l. 8; *IA*, vol. XV, p. 113, l. 10; *IA*, vol. XV, p. 141, l. 12.

[230] Mishra, 1990, p. 48, l. 7.

as far as the preserve of the grass as well as the pasture lands up to the boundaries' of

the said village which were, as enumerated in the later portion of the grant, *bhāga, bhoga,*

kara, hiraṇya etc.[231] There is no mention of any village resource being given away. The

second record, which is undated, refers to a grant made by an important official

Mādhava who was also the *tantrapāla* based at Ujjain at the request of Indrarāja,[232] the

local Cāhamāna ruler controlling areas around modern Pali district of Rajasthan. It is

quite possible that this area was under the jurisdiction of Mādhava. The granted village

was within the holding of Vidagdha,[186] the ratifying authority and a royal representative

at the Cāhamāna court. The inscription, making no reference to the reigning Pratīhāra

sovereign, seems to be dated later than the first record and belonged to a period when

the Pratīhāras were fast loosing control over the outlying areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat and

central India. As a matter of fact, record one of this inscription happens to be the last of

any Pratīhāra sovereign in southern Rajasthan. The grant, which clearly seems to have

been made on local initiative, mentions gift of the granted village 'as far as its

boundaries, together with various gardens or plantations, along with all the goods, grass

and pasture land, together with all water bodies and land surface, with borders

demarcated by thorny shrubs, along with *bhoga, bhāga, kara, hiraṇya* etc., *skandhaka,*

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[231] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 184, l. 13, *dīyamāna-bhāga-bhoga-kara-hiraṇyādikamasyopanetavyamiti.*

[232] *Ibid.* p. 186, l. 20-21, *ityasmin kāle vartamāne ihaiva śrīmadujjayanyāyāṁ(yinyāṁ) kāryābhyagata-tantra(ntra)pāla-mahāsāmanta-mahādaṇḍanāyaka-śrī-mādhavenaḥ(dhavaḥ)-śrī-dāmodarasutena(sutaḥ) cāhamānānvaya-mahāsāmanta-śrī Indrarāja śrī durlabharājasutasya prārthanayāḥ.*

mārgaṇṇaka etc., and together with all the dues due to the king'.[233] Overlapping in various terms is clearly discernible. Similar, though in varying degrees, are the references in the Una Plates of Balavarman (893 AD) and Avanivarman (899 AD), Wadhwan grant of Dharaṇīvarāha (914 AD), Rajor inscription of Mathanadeva (960 AD), Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla (1028 AD) and Kara stone inscription of Yaśaḥpāla (1036 AD).[234]

There seems to be a clear dichotomy in the way the accompaniments of the grants were being projected. While the Pratīhāras, who ruled extensive territories in virtually the whole of north India, except the last two rulers, used a rather light and simple expression to convey the contents of the grant, the local (and in most cases subordinate) rulers, including the last two Pratīhāra kings were much more concerned about the explicit mention of virtually every thing that could be found in a village settlement. It is not of great concern as to what constituted *sarvvāya-sameta* or whether every thing finding mention in these detailed lists was actually given or not. It is clearly discernible from the given evidence that local, subordinate rulers were trying to project an image through these grants especially when the sovereign dynasty was fast waning away; the image of a ruler who was independent, powerful, closely adhering to the ideals of *pūrta*,

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[233] For the text and reference, see Table 4.

[234] See, Table 4.

who, as if, was the lord of prosperous and extensive dominions and who was dedicated to the cause of gods and their temporal custodians, the brāhmaṇas.

Having said that, though, it is also important to acknowledge that, these references were not merely standard stereotypical epithets. A case in point would perhaps be that of the Una plates as indicated in Table 4 at the end of this chapter. These were the grant of two contiguous villages which find mention in each other's boundary descriptions. What is interesting here is that, even when they are located in close vicinity and were granted within a span of five years, still refer to very different terms of taxes.

This is also borne out by a close perusal of the terms mentioned in each grant in Table 4. It is perhaps indicative of, one, how certain items, associated with the agrarian context, were conceptualized as resources, and two, even with some margin for formality and contemporary ways of composing a land-grant, the possibility that certain resources were considered more important in a specific geographical context. They may be seen in some details taking cognizance of the locality they come from.

If one goes chronologically, leaving apart the grants of the Pratīhāra sovereigns which only mention 'all inclusive', [229] perhaps a pattern may come up. The Una plate of Balavarman issued in 893 AD, besides mentioning the grant of taxes up to the boundaries of village, refers to only one term which may be categorized as a resource

other than taxes—'together with various gardens or plantations'.[235] The plates of his son

issued five years later, as also the Wadhwan grant of Dharaṇīvarāha issued in 914 AD,

make only one addition—'together with the right to get unpaid labour whenever that

may be due from the tenants'.[236] No other Pratīhāra grant except these two refers to *viṣṭi*.

The second record of the Pratabgarh inscription adds to the above formulation—wood,

grass and pastures, and all the water bodies and land surface.[237] The Rajor and the Jhusi

grants are much more detailed in this context. While the former mentions, 'as far as the

boundaries of the gifted village, the preserve of grass and pasture land', along with

gardens and trees, water bodies, gifts, and treasure troves,[238] the latter, in addition to the

preserve of grass and pasture land, mentions water bodies and land surface, mango and

madhūka trees, iron mines and salt pits, marshy land and forests, stone quarries, pits and

saline spots or barren land, and whatever is [produced or found] below or above the

ground.[239] The very nature of the description points to the implicit exaggeration and

such a composition of a village settlement would compel one to wonder whether there

was any space left in the village for people to live. At the same time though, the

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[235] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 17, *sasīmāparyantaḥ savṛkṣamālākulaḥ.*

[236] *Ibid.*, p. 10, l. 55, *sābhajamānaveṣṭikaḥ; IA*, vol. XII, p. 194, ll. 14-15, *sotpadyamānaveṣṭīkaḥ.*

[237] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 186, l. 24, *sakāṣṭatṛṇagopacāraṁ sajala-sthala-sametaṁ.*

[238] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, ll. 10-11, *sva-sīmātṛṇa-yūti-gocara-paryantaḥsodraṅgah savṛkṣamālākulaḥ sajalo;* p. 266, ll. 11-12, *dāna-nidhi-nidhān.*

[239] *IA*, vol. XVIII, pp. 34, ll. 5-6, *sva sīmā-tṛṇa-yūti-gocara-parṣabhaḥ sajala-sthala sā (vra) mra-madhūkaḥ saloha-lavaṇākarah sānūpa-jaṅgalah sapāṣāṇa-khānih sagarh [tta]-osaraḥ sādha-ūrddhvaḥ.*

bhoga-bhāgaḥ may have been used for all exactions to be made in cash. It seems to us that the term in question was used here in place of *hiraṇya*.

As against this, the Rajor inscription provides a different kind of dichotomy. Here one slab mentions *bhoga-mayut-ādāyābhyām-api-samasta-sasyānāṁ*[262] and the second refers to taxes *bhāga, khala-bhikṣā, prasthaka, skandhaka* and *mārgganaka* along with other administrative privileges and resources.[263] The term *mayut* in the first block has remained unexplained but *sasyaṁ* or *śasyaṁ* means corn or grain, or fruit or produce of any other plant.[264] Ghoshal considers it to be synonymous with *bhoga*. In any case, here the first block seems to have consisted of terms denoting periodical offerings of fruits while the second block contained tax terms which were calculated as a fraction of the produce or area under cultivation or unit of goods being taxed. These distinctions are important insofar as they signify at some level the organization of tax structure and help us understand as to how they were arranged in their local contexts. We may now move on to see some of the other terms of taxes mentioned in the inscriptions.

The Una grants, of Balavarman and his son Avanivarman, referring to gift of two contiguous villages separated in time by five years are rather interesting insofar as they refer to different taxes. While Balavarman's grant mentions *uddraṁga* (*uddraṅga*) and

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[262] *EI*, vol. III, p, 266, l. 11.

[263] *Ibid.*, ll. 11-12.

[264] *SSED*, s.v., *sasyaṁ* and *śasyaṁ*.

The term *hiraṇya* literally means gold but in the present context it has been explained

as 'tax payable to the king in cash' or 'dues payable in cash'.[251] U. N. Ghoshal explained

the term as 'a tax in cash levied upon certain kinds of crops as distinguished from the

tax in kind which was charged upon the ordinary crops',[252] but Lallanji Gopal believes

that it refers to 'lump assessment in cash upon villagers as distinguished from the king's

grain share assessed upon the individual cultivators'.[253] The term also occurs in the

inscriptions of Bengal as *saṁ hi* which has been explained by D. C. Sircar as an

abbreviation for *sāṁvatsarika hiraṇya*, annual revenue income in cash.[254] At any rate

hiraṇya seems to have been used in the sense of dues against produce, in addition to

bhāga or in lieu of it, in some cases assessed on annual basis. So, these terms commonly

occurring as a block, joined through a compound, seem to have constituted the core of

the customary tax structure. We may now look at some of the exceptions.

The Una plates refer to these terms through two blocks, *sabhogabhāgaḥ* and

sahiraṇyadānaḥ.[255] The Wadhwan inscription of Dharaṇīvarāha also refers to the

expression *sadānībhogabhāgaḥ*.[256] There is a wide variation in the way that the terms *dāna*

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[251] *Ibid.*, s.v.; *ELNI*, p. 39.

[252] *Ibid.*

[253] *Ibid.*, pp. 30-40.

[254] *IEG*, s.v.

[255] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 16; p. 10, l. 55.

[256] *IA*, vol. XII, pp. 193-94, plate II, ll. 10-11.

was earmarked at one-sixth in the *Arthaśāstra* but we can not be sure of that for the period in question.[247] Bühler explained the term *bhoga* as 'periodical supplies of fruits, firewood, flowers and the like which the villagers had to supply to the king'.[248] In the specific context of the use of this term as a tax obligation, the explanation has found general acceptance among scholars. In the light of the interpretation of these two terms, that of *kara* has remained a little problematic. Lallanji Gopal has highlighted the divergence in the meaning of the term in individual cases but has explained the term, based more on its meaning in the contemporary literature, as 'a periodical tax over and above the grain share which was often realized from the village people as a fixed amount calculated on the basis of the property like land and cow'.[249] But its various meanings from different sources cited by D. C. Sircar[250] would tend to show that it was never used as a standard term. While we can not be sure about the mode of payment of *kara*, its common occurrence along with *bhāga* and *bhoga* indicates that it might have been appropriated in kind.

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[247] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[248] *Ibid.*, p. 54; *EI*, vol. I, p. 75.

[249] *ELNI*, p. 37-38.

[250] *IEG*, s.v.

Pratīhāras. The most common block of terms that we find occurring independently in the inscriptions of north India, with endings which were sometimes different, was *bhāga-bhoga-kara-hiraṇyādi*. This phrase has been taken to mean as a block consisting of terms which constituted either collectively of individually, the core of the customary taxes due to the king.[245] Their virtual indispensability in the contemporary copper plate grants would tend to suggest that they were widely prevalent over the whole of north India and in that sense, even with slight regional variation in their meanings, if any, it seems they were associated with agriculture. Perhaps one way of looking at the tax structure would be in terms of customary taxes associated with the production process which occur commonly in inscriptions over a wide geographical area and other taxes which may or may not have been widely prevalent but were used in inscriptions, not as a rule, but with respect to their local contexts. But there are exceptions to the use of these terms as a block joined through a compound. Before looking at the exceptions let's see how these terms have been explained.

While some scholars have identified the expression *bhāga-bhoga-kara* as single term denoting 'share of the produce' or 'usual grain share of the king',[246] most other scholars have seen the expression as consisting of three terms with independent meanings. *Bhāga* has generally been taken to mean as the king's customary share in the produce which

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[245] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[246] *Ibid.; IEG*, s.v.

As regards the nature of taxation, our understanding largely comes from the inscriptions issued by the subordinates or the later Pratīhāra rulers. As many as nine copper plate inscriptions issued by the Pratīhāra sovereigns carry the term *sarvvāya sameta* instead of specific terms for tax obligations of different types. Possibly a regional variation in both terms of reference and the nature of taxes would have prompted the use of a generic term. The first record of the Pratabgarh inscription, which falls in the twilight zone of the Pratīhāra control over the outlying areas, provides the first departure from this practice of long standing. In this light the listing, in great details, of terms of taxation in the inscriptions of subordinates and those of the last two Pratīhāra kings is understandable. Regional divergence in the nature of taxation can be demonstrated by looking at the grants of the subordinates and the later Pratīhāras in different parts of north India. There is also a divergence among scholars with regard to the meaning of these terms. Lallanji Gopal seems to be correct to point out that even this may be a reflection of the local or regional organization of the tax structure.[244] While the references in these records do not, in any manner, indicate the incidence of taxation, additional cesses could be imposed when required by the political authority as in the case of the Rajor inscription.

Before taking up meaning of each term, it may be interesting to see as to how the tax structure was organized with reference to regional or local contexts under the

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[244] *ELNI*, pp. 32-33.

divergence in the references would indicate as to how certain resources were considered important in certain geographical spaces. For example references to salt pits and quarries in the Jhusi grant would perhaps indicate that these resources were considered important in the areas around Allahabad. After all, Chunar, famous for its stone quarries, is not very far from here. The Rajor inscription also refers to an interesting expression, *aputtrikādhana naṣṭi(naṣṭa) bharaṭa.*[240] D. C. Sircar believed that the two terms *aputtrikādhana* and *naṣṭi-bharaṭa* were separate and while the former meant 'escheat of the property of persons who died sonless',[241] the latter stood perhaps for 'some sort of levy or compensation against losses'.[242] R. S. Sharma considered the whole expression to mean 'resumption of property on failure of issue'.[243] It is difficult to ascertain the meaning of the phrase but it seems it certainly carried with it, the privilege of escheat of a property, if there was no male issue, to the donee, which otherwise went to the king. This privilege, if was actually realized, was significant insofar as it could provide opportunity to the donee to create private property in an area which was otherwise granted for the use of state resources.

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[240] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 12.

[241] *IEG*, s.v.

[242] *Ibid.*, s.v.

[243] *IF*, p. 98.

and *dānī* have been understood. *Dāna* has been explained as a gift[257] and *dāṇa*, perhaps a

variant of *dāna* has been understood as meaning gift, road cess, custom duties etc.[258] The

Lekhapaddhati explains the term *dānī* as land tax[259] but D. C. Sircar describes the term

dāṇādāya as excise or custom duties and *dāni-bhoga* as a tax for maintenance of the tax

collector.[260] Terms *dāṇī-bhoga/dāni-bhāga/dāṇī-bhoga-bhāga* have also been explained as

periodical supplies of fruits, firewood and the like by the villagers or as tax for

maintaining the collectors of the tax called *dāna* or as share of the produce.[261]

It may be possible that the term had different meanings in different contexts but the

real meaning is quite oblivious. In any case the context of its use in the three inscriptions

from Gujarat provides perhaps a partial understanding of the term. The first block

mentioned in the Una plates, i.e., *sa-bhoga-bhāgaḥ* refers to taxes which, as we have seen,

were appropriated in kind. As against this the second block, *sa-hiraṇya-dāna*, refers to

hiraṇya, clearly a tax in cash. It may well be possible that the term *dāna*, used along with

hiraṇya or independently, referred to some dues to be paid to the state, in cash. If it was

used independent of *hiraṇya* then Sircar's understanding of this term as custom duties or

road cess gets some credence. In the Wadhwan inscription though, the term *dāṇī* in *dāṇī-*

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[257] *IEG*, s.v.

[258] *Ibid.*

[259] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[260] *Ibid.*

[261] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

dramma,[398] *vigrahatungīya dramma*,[399] *śrīmadādivarāha*,[400] and *śrīmadādivarāha dramma*.[401]

The Bhilsa inscription, dated 878 AD, refers to *pañciyaka dramma*[402] while the Kaman inscription mentions both, *dramma* and *paṇa*.[403] Besides this, from the archaeological finds we know of a coin type bearing the legend *śrī vināyakapāladeva* ascribable to the Pratīhāra king Vināyakapāla (known dates 931 AD and 941-42 AD).[404]

Deyell calls the *vigrahapāla dramma*, the *ādivarāha dramma* and the *vināyakapāla dramma* as the earliest, the second and the latest 'imperial' coinage.[405] In terms of the find spots, the *vigrahapāla dramma* is associated with the Ganga basin.[406] References to this coin in the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription would suggest that it was current at least up to this area in the tenth century. The *ādivarāha drammas* coincide more categorically with the Pratīhāra dominions with substantial overlapping with the *vigrahapāla dramma* mainly in the

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[398] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 9.

[399] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 20.

[400] *Ibid.*, l. 19.

[401] *Ibid.*, p. 178, l. 37.

[402] *EI*, vol. XXX, p. 214, ll. 4, 6, 7 and 11.

[403] *EI*, vol. XXIV, p. 335, l. 17; p. 336, ll. 19 and 23.

[404] Gupta, 1996, p. 86.

[405] Deyell, 1990, pp. 26, 28 and 30.

[406] See map, *Ibid.*, p. 27.

upper and the middle Ganga valley, and as Deyell's map[407] indicates, with a 'tendency towards greater concentration in the Rajasthan borderlands and a commensurate lighter representation in the Bihar region'.[408]

The *vigrahapāla dramma* has on the obverse has a rude head facing right with the late Brāhmī or proto-Devanāgarī legend *śrī-vigra*. The reverse has portions of a fire altar flanked by attendants sometimes without a legend and sometimes with Devanāgarī *sa* or *ma*.[409] While there is no unanimity regarding the original issuer of this type, these billon coins, as suggested by Deyell, were manufactured before the *ādivarāha* issue of Bhoja.[410] The *ādivarāha dramma* was probably a billon coin of Gadahiya type 'having vestigial remains of the *vigrahapāla dramma* on the reverse.' The obverse of the coin depicts the boar incarnation of Viṣṇu while the reverse has the legend *ādivarāha* in addition to the fire-altar picture.[411] The coins are ascribed to Bhoja (836-885 AD) who was addressed as *Ādivarāha* in the first of the two Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple inscriptions from Gwalior. The *vināyakapāla drammas* were 'the latest and most degraded in fabric of the *ādivarāha* type coins' and had the legend *śrī vināyakapāladeva*.[412] So, all the three issues of the

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[407] *Ibid.,* p. 29.

[408] *Ibid.,* p. 30.

[409] *Ibid.,* p. 26.

[410] *Ibid.,* pp. 27-28.

[411] *Ibid.,* pp. 28-29; *ACHI,* p. 1426.

[412] Deyell, p. 30.

imperial coinage seem to have been based on the Indo-Sassanian or Gadahiya coins. In fact, it has been pointed out that on many *ādivarāha* and the *vināyakapāla* coins 'the face of the boar appears like that of an ass' which may have been one among many factors behind the naming of the Indo-Sassanian coins as Gadahiya.[413] Regarding the *pañciyaka dramma* mentioned in the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription, B. N. Puri believed that they were issued by the local *goṣṭhī* or *pañcāyat*[414] but these coins have also been mentioned in the Bhilsa inscription. According to B. N. Mukherjee, it was equivalent to $1/5^{th}$ of a unit of *dramma*,[415] while Mirashi, on the basis of the twenty seventh record of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription, equated one *pañciyaka dramma* with $\frac{1}{4}^{th}$ of the *ādivarāha dramma*.[416] The question though is if *pañciyaka dramma* meant $\frac{1}{4}^{th}$ of the *ādivarāha dramma* then why in the same record (27th) we come across the expression *śrīmadādivarāha-drammasya-pādaikaṁ* (one fourth of the *śrīmadādivarāha-dramma*).[417] The record that Mirashi relies upon is quite confusing. It refers to an endowment or an arrangement which included grant of $\frac{1}{4}^{th}$ of the *ādivarāha dramma* to the concerned temple, so that every month one *pañciyaka dramma* was to be given out of the rent of a *vīthī* which was taken on lease by the donor and who

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[413] Mukherjee, 1992, p. 16.

[414] Puri, 1975, p. 135

[415] Mukherjee, 1992, p. 29.

[416] CII, vol. IV, p. cxxxiv.

[417] EI, vol. I, p. 178, l. 37.

promised to provide the owner with a *vīthī* of the same kind.[418] It seems the grant made

was some kind of a surety which might or might not have anything to do with the

amount to be given to the temple every month. The Bhilsa inscription refers to *vīthīs*

accruing rents of 13 or 130, 50 and 40 *pañciyaka drammas*.[402] B. N. Puri's suggestion seems

to have been of some merit because the *pañcakulas* of Sīyaḍoṇi were associated with the

administration of the *maṇḍapikā* situated at the site and if one understands the term

mudrayitvā, in the second record of the same inscription, meaning 'having stamped' as a

reference to minting then we are looking at a mint in the prominent urban centre. This

record also refers to a donation of ¼th of a *pañciyaka dramma* (*pañciyaka dramma satka*

pādamekāṁ) and one *yugā* on every estampage in a day.[419] To us it seems the *pañciyaka*

dramma was an independent coin of *dramma* type which was current locally in the areas

around Lalitpur-Jhansi and up to Bhilsa.

What is interesting is that most of these coins are mentioned in the inscriptions as

submultiples. These include *drammārddhaṁ* or *drammārddhikā* (one half),[420] *drammasya*

tribhāgaṁ (one third),[421] *pādamekaṁ* and *drammasya pādaikaṁ* (one fourth).[422] Besides this,

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[418] *Ibid.*, ll. 36-39.

[419] *EI*, vol. I, p. 173, l. 6.

[420] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 9; p. 175, l. 20.

[421] *Ibid.*, p. 176, l. 24; p. 177, ll. 29 and 30.

[422] *Ibid.*, p. 173, l. 6; p. 178, l. 37.

the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription refers to *varāhakaya viṁsopaka*[423] (1/20th of an *ādivarāha dramma*) and *vigrahadramma visovakaṁ*[424] (1/20th of a *vigrahapāla dramma*). It seems *viṁsopaka, visovakaṁ* or *viṁśopaka* were a unit in themselves, which would have valued 1/20th of a *dramma*. Both Ahar and the Rajor inscriptions are a testimony to this.[425]

Small silver coins weighing in the proximity of 6-7 grains and dated towards the end of the eighth century have been found. They seem to have been current in this period in western and central India. These coins have an elephant walking to the right on the obverse and the inscription *raṇahasti* on the reverse. These coins have been ascribed to Pratīhāra ruler Vatsarāja who was associated with the region where these coins were used and was also called *Raṇahastiṁ* Vatsarāja in Uddyotana Sūrī's *Kuvalayamālā.*[426]

Cowrie shells seem to have become an inseparable part of the early medieval exchange form. In fact their use has been attested to by Fa-hsien and thus goes back to the Gupta period. The *Līlāvatī*[427] (12th Century A.D.) provides the following table of the relative worth of the cowries:

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[423] *Ibid.*, 174, l. 10.

[424] *Ibid.*, p. 176, l. 26.

[425] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 59, l. 10; p. 61, l. 21; the Rajor inscription refers to *viṁśopaka* as abbreviated *viṁ*, *EI*, vol. III, p. 267, ll. 22 and 23.

[426] Gupta, 1996, p. 85.

[427] Cited in *ELNI*, p. 211.

20 *Varāṭakas*	=	1 *Kākiṇī*
4 *Kākiṇīs*	=	1 *Paṇa*
16 *Paṇas*	=	1 *Dramma*
Which means 1 *Dramma*	=	1280 Cowries

The Sīyaḍoṇi inscription refers to *varāṭaka*[428] and *kapardaka*,[429] both meaning cowrie and to *kākiṇī*[430] which is mentioned in the contemporary records as equal to 20 cowrie shells.[431] In the same context merchant Sulaimān says with reference to the king of Jurz that, 'Exchanges are carried on in his states with silver (and gold) dust, and there are said to be mines (of these metals) in the country.[432] S. Maqbul Ahmad though translates the relevant term as 'ingots' instead of 'dust'.[433]

Studies on the nature of monetization in the overall early medieval complex have made some strides in the recent years. The hugely influential argument of almost complete absence of coins in the period between 500 and 1000 AD has been challenged.

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[428] *EI*, vol. I, p. 179, l. 45.

[429] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 20.

[430] *Ibid.*, p. 179, l. 45, *arddhakākiṇīṁ*.

[431] James Heimann has analyzed the role of cowries in the Indian Ocean trade network and had also examined the nature of cowrie trade between Bengal and the Maldives in the early medieval period. He points out two significant points pertaining to cowrie usage in India—first, that, in the Indian context, cowries were the basic unit of economy and was easily 'adaptable to the changes in demand and facilitated continuity in trade and industry in the periods of unrest'; and second, that 'Maldives and Bengal formed an economic system based on the dual aspect of cowrie as a currency and cowrie as a commodity.'

[432] *HIED*, p. 4.

[433] *ACAIC*, p. 43.

There is no dearth of references to metallic media in contemporary inscriptions but in the want of actual specimens, all these have been seen as a pure imagination and understood as 'notional sense' of the past in the Indian feudalism construct. It is perhaps significant historiographically that one hand the secular or official grants of land are being pushed far back in history primarily on the basis of speculation and an analysis of rather tangential evidence of certain terms, even when such grants feature in inscriptions only from the ninth-tenth centuries; at the same time inscriptional references to coins or their various denominations are being completely disregarded even when the contemporary inscriptions are abound in references to them.

In his cogently argued article on the limited monetization of the Śilāhāra economy, K. M. Shrimali says this—"It is well known that once a cash system comes into use, even when it falls into comparative disuse, the old practice of computing prices and payments in cash continues. It is, therefore, not improbable that some of the allusions to cash donations may have been spelt out only in a notional sense rather than in specific monetary terms."[434] But the question is how one would define old practices. How many coin types of the early medieval period are known from earlier times? The most prominent of the early medieval coins, the Indo-Sassanians are known not before the sixth century, i.e., almost from the period when the perceived decline in money commences. How the notional sense of an earlier period gets expressed through current

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[434] Shrimali, 2000, p. 362.

parikara (*uparikara*),[265] these are missing in Avanivarman's grant. Similarly the latter

refers to *viṣṭi*[266] but the former does not. In addition to this, Balavarman's plate mentions

an expression which has remained unexplained, and finds no citation in the plate of

Avanivarman. The term is *collakavaiṇivaigikakoṣyādi-sahitaḥ*.[267] The last expression *sahitaḥ*

tends to indicate that the preceding terms meant names of taxes (or perhaps even

resources) which were somehow related. Attempts have been made to explain *collaka* in

relation with the term *collika* or *collikā* meaning a load of leaves or a quantity, perhaps of

betel leaves.[268] It may be possible that *collaka* stood for a tax on certain load of leaves,

either betel or of some other plant, which was produced in or passed through the said

village. The second term seems to be *vaiṇi*. *Veṇuḥ* means a bamboo or a reed in

Sanskrit.[269] In addition to this *vaiṇaḥ* and *vaiṇavaḥ* respectively mean 'a maker of bamboo

work' and 'a bamboo staff'.[270] These references tempt us to believe that the said

expression was some kind of a tax imposed on bamboo, bamboo works or bamboo

workers. We are not able to explain the third term *vaigika*. With regard to the fourth

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[265] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 17.

[266] *Ibid.*, p. 10, l. 55.

[267] *Ibid.*, p. 5, ll. 17-18.

[268] The term *collikā* occurs in the Rajor inscription of Mathanadeva in the context of a cess of fifty leaves on every *collikā*. See, *EI*, vol. III, p. 35, l. 23.

[269] *SSED*, s.v.

[270] *Ibid.*, s.v., *vaiṇaḥ* and *vaiṇavaḥ*.

term, it may be said that the expression *koṣyadi* indicates some mistake either in the inscription or in printing and in our view the correct rendering should be *koṣyādi* since there is a strong indication that it was ending in *ādi*. As per the *sandhi* rules, the part preceding *ādi* should either be *koṣi* or *koṣī*. *Koṣi* or *kośī*[271] means a mango tree and one of the meanings of the term *kośaḥ* (or *koṣaḥ*)[272] is a 'nutmeg or a nutshell'. The latter term is also used for 'stone of a fruit'. While one may not be very confident about such inferences, it may be possible that all these terms actually denoted taxes related to plants and fruits or products there from.

Two inscriptions, the Una grant of Balavarman and the Rajor inscription of Mathanadeva, refer to the term *uddraṁgaḥ*.[273] As against this, *uparikara* is mentioned only in the plate by Balavarman.[274] While the two terms usually occur together, there are instances such as the Rajor inscription where only one of them finds mention. Ghoshal explained *uddraṅga* and *uparikara* as tax on permanent and temporary cultivators respectively.[275] Lallanji Gopal equates the two terms with *klipta* and *upaklipta* respectively meaning a fixed tax and an extra cess on cultivators.[276] These taxes have also

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[271] *Ibid.*, s.v., *koṣi* and *kośi*.

[272] *Ibid.*, s.v.

[273] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 17; *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 10.

[274] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 17.

[275] *ELNI*, p. 41.

[276] *Ibid.*

been equated with *bhāga* and *bhoga*.[277] It is difficult to ascertain as to how these terms, if different from such terms as *bhāga* and *bhoga*, would have related to the agrarian tax structure. The Rajor inscription refers to two more taxes—*khalabhikṣā* and *prasthaka*.[278] *Khalabhikṣā* has been explained as 'cess payable at the threshing floor'.[279] It seems to have been an additional cess which was exacted in kind soon after harvesting while the produce was still lying in the fields. *Prasthaka* has been explained as a 'cess at the rate of a *prastha* (a measure of capacity perhaps equivalent to one sixteenth of a *droṇa*) over and above the usual grain share'.[280] Lallanji Gopal though suggests that it refers to a 'contribution at the rate of one *prastha* from every household'.[281] From the Rajor inscription and the second record of the Pratabgarh inscription we come across *skandhaka* and *mārggaṇaka* but as these taxes were related with movement of goods they will be discussed in the next section.

The nature of evidence especially the terms of taxes in the Pratabgarh and Rajor inscriptions indicate that tax exactions were numerous and quite high at least in the middle of the tenth century. References to *ucitānucita* and *nibaddhānibaddha* in the Rajor

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[277] *Ibid.,* p. 42

[278] *EI,* vol. III, p. 266, l. 11.

[279] *IEG,* s.v.

[280] *Ibid.,* s.v.

[281] *ELNI,* p. 66.

within or above the ground). The inscription comes from an area in the vicinity of Allahabad which later formed an important part of the Gāhaḍavāla dominions.

The list of taxes under the Gāhaḍavālas[284] seems to have risen exponentially from the earlier times but it may be interesting to see as to what kind of taxes were being levied. The list of taxes includes *inter-alia*, terms such as *pravaṇikara* (probably tax on merchants—a composite tax against earlier *skandhaka* and *margganaka?*), *jalakara* (perhaps tax on the use of water bodies for irrigation), *gokara* (grazing tax?), *lavaṇakara* (tax on the salt pits), *ākara* (tax on any mine perhaps including quarries) and *nidhi-nikṣepa* (meaning treasure trove; perhaps mentioned as a tax by mistake). A comparison of these terms with the grant of Trilocanapāla would indicate broadly that certain items referred to in the Jhusi grant as resources were included in the list of taxes under the Gāhaḍavālas. This, at some level, would only indicate that at least from around the middle of the tenth century we have evidence to show that resources under state control were increasingly coming in private hands and the state was levying taxes on production through, and use of, these resources. It seems under the Gāhaḍavālas, these taxes which were otherwise due to the state were being diverted, in addition to other customary taxes, to the donee. The argument is significant insofar as it raises question that if the state was replacing its monopoly over resources with private control and thereby expanding its tax net then why it would be bent upon abjuring all resources and land, forever.

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[284] Our understanding of the Gāhaḍavāla tax terms is based largely on *ELNI*, pp. 46-60.

With regard to the question of measurement of land or weighing of grains we do not have any concrete evidence as most of our understanding comes from the copper plate grants. The second of the two inscriptions of the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple from Gwalior contains two references to grants of land. The first grant, which refers to Cūḍāpallikā village as owned by the town, mentions measurement in terms of *pārameśvarīya hasta*, translated as royal measure (Bhoja, in the inscription, has been referred to as *śrīgopagirau svāmini parameśvara śrī Bhojadeva*).[285] The same inscription, in relation with measurement of some other pieces of land, which again seem to have been property of the town, mentions the fact that 'the seed required for the two fields is eleven *droṇas* of barley according to the measurement of Gopagirī (*gopagirīya-māpyenavāpo-yavanam-droṇa-ekādaśa*).[286] This, in all probability refers to measurement of weight. Two inferences may be drawn:

(1) While land was measured in terms of royal *hasta*, grains etc. were measured in terms of a local weight. Use of royal *hasta*, which might have been a standard measurement where ever possible, is significant in relation with the revenue demands which might have been assessed in terms of measurement.

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[285] *EI*, vol. I, p. 159, ll. 1 and 4.

[286] *Ibid.*, ll. 8-9.

(2) The reference to royal *hasta* at Gopagiri perhaps points to attempts made by Bhoja to encroach into the agrarian domain of at least directly controlled areas through standardization of land measurement.

The first grant of the Siyadoni inscription refers to *hasta*[287] which may or may not have been same as that in the Gwalior inscription. In the out lying areas though, local systems seem to have been in practice. The Pratabgarh inscription refers to a grant of a village in which ten *māṇis* of seeds could be sown and which was irrigated by one leather bucket.[288] Another record in the same inscription refers to grant of two fields having proper names and in each of them ten *māṇis* of seed could be sown.[289] These references clearly show that a rather customary and vague method was used to measure the land under cultivation. It seems each field, with proper name, granted, constituted a unit of plot but since the term *māṇis* has remained unexplained one can not compare it with modern units of measurement. Nevertheless use of this method, which seems to have been quite popular locally, cannot be ruled out for measurement of land for revenue purposes, at least in and around this area. Another, rather inadequate, reference comes from the Kaman inscription in which one of the records refers to a gift of three-ploughshare measure of land.[182] Since the permanent endowment is addressed in plural

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[287] *EI*, vol. I, p. 173, l. 3.

[288] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 188, l. 31.

[289] *Ibid.*, l. 34.

(*akṣayaniviṣu*) it seems the term *trihaliṁ* referred to land, which could be tilled by three ploughs, and at least in this case land tilled by one plough was considered a unit. In concrete terms though, area under this unit cannot be ascertained.

Socio-Political Organization of Resources – The Non-agrarian Context

The social organization of resources in the non-agrarian context would subsume both trading and artisanal activities. But a comprehensive analysis of the question is perhaps difficult owing to the nature of sources at disposal. Land grants generally do not provide much information. But taking into account a gradual evolution of such local level exchange and cess collection centres as *haṭṭa, penṭha, maṇḍapikā* etc., and also in the light of rather voluminous use of non-preciosities in the exchange processes, it would be erroneous to detach the non-agrarian from the rural context. At this point it may also be important to highlight problems with such texts as the *Kuvalayamālā* and the *Samaraicchakahā* as demonstrated by B. D. Chattopadhyaya.[290] An important aspect of any study on exchange would be to look as to what kinds of groups were involved in trade and artisanal activities, how they were organized and whether these groups and their activities were somehow localized, both in semantics and in content.

In relation with the organization of traders and artisans, two points are of importance. First is the organization of these groups in *śreṇis* (translated as guilds) and

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[290] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, pp. 90-91.

second, a gradual coalescence of these *śreṇis* into *jātis* (castes). These two points, besides being relevant to organization of these groups, are also important to comprehend the question of caste formation in the early medieval period. A rather deeply entrenched belief pertains to conceptualization of guilds as almost a pan-Indian phenomenon at least from the Sātavāhana-Gupta times. For the period under consideration, Medhātithī has been used to show the continuity in the existence of guilds of merchants and artisans and their autonomous nature.[291] Medhātithī's account may not be taken as a complete objective reality for the period, and it is important to see whether any divergences are discernible from this dominant notion.

The question of *Jāti* formation has remained complicated. The process has been looked at in relation with the proliferation of the castes and creation of sub-castes within castes in post-Gupta centuries. The process, theoretically explained as *varṇasaṃkara*, was, in all probability, driven by such factors as expansion of state society leading to acculturation whereby new entrants had to be incorporated into the Brahmanical social structure, incorporation of such groups which were considered non-indigenous into the social hierarchy, and transformation of guilds into castes. A major impetus to caste formation, as envisaged in the construct of the feudal social formation in early India, was given by the decline in trading and artisanal activities in the post-Gupta period leading to a closed village economy which in turn resulted in craft guilds becoming

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[291] Puri, 1975, p. 130.

inscription,[282] in addition to the reference to imposition of certain additional cesses in the second part of the Rajor inscription[283] clearly demonstrate that peasants had to face this problem of additional periodic exactions. It needs to be seen, in addition to other socio-economic factors, in the context of the emergence of local polities with limited resources which would have prompted them to enhance the tax net both in terms of number of taxes and incorporation of more items in the tax structure. This would have been important if the village resources nominally under the control of the state but actually used by the villagers would have yielded no money to the state. The Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla is quite revealing in this context. We have already seen the kind of resources that were to accompany the enjoyment of the village in question. As regards taxes, they are mentioned as separate from resources and those relating to customary share of the state in the produce have been mentioned. As against this, the resources, which would have been the property of the state or at least the king had such superior rights to part them to the donee, included *sajala-sthala* (water bodies and land surface), *sā (vra) mra-madhūkaḥ* (mango and *madhūka* trees), *saloha-lavaṇākarah* (iron and salt pits), *sānūpa-jangalah* (all marshy land and forests), *sapāṣāṇa-khānih* (stone quarries), and *sagarh[tta]-osarah sādha-ūrddhvah* (pits, barren land, everything [found or produced]

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[282] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 12.

[283] *Ibid.*, p. 267, ll. 22-23.

'stagnant, immobile, more and more hereditary and more and more localized'.[292] The

case of kāyasthas demonstrates how practitioners of a specific vocation, irrespective of

their *varṇa* affiliations, gradually coalesced into a caste.[293] It may be an interesting

exercise to see as to how these aspects are reflected in the inscriptions of the Pratīhāras

for the period.

References from Tattānandapura are rather important especially with reference to

merchants. Record 2 dated HS 258 = 864 AD mentions of a merchant of Dharkkaṭa *jāti*

who had migrated from Bhillamāla[294] and another merchant who belonged to

Lambakañcuka *jāti*.[295] Some of the records refer to *samasta sauvvarṇṇika mahājana,*[296]

which would perhaps mean community of goldsmiths but in one record the community

is addressed as *sauvvarṇṇika-vaṇig-mahājanena,*[297] which would tend to indicate that

members of this community also in some way engaged in trade. A record dated 893 AD

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[292] Sharma, R. S., 1969, p. 25.

[293] *Ibid.,* p. 15-16.

[294] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 58, l. 3, *śrī tattānandapura prativasamānaḥ śrī bhillamāla vinirggatavaṇig-varkkaṭajātīya-bhadraprakāśānāmā*. K. V. Ramesh later corrected the reading Varkkaṭa to Dharkkaṭa, see *EI*, vol. XXXIV, p. 194, fn. 1.

[295] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 58, l. 3.

[296] *Ibid.,* p. 59, l. 6; pp. 60-61, ll. 19-20; p. 61, l. 22; p. 62, l. 28.

[297] *Ibid.,* p. 58, l. 5.

refers to a trader belonging to kṣatriya family[298] while another record dated 867 AD

mentions a trader belonging to Gandhika-māthura *jāti*.[299] Besides these, the inscription

also contains references to individual merchants.[300]

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[298] *Ibid.*, p. 60, l. 14, *kṣatiyānvayaḥ vaṇik-sahāka icchukaputra*. The Indor copper plate inscription of the Guptā ruler Skandagupta, dated, 465-66 AD, (CII, vol. III, no. 16, pp. 68-72) was found from a place called Indor (ancient Indrapura or Indrāpura) located five miles to the north-west of Dibai (which itself is not more than 15-20 Kms to the south of Anupshahr). Two things in this inscription interest us. First, that it refers to two merchants of the town Indrāpuraka, Acalavarman and Bhrukuṇṭhasiṁha and both are stated to be kṣatriyas. This indicates that presence of kṣatriya merchants was nothing new in the region in the ninth century. Second, that while the Ahar inscription frequently mentions traders through their *jāti* affiliations, there is not a single reference in the inscription to *śreṇīs*. The Indor inscription on the other hand refers to the guild of oil men (*tailika śreṇyā*) (p. 70, l. 8). It is important to note that that the Indor inscription records the grant of an endowment by a brāhmaṇa, to the temple of Savitṛ, to the effect that the guild of oil-men associated with Indrāpura were supposed to give to the said temple, 'for the same time as the moon and the sun endure, two pālas of oil by weight...uninterrupted in use (and), continuing without any diminution from the original value' (p. 71). Clearly the brāhmaṇa seems to have invested some money with the guild against which the guild was to supply the oil (it seems to have been more like a rent in kind). This is also borne out by the term *mūlyaṁ prayacchati* (p. 70, l. 8) instesd of *akṣayanivikā* which seems to have become a more popular expression to convey the meaning of perpetual endowment in later times. In the ninth century though, as suggested by the Ahar inscription, the investment patterns were very different. Now, either the temple committees, on behalf of the temples, or those who desired to made an endowment to temples, were buying shops or houses on a lease of ninty nine years, and then renting them out. The rent thus accrued, or a part thereof, was then utilized towads the daily expenses of the temples. Besides, in some cases, some donors were also pleding the properties as surely in case the actual endowment was discontinued for some reason. This kind of shift in investment pattern is significant not just because it points to the point that non-liquid assets in an urban domain were becoming more valued, more coveted, but it also highlights an inherent contradiction vis-a-vis the conceptualization of the post-Gupta period as one of complete, endemic and all-pervading ruralization.

[299] *Ibid.*, p. 61, ll. 22-23, *prativasamāna gandhika-māthura-jātīya-vaṇig-Mādhava-Devanāgaputra*.

References in this inscription are interesting insofar as they provide insights into *jāti* formation which was a rather complex process. While Gandhika-māthura *jāti* seems to be an amalgamation of the occupation (perfume selling) and place name (Mathurā) from where the trader seems to have hailed, Lambakañcuka as a *jāti* perhaps indicates association with occupation (seller of garments). More significant of these references though seems to be that of *vaṇik*-Dharkkaṭa *jāti*. Recent studies have shown as to how, in the early medieval period, families of merchants moved from one place to another, perhaps in search of greener pastures and gradually gained ascendancy. With time these families or lineages started claiming a *jāti* status. Dharkkaṭa was one such lineage. Besides the reference from Tattānandapura, some other inscriptions also provide valuable information about this *jāti*. The Garh inscription of the time of Mahīpāla (dated 921 AD)[301] mentions four generations of a family of architects who are said to have belonged to the Dharkkaṭa *jāti*.[302] The earliest of the family members mentioned in the inscription, Ardraṭa, who is said to have hailed from Purṇṇatallaka, 'was an expert in carving out various sculptures in stone and was attached to the Jaina faith (*jaina-mat-ānuraktaḥ*).[303] His son Deddulāka, 'on account of being a source of delight to all the

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[300] See for example, *Ibid.*, p. 59, l. 10; p. 60, l. 15-16.

[301] *EI*, vol. XXXIX, pp. 189-198.

[302] *Ibid.*, 195, l. 6, *dharkkaṭ-ākhya jātau*.

[303] *Ibid.*, l. 6.

people, was respected by them'.[304] His son, Sarvvadeva is said to have mastered all the fine arts in their entirety and attained supremacy among the architects here (Rājyapura).[305] He was always attended upon by the assembly of persons who were his students and his name was always appended with the epithet *sūtradhāra*.[306] The second part of the inscription introduces his son Varānga as wise, renowned and leader of all architects.[307] He is also said to be rich, held in high esteem by the king and was chief among the architects.[308] Even with some degree of exaggeration, this *praśasti* of the family of architects clearly shows as to how members of the successive generations gained in status and reputation which came to be acknowledged even by the political authority of the place.

At Osian, a number of commemorative image inscriptions have been found in various temples datable to the period under consideration. In most cases the name of the person is followed by the *jāti* to which he or she belonged. Many of these inscriptions refer to persons belonging to Dharkkaṭa *jāti*:

- *Kuka-putra lokāntarī bhūtā dhakaṭa jāti* (VS 840)[309]

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[304] *Ibid.*, l. 7.

[305] *Ibid.*, l. 7, *tasyātmajo vidita sarvakalā kalāpaḥ prāp-ādhīpatyām iha śilpiṣu Sarvvadevaḥ.*

[306] *Ibid.*, l. 8.

[307] *Ibid.*, p. 196, l. 18, *mahā-matir bbabhūvātra Varānga-iti viśrutaḥ tanayaḥ sarvvadevasya sarvva-viñjāni-nāyakaḥ.*

[308] *Ibid.*, l. 19.

[309] Handa, 1984, p. 213.

- *Ādiputtra sarvvaṭa dharkaṭa-jātyā* (VS 885)[310]

- *Dhavaka jaṣāditya-puttra dharkkaṭṭ-jātyā* (VS 895)[311]

- *Deduvaka-uddyotana-puttraḥ dharkaṭaḥ-jātya* (VS 932)[312]

- *Nāgāditya-putra viṭṭurdharkaṭa-jātyā* (VS 969)[313]

- *Malukā vihana patnī lokantari bhūtaḥ dhakaṭa-jātyā* (VS 1010)[314]

It seems Dharkkaṭa, which was originally used for a family, in all probability, along with the extended kin group, gradually with movement and proliferation in time and space came to be crystallized as a *jāti* name. References cited above suggest that the *jāti* status in the areas around Jodhpur and Osian had already gained currency in the late eighth century but there are references to show that around the same time the term was being used in the Churu-Sikar area in the sense of a lineage. This would also elaborate the argument that Dharkkaṭa as a *jāti* had emerged from a family or a lineage name.

The Sakrai inscription dated VE 879 = 822 AD, which was discovered at village Sakrai, 14 miles north-east of Khandela, on the border of Sikar and Jhunjhunu districts of Rajasthan, provides a glimpse of the mercantile community living in the area. The inscription records the construction of pavilion in front of (the temple of) goddess

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[310] *Ibid.*

[311] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

[312] *Ibid.*

[313] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

[314] *Ibid.*

Śaṁkara by as many as eleven merchants (seemingly prominent merchants of the area) who organized themselves in a *goṣṭhika*.[315] Of these eleven merchants the inscription provides the detailed pedigree of only four.

(a) *Śreṣṭhī* Maṇḍana s/o *śreṣṭhī* Rāma s/o Yaśovarddhana belonging to the Dhūsara lineage which was pious, prominent, far famed, pure, and virtuous.[316]

(b) *Śreṣṭhī* Garga s/o *śreṣṭhī* Madvana s/o Maṇḍana belonging to the spotless, glorious, rich, liberal and chaste *vaṁśa* called Dharkkaṭa.[317]

(c) Gaṅgāditya and Devadatta, sons of merchant Bhaṭṭiyaka born of the Dharkaṭa *vaṁśa*.[318]

Besides these four members of the *goṣṭhika*, one more member, Ādityanāga, son of Vodda, is known from the Khandela inscription of 807 AD[319] which informs us that he belonged to the lineage of the Dhūsaras (*dhūsarānāṁ vaṁśe*).[320]

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[315] Mishra, 1990, p. 38, l. 37, *tairyam-goṣṭikair-bhūtvā-surānām maṇḍapottamaḥ kāritaḥ śamkara devyāḥ purataḥ puṇya vṛddhye.*

[316] *Ibid.,* p. 38, l. 3, *āsīda dharma parāyaneti mahatī proddāmaṁ kīrtyujjvale vaṁsedhūsara.*

[317] *Ibid.,* p. 38, l. 4, *āsiccāmālinī prakāśa yaśasiśrīma tyudāre śucau vaṁśe dharakkaṭa.*

[318] *Ibid.,* p. 38, l. 5, *vaṇig-dharkaṭa-vaṁśajaḥ.*

[319] *EI,* vol. XXXIV, pp. 159-163.

[320] *Ibid.,* p. 163, l. 4.

With regard to Dharkkaṭa, D. R. Bhandarkar saw the survival of this term as Dhākaḍa which he believed was a sub-section of Oswals who are unmistakably associated with Osian, known as the 'Cradle of the Oswals'.[321] A considerable number of commemorative inscriptions, usually engraved in the Jaina temples at Osian, as also the reference from the Garh inscription, where an architect is said to have migrated to Rājyapura from Purṇṇatallaka (identified with Puntala near Jodhpur), seem to indicate that the original base of this lineage or community was perhaps located in this area. Their specific presence in Osian seems to be largely because of their general association with Jainism and in that sense, the identity of Dharkkaṭa as a sub-section of the Oswals remains largely a conjecture. It seems it was from this area that some of the families started migrating to other centres. The process seems to have begun by at least the eighth century as is discernible from the Sakrai inscription. Also the shift from lineage to *jāti* status was not a coherent and uniform development. There were spatial divergences in the process and perhaps, at least to begin with, terms *vaṁśa* and *jāti* were being used interchangeably.

With regard to Dhūsara, we don't have much evidence to trace its development. Two evidences for the term come from the Khandela area in Rajasthan. Ratan Lal Mishra traces the origin of the term to Ḍhosī, a place on the Shekhavati border near Narnaul in

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[321] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 111, fn. 79.

Haryana.[322] D. C. Sircar points out that persons bearing the surname Dhūsara now call themselves Bhārgava brāhmaṇas.[323] At any rate, there is no corroborating evidence to check the veracity of these arguments. But the reference in the Khandela inscription to the lineage of the Dhūsaras (*dhūsarānāṁ vaṁśe*) is interesting insofar as the use of the lineage name in plural at some level signifies the development some sort of community consciousness which may have helped in the later crystallization of the caste status. On similar lines, we also come across, in the inscription discovered at Bhilsa[324] and dated in 878 AD, reference to a *vaṇik* named Haṭiāka who belonged to the Pāravāda *jāti* (*pāravāḍa jātyena*),[325] which may have been a variant of Prāgvāta *vaṁśa* in some inscriptions.

The Pehowa inscription clearly evinces that place or family commonalities were not a prerequisite for caste or guild formation. There we found that horse traders organized under a *deśī* belonged to different places and some of them were brāhmaṇas. A converse of this would be the case of Dharkkaṭa *jāti* where even when most references pertain to *śreṣṭhis* and *vaṇiks*, we have at least one reference, that of the Garh inscription, where a family of architects was claiming association with the Dharkkaṭa *jāti*. This would suggest that lineage based caste forms could subsume families engaged in different vocations.

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[322] Mishra, 1990, p. 35.

[323] *EI*, vol. XXXIV, p. 162.

[324] *EI*, vol. XXX, pp. 211-215.

[325] *Ibid.*, p. 214, l. 2.

The Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple inscription no. 2 from Gwalior refers to *śreṣṭhi* Vavviāka and *sārthavāhapramukha* Icchuvāka as members of the *sthānādhikṛta*, perhaps a local civic body.[326] The inscription further refers to four chiefs of the oil millers from *śrī* Sarvveśvarapura;[327] two chiefs of oil millers dwelling in *śrī* Vatsasvāmipura;[328] and four chiefs of oil millers who resided in Caccikāhaṭṭikā and Nimbādityahaṭṭikā,[329] along with the whole *śreṇi* of the *tailikas* (*samasta tailikaśreṇyā*).[330] With reference to another donation, the inscription refers to the heads of the gardeners. Seven heads[331] along with other members of the whole *śreṇi* of the *mālikas* (*samasta mālikaśreṇyā*) have been mentioned.[332]

Evidence from Gopagirī suggests that occupational groups were organized through *śreṇis* but this formal organization worked at supra-village level at least in the case of the oil millers. It seems that these groups, at the village level, were informally organized under two or four heads and many such village level organizations combined to form a

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[326] *EI*, vol. I, p. 159, ll. 2-3.

[327] *Ibid.*, ll. 12-13, the heads were Sarvasvāka, son of Bhoccāka, Jayāśakti, son of Mādhava, Sāhulla, son of Śivadhari, and Gaggīka, son of Saṅgāka.

[328] *Ibid.*, ll. 13-14, the heads were Singhāka, son of Kuṇḍāka, and Khohaḍāka, son of Vallūka.

[329] *Ibid.*, ll. 14-15, the heads were Jajjaṭa, son of Deuvāka, Goggāka, son of Vaccillāka, Jamve(be)ka, son of Deddūka, Jamva(ba)hari, son of Rudraṭa.

[330] *Ibid.*, ll. 15-16.

[331] *Ibid.*, ll. 17-19, the heads were Ṭikkūka, son of Sāhulla, Jāseka, son of Deddūka, Siddhūka, son of Vahulāka, Sahaḍāka, son of Jamva(ba)ka, Durggadhari, son of Danti, Vāhumāka, son of Nannumāka, and Vāyaṭāka, son of Veuvāka.

[332] *Ibid.*, l. 19.

śreṇi. The evidence also at one level contradicts the general understanding of *śreṇis* as village level organizations, and leading from that their localization confined to villages as a result of the coming of closed village economy. In some cases even this village level organization comprised of artisans of more than one village as in the case of Caccikāhaṭṭikā and Nimbādityahaṭṭikā where the oil millers were organized with four heads or leaders. In case of the gardeners, we do not get any idea of their organization except in Gopagirī. It seems they were organized in a *śreṇi* under seven heads, which may or may not have included gardeners from nearby villages. This also shows that the number of heads for different vocations could differ.

Kaman inscription throws important information regarding organization of guilds. There are three such guilds mentioned, those of potters (*kumbhakārāṇāṁ śreṇyā*),[333] masons or architects (*mālikānāṁ tathā śreṇyā*)[334] and gardeners (*śreṇyā sthāpatīnāṁ*).[335] It seems all those who practiced these occupations were a part of these guilds. At least in two cases, of potters and artisans, it is explicitly mentioned that 'one who follows the particular profession was to contribute a fixed amount'.[336] The inscription also refers to a

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[333] *EI*, vol. XXIV, p. 335, l. 16.

[334] *Ibid.*, l. 17.

[335] *Ibid.*, l. 18.

[336] *Ibid.*, ll. 16-17; l. 19

worker of conch shells.[337] Conch shells, which were not locally available, would have reached here through trade.

A rather detailed list of the occupational groups comes from the Sīyaḍoṇi stone inscription. Almost every second or third record refers to the salt merchant Caṇḍuka (*nemakavaṇik*) or his son Nāgāka[338] primarily because the temple of Viṣṇubhaṭṭāraka to which most of these endowments were made was built by Caṇḍuka. The last record dated VS 1025 though, refers to another salt merchant who is introduced as *nemaka-jāti-vaṇik-mahādityena*.[339] While it may not be entirely correct to understand these terms through such strict social categories as we know them today, it seems, for certain, that the *jāti* was used at one level to highlight the community association whether through occupation or lineage. In any case, there is no evidence in the inscription to show that *nemakajāti* had evolved from a guild like organization. As a matter of fact this seems to be the case with most other occupational groups mentioned in the inscription which may be enumerated as follows: *Samasta Kallapālānāṁ;*[340] *Kumbhakāra Daivaika Aicāgāndu Kaliākādināṁ;*[341] *Vāra Pramukha Sthāna Sambaddha Kandukānāṁ;*[342] *Mātaṅgānāṁ;*[343] *Samasta*

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[337] *Ibid.,* p. 336, ll. 20-21.

[338] *EI,* vol. I, p. 174, l. 7, l. 9, l. 10; p. 175, l. 14, l. 16, l. 19, l. 20; p. 176, l. 22, l. 22, l. 24, l. 25, l. 27.

[339] *Ibid.,* p. 178, l. 37.

[340] *Ibid.,* p. 174, l. 9; p. 175, l. 19.

[341] *Ibid.,* l. 8.

[342] *Ibid.,* l. 10.

Lokānāṁ (with reference to Tāmbulikas);[344] *Samasta Tailikānāṁ;*[345] *Samasta Mahājanena Ekamatībhūtvā;*[346] *Samasta Āhāḍa Sambaddha Silākuṭānām Ekamatībhūtvā;*[347] *Iha Nivāsī Tailikānāṁ;*[348] and *Lohavānāṁ.*[349] Besides these there is also a reference to a brāhmaṇa seller of betel leaves.[350]

These references are clearly symptomatic of the fact that occupational groups at least at Sīyaḍoṇi were not organized through any such formal organization as a *śreṇi*. This is in clear contrast to Kaman and Gwalior, the latter geographically not too far away from Sīyaḍoṇi. The use of the term *ekamatībhūtvā* perhaps points to the coming together of practitioners of same vocation as an informal group only for the purpose of making of the donation. This seems to be a significant feature more so for the period when guilds were believed to be the most important structure through which both trade and craft groups were organized. At the same time these groups at Sīyaḍoṇi did function under

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[343] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 20.

[344] *Ibid.*, p. 176, l. 26.

[345] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 28.

[346] *Ibid.*, l. 29.

[347] *Ibid.*, l. 30.

[348] *Ibid.*, l. 31.

[349] *Ibid.*, p. 179, l. 45.

[350] *Ibid.*, p. 176, l. 25.

some or the other form of leadership: *Grahapatika Tāmbulika Keśava;*[351] *Kallapāla Mahattaka Pañcikāḥ;*[352] *Tāmbolika Mahara;*[353] oil millers led by four persons;[354] and four persons referred to as *Sūtradhāras* as leaders of the stone cutters.[355]

At Gopagirī we found *śreṇis* of oil millers or gardeners organized through two, four or seven heads but here, while there are references to four or five heads of groups or communities, there is no explicit mention of their being organized through a *śreṇi*. In any case these groups, by making such formal or informal organizations worked as an interest group in an urban centre which was predominantly a market complex. The reference to *kallapālamahattakapañcikā* is particularly interesting which seems to endorse the point made earlier regarding family or lineage based organizations. The explicit reference to five heads would perhaps indicate that these family or lineage based organizations were gradually moving towards coalescing into a guild like organization.

The above discussion, for sure, brings to the fore the inherent complexities in the way the trading and craft groups were organized both as a social as well as an economic group. It is strongly indicated, though, that there was no one standard way in these

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[351] *Ibid.,* p. 175, l. 15.

[352] *Ibid.,* l. 19.

[353] *Ibid.,* p. 176, l. 26.

[354] *Ibid.,* pp. 176-177, ll. 27-28, *tailika vīṭhu tathā nārāyaṇastathā nāgadevastathā mahasoṇaḥ samastatailikānāṁ.*

[355] *Ibid.,* p. 177, ll. 29-30, *sūtradhāra jejepastathā visiākastathā bhaluākastathā jogukadrakādināṁ.*

would have been organized. Also, there seem to be divergences in the social organization of these groups in different geographical regions or even in different urban centres within a coherent geographical unit. These kinds of evidences also at some level highlight the need for careful use of early Indian texts, especially normative, which portray a geographically uniform and at some level simplified picture of such groups. Having said that, it needs to be acknowledged that these texts do provide insightful information on such aspects which are not discernible in the contemporary inscriptions, for example, how these groups functioned and deliberated on day to day basis, and what kinds of rules were framed for their smooth functioning.

With regard to the political organization of resources unfortunately the nature of data available does not provide any concrete information regarding the kind of taxes associated with the non-agrarian sector of economy. We have already, in the foregoing pages, referred to the term *dāṇī* which probably meant—perquisites for the official, in charge of collecting custom duties, but the inference is only circumstantial and not very concrete. There are though two other terms mentioned in the inscriptions of the Pratīhāras which, for sure, meant taxes associated with the movement of goods. These are *skandhaka* and *mārggaṇaka*.[356] The former has been explained as a cess at a certain rate per shoulder load[357] while the latter was perhaps some kind of an excise duty charged on

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[356] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 186, ll. 24-25; *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 11.

[357] *IEG*, s.v.

goods against their movement.[358] Only this, rather minimal, information is forthcoming about these taxes in the non-agrarian context.

In any case the dearth of tax terms for non-agrarian context does not mean that taxation was lean. An important source of our understanding on the nature of taxation mainly on goods sold in an urban domain comes from the reference to the term *maṇḍapikā*. This term, which has been explained both as an exchange centre and as a cess collection centre, literally means a pillared structure or a pavilion, in all probability, as a derivative of the term *maṇḍapa*. We believe that *maṇḍapikā* was actually a tax collection centre perhaps on goods that were brought to be sold in the local market and in that sense, its identity as an exchange centre is somewhat problematic. In this context a few points may be noted. First, the derivation of the term from *maṇḍapa* would perhaps negate the possibility of its being a large open or closed space. A possible corollary to this would be references in the early medieval period to the *maṇḍapikā* shrines, which were actually rather small pillared shrines.[359] Second, at a place like Sīyaḍoṇi where a number of *haṭṭas* are mentioned, it needs to be explained as to how these *haṭṭas* were different from the *maṇḍapikā* associated with the town if it were to be an exchange centre. Third, some of the references to *śulka-maṇḍapikā* endorse the point that *maṇḍapikās* were

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[358] *IEG*, s.v.

[359] *EITA*, vol. 2, part 1, Chapters 12 and 13; Trivedi, 1990, p. 67. In the glossary, Trivedi defines *maṇḍapikā* as 'shrine without *śikhara* usually of modest dimensions' (see, Idem, 1990, p. 179).

primarily cess collection centres in all probability located at important entry points into

the town. In the study done by Ranabir Chakravarti on the *maṇḍapikās* in early medieval

period based on thirteen inscriptions and the Lekhapaddhati,[360] there is not a single

explicit reference to donations made on the basis of commodities exchanged as in the

case of the horse dealers' inscription of Pṛthūdaka. Almost all of these references are

either of donation of the cess collected at the *maṇḍapikā* (or *śulka-maṇḍapikā*) or voluntary

imposition of cess by occupational groups (not on the basis of commodities exchanged)

which was perhaps diverted to the favoured temple through the *maṇḍapikā*.[361] Also, as

we shall see soon, references to *haṭṭa-dāna* or *dāna*, based on the context of their use,

indicate that these perhaps performed a function similar to the *maṇḍapikās* but in rural

contexts. We believe, *haṭṭa* and *maṇḍapikā* were more like complementary institutions

and not necessarily synonymous.

First part of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription contains records of twenty seven donations

made to various deities in the town by merchants and artisans individually or

collectively. Of these twenty seven records only six records are such which invoke the

local political authority and local administrative institutions. The term *maṇḍapikā* is

mentioned in four of these six records (it may have been mentioned in the first record as

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[360] Chakravarti, 1996, pp. 69-79.

[361] See for a quick glance the table at the end of the essay by Chakravarti, *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

well which is strongly indicated by the reference to *kauptika*).[362] It seems *maṇḍapikā* as the office for collection of taxes in the town was closely associated with the political authority in place. A crucial question though that needs attention is why out of twenty seven records of donation, *maṇḍapikā* appears only in four instances.

As many as sixteen of these twenty seven records relate to donation of *avāsanikās*, *gṛhas* or *vīthīs* by local merchants, predominantly those dealing in salt trade, either individually or in groups.[363] These commercial or residential spaces were personal properties of the donors through descent or purchase and their donation was purely a personal endeavour. There are two other records, rather confusing in language, were acts of donation perhaps of a periodic rent against deposition of money with artisanal groups.[364] Apart from this, one record that would fall in this category refers to the *maṇḍapikā* and *pañcakula* and seems to have been a special case.[365] Otherwise such arrangement would not have required state intervention in any manner. Three records

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[362] Here it is important to note that in lines 19 and 30, the term *kauptika* compounded with a proper noun is immediately preceded by *maṇḍapikā* in singular locative (*maṇḍapikāyāṁ*), *EI*, vol. I, p. 175, l. 19; p. 177, l. 30.

[363] *Ibid.*, record 3, p. 174, ll. 7-8; record 6, p. 174, ll. 11-13; record 7, pp. 174-175, ll. 13-15; record 8, p. 175, ll. 15-16; record 9, p. 175, ll. 16-17; record 10, p. 175, ll. 17-18; record 13, p. 176, ll. 21-22; record 14, p. 176, ll. 22-23; record 15, p. 176, ll. 23-24; record 16, 176, ll. 24-25; record 17, p. 176, ll. 25-26; record 19, p. 176, l. 27; record 24, p. 177, ll. 31-33; record 25, p. 177, ll. 33-34; record 26, p. 177, ll. 34-36.

[364] *Ibid.*, record 4, p. 174, ll. 8-10; record 5, p. 174, l. 10. Record 12, ll. 20-21 which involves an arrangement between Nāgāka and the *Mātaṅgas* in the town wherein *Mātaṅgas* were to pay some amount in *kapardakas* (cowries) to a deity, we are not able to understand fully.

[365] *Ibid.*, record 11, p. 175, ll. 18-20.

pertain to donation of self imposed cess in kind or cash[366] but two other similar records

invoke *maṇḍapikā* and *pañcakula*.[367] The very first record relates to grant of a field by the

local authority on behalf of the whole town[368] and the last one, donation of the rent from

a *vīthī* taken on lease by a merchant with the pledge that a similar *vīthī* would be made

available to the owner. This record refers to *pañcakula* but not to *maṇḍapikā*.[369]

This engagement explains as to why in most records the political authority and other

institutions were not required to be invoked. Let us now discuss those records which

refer to *maṇḍapikā*. The second record dated VS 964 = 907-8 AD refers to Mahendrapāla-I,

the sovereign, and the local ruler Undabhaṭa.[370] It then refers to the grant of a permanent

endowment by *śrī* Undabhaṭa to the effect that in the *maṇḍapikā* belonging to Sīyaḍoṇi

(*Sīyaḍoṇi-satka-maṇḍapikā*) every day, one fourth of a *pañciyaka-dramma* and one *yugā* on

every estampage in a day were to be given to the temple of Viṣṇubhaṭṭāraka built by the

salt merchant Caṇḍuka. The grant was signed by *śrī* Undabhaṭa and brought into force

by the *vārapramukhasthāna*.[371] Possibly the amount paid daily was arranged from the

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[366] *Ibid.*, record 22, p. 177, ll. 29-30; record 18, p. 176, l. 26; record 20, p. 176-177, ll. 27-28.

[367] *Ibid.*, record 21, p. 177, ll. 27-28; record 23, 177, ll. 30-31.

[368] *Ibid.*, record 1, p. 173, ll. 1-4.

[369] *Ibid.*, record 27, p. 178, ll. 36-39.

[370] *Ibid.*, p. 173, ll. 4-6.

[371] *Ibid.*, l. 6, *sīyaḍoṇisatkamaṇḍapikāyāṁ pratidinaṁ pañcayikadramma-satka-pādamekaṁ dātavyaṁ tathā dinaṁ prati mudrayitvā yugaikā deyā.*

collection made at the *maṇḍapikā*. Donation of one *yugā* per estampage is rather unclear. It might have been a fee over and above the cess collected which went towards administrative overheads of the *maṇḍapikā* but one can not be sure of that.

The eleventh record of the donation dated VS 969 = 912 AD refers to the local ruler Dhūrbhaṭa, the *pañcakula*, *maṇḍapikā* and the *vāra*, which was in charge of the *sthāna* (*sthānāropita*).[372] The purport of the record was that Nāgāka, the salt merchant purchased an endowment from the distillers of spirits in all the markets led by *kallapālamahattakapañcika* by depositing 1350 *śrīmadādivarāha-drammas* with them so that liquor worth half a *vigrahatuṅgīya-dramma* was to be donated as *tālī* to god Viṣṇubhaṭṭāraka on the sale of liquor to be purchased by ten *vigrahatuṅgīya-dramma* in perpetuity.[373] The question however is how this transaction was different from other such donations in the inscription insofar as it clearly involved the local administration including *maṇḍapikā*. From the available evidence it is difficult to explain. One possibility is, as suggested by Ranabir Chakravarti,[374] that Nāgāka paid certain dues, either impending or to be realized in future, for the distillers at *maṇḍapikā* against which distillers imposed a tax on themselves.

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[372] *Ibid.,* p. 175, ll. 18-20.

[373] *Ibid.*

[374] Chakravarti, 1996, p. 71.

Record twenty first dated VS 1005 = 948 AD belonged to the reign of Devapāla and referred to the local ruler Niṣkalaṅka, the *pañcakula*, the *maṇḍapikā* and the *vāra*.[375] According to this record all the *mahājanas* in Dosihaṭṭa, having come together, (pledged to) give one third of a *dramma* to (the temple of?) *śrī* Bhaillsvāmideva, established by merchant Vikrama.[376] The nature of the grant does not indicate as to how the *maṇḍapikā* and the *pañcakula* were included in the arrangement. One of the many possibilities may be that the *mahājanas*, who do not seem to have been organized formally as a group, decided to divert the self imposed cess through the *maṇḍapikā* and the *pañcakulas*. Possibly one third of a *dramma* was to be added by all merchants of *Dosihaṭṭa* to their monthly payment to the *maṇḍapikā* which was then given to the temple. Unfortunately these are conjectures only owing largely to the rather confusing manner of composition of the record.

Record twenty three says that in VS 1008 = 951 AD, when Purandara etc., were sitting on the feet of *mahārājādhirāja* Niṣkalaṅka, Mādhava was the *kauptika* in the *maṇḍapikā* and Tuṇḍi and Praddyumna were heading the *vāra*, looking after the affairs of the *sthāna*, in this *adhiṣṭhāna* all the *tailikas*, residing in this place, under the leadership of five persons gave one *palika* of oil from every oil mill to *śrī* Cakrasvāmideva, established by

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[375] *Ibid.*, p. 177, ll. 28-30.

[376] *Ibid.*, l. 29.

Purandara in the temple of Viṣṇubhaṭṭāraka constructed by Caṇḍu.[377] The record does

not make explicit as to whether the arrangement was a one time gift or a periodic one.[378]

Periodic nature of endowment is very clearly mentioned in some of the other records

and moreover the record in question does not refer to the gift as an *akṣayanimikā*. The

possibility, that the gift was a one time imposed or self imposed cess paid through the

maṇḍapikā can not be discounted.

Second part of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription (ll. 39-46) of the time of Harirāja, which seems

to be of a slightly later date, also refers to *maṇḍapikā*. The reference is not very clear as

the inscription is fragmentary in this part but perhaps it records the imposition/self-

imposition of certain cess by *lohavānas* (ironsmiths or perhaps Iron dealers) in favour of

the temple of Murāri established by Dāmodara. In this context only, the record refers to

a cess of half a *kākiṇī* everyday in the *maṇḍapikā*.[379]

The nature of instances presented above would tend to indicate that while a number

of donations by individuals or groups were being made for temples or deities in town,

only such acts of donations which either related to the property of the town (record 1),

or recorded some kind of a donation by the political authority in place (record 2), or

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[377] *Ibid.*, p. 177, ll. 31-33.

[378] Ranabir Chakravarti considers this endowment as a monthly one but we do not find such a term in the record, Chakravarti, 1996, p. 71.

[379] *EI*, vol. I, p. 179, l. 45.

were channelled through the local administration (records 11, 21 and 23) would have required the consent of these institutions. While to us, this seems to be a strong possibility but the nature of the inscription, notwithstanding its richness in content, is such that any inference drawn would always remain tangential. We have to submit that our conclusions do not preclude the possibility of other inferences with regard to the invocation of political authority or institutions in only a few records of donation from as many as twenty seven records.

There are three other references to *maṇḍapikās* in the Pratīhāra inscriptions. The second record of the Pratabgarh inscription refers to *mahāsāmanta daṇḍanāyaka śrī* Mādhava as ruling in Ujjayini and *śrī* Śarma (or Śamma), appointed by *balādhikṛta śrī* Kokkaṭa, who was living at the feet of *parameśvara* (a reference to the Pratīhāra sovereign) who was carrying out the affairs in the *maṇḍapikā*.[380] In our view the *maṇḍapikā* in question was the cess collection centre associated perhaps with Ujjayini rather than the name of present Mandu as suggested by the editor of the inscription.[381] Next reference to *maṇḍapikā* comes from the Bayana inscription of Citralekhā dated 956 AD.[382] It refers to the donation of three *drammas* everyday from the *maṇḍapikā* at Śrīpathā

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[380] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 185, ll. 19-20, *śaimadujjayanyāṁ mahāsāmanta daṇḍanāyaka śarī mādhavaḥ tathā maṇḍapikāyāṁ parameśvarapadopajīvi va(ba)lādhīkṛta śrī kokkaṭa-niyukta śrī śamme ca vyāpāraṁ kurvvate.*

[381] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[382] *EI*, vol. XXII, pp. 120-127.

and a similar amount was to be given from Vusāvaṭa *maṇḍapikā* to the temple of Viṣṇu.[383]

The inscription further says that in the *dāna* one *dramma* was to be given to the god on

every horse.[384] Reference to *dāna* in locative would suggest that the word was not used

for 'gift'. We saw in the Rajor inscription from the adjoining Alwar district, mention of

haṭṭa-dāna (again used in locative) which was either a tax or, more probably, a local level

cess collection centre.[385] In the case of Bayana inscription, as suggested by the editor, the

arrangement either meant that 'a gift of one *dramma* was to be set apart for the deity

probably whenever a horse was sold' [386] or the said sum was levied over and above the

octroi duty on every saleable horse passing through the village. The villages in question

were, in all probability, the granted ones. The second suggestion seems to be more apt

since it is rather unlikely that horses would have been traded in village level markets.

Śrīpathā was probably modern Bayana while Vusāvaṭa, modern Bhusavar in Bharatpur

district. The cumulative evidence from both Bayana and Rajor inscriptions (separated in

span by only four years) does suggest that in the middle of the tenth century, at least in

the Alwar-Bharatpur area, *dāna* was the term used for a village level cess collection

centre which would have been associated with local *haṭṭa* (*haṭṭa-dāne*). Possibly *maṇḍapikā*

denoted such institutions in a more urban domain.

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[383] *Ibid.,* p. 124, l. 23.

[384] *Ibid., prati ghoṭakaṁ ca dāne drammo devsya bhagavato vihitaḥ.*

[385] *EI,* vol. III, p. 267, l. 22.

[386] *Ibid.,* p. 121.

Media of Exchange and Linkages

The theme of monetization in the early medieval period has evoked serious scholarly

attention in the last twenty years of so. It all began with the idea of decline syndrome in

early medieval India leading to feudalization of state structure and economy. Paucity of

coins has been as important a marker of the feudal social formation in India as has been

the decline in trade and commerce, especially external. The decline in the metallic

circulating medium in the Gupta-post-Gupta period has been seen as both, a cause for

and an effect of the decline in trade, and expansion of the agrarian economy. The

situation is seen to have resulted into the emergence of closed village economy, based

largely on barter, and an increase in the practice of remuneration through land grants. In

recent years serious challenges have been posed on the veracity of such an argument but

still the questions of quantification and efficacy of the coins, listed in the contemporary

inscriptions, in the monetization of the economy are very much entrenched in the

historiography of Indian feudalism.[387]

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[387] John Deyell's critique of the paucity of coins in the early medieval period is important from the perspective of economic history. He lists two major misconceptions about the monetary history of the period—the paucity of coinage and the fact that the state, in this period, suffered from a lack of financial resources. He argues that the studies done till now on the early medieval coins are based on the catalogue coverage which essentially relates to the multiplicity of coin types while the number of coins of each type may be quite small in number. In his view, in the early medieval period, (a) coins ceased to a message bearing medium; (b) retention of coin types came in vogue and; (c) same types were issued were issued by many dynasties without any distinguishing marks. He further argues that there is a definite paucity of coin types in the early medieval period but this does not mean a scarcity of circulating medium. Literary sources

The most frequently cited coin in the early medieval inscriptions is *dramma*. The Pratīhāra inscriptions are no exception. In the Pratīhāra inscriptions references to *dramma* come from Pehowa in the north to Siron Khurd in the south, Asni in the east to Kaman and Bayana in the west which signifies that the coin was popular over the whole expanse of the Pratīhāra state.[388]

One of the most prominent coin series associated with north India for the early medieval period is what is generally referred to as Gadahiya coins. Also known as the Indo-Sassanian series, these bear a Sassanian bust on the obverse and a crude representation of an altar flanked by two attendants on the reverse.[389] The series seems to have emerged from a similar device of the Huṇas and became current in later centuries in different parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, western Deccan, Malwa, U. P., and Bihar.[390] There are two aspects that should be kept in mind regarding the Indo-Sassanian series—first, that, in all likelihood, initially the coins of these series were struck in silver,

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do not tell us about the numbers of coins originally produced or circulated. When reference is made to coin hoards, the notion of paucity of coins for the period seems misplaced. About the efficacy of hoard analysis he says, "types of question which may be addressed through analysis of hoards are—relative mint production over time, the intensity of coin usage and the monetary relationship of different regions."

[388] For references to *drammas* in the Pratīhāra inscriptions, see, *EI*, vol. I, p. 177, l. 29; *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 58, l. 3; *IA*, vol. XVI, p. 175, ll. 12-13; *EI*, vol. XXII, p. 124, l. 23; *EI*, vol. XXIV, p. 336, ll. 19 and 23. In the Pehowa horse dealers' inscription *dramma* is mentioned as *ddharma*, see, *EI*, vol. I, p. 187, ll. 12 and 14.

[389] Mukherjee, 1992, p. 15.

[390] *Ibid.*

but later debased silver, copper and billon coins were also utilized; and second, while the continuity of the device is maintained, the coins seem to have grown thicker with increasingly smaller flans.[391] In Lallanji Gopal's view *dramma* generally denoted the Indo-Sassanian or Gadahiya coin which probably followed the *Drachma* weight standard of 67.5 grains. The term later came to be associated with other coins of western and central India which followed the *Drachma* standard.[392] B. N. Mukherjee though argues that metrologically *dramma* should be related to the Sassanian silver dirham of 4.12 grams or approximately 64 grains weight standard. He emphasizes that only a few of the Gadahiya coins weigh above 64 grains and such coins may be taken as equivalent to 1¼ of a *dramma*.[393]

Besides *dramma*, there are many other coins mentioned in the Pratīhāra inscriptions with specific appellations. The Sīyaḍoṇi inscription refers to *pañciyaka dramma*,[394] *pañciyaka dramma satka*,[395] *vigrahapāla dramma*,[396] *vigrahapālīya dramma*,[397] *vigrahapāla satka*

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[391] *Ibid.*

[392] *ELNI*, p. 181.

[393] Mukherjee, 1992, p. 27.

[394] *EI*, vol. I, p. 178, l. 37.

[395] *Ibid.*, p. 173, l. 6.

[396] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 30.

[397] *Ibid.*, p. 176, l. 24.

monetary terms is difficult to comprehend. Besides this, there also seems to be a contradiction within the Indian feudalism model on the interrelationship of a monetized economy and trade and commerce. It is a well known argument in the feudalism construct, that decline in foreign trade and decay of urban centres was directly linked with the decline in the monetized economy. On the other hand Shrimali concludes his essay by saying that 'the cash nexus on the western coast under the Śilāhāras was marked by limited use of money despite the revival of trade, spurt in agricultural activities, growing tendency of urbanization and multiplication of exchange centres in different areas of northern and western India during the centuries between the ninth and the thirteenth'.[435] It seems, ideally, if decline in trade and decay of urban centres was directly responsible for diminishing cash nexus, then their revival or rejuvenation should also lead to increasing monetization, especially in an economy which would invariably be a part of foreign trade through the western coast.

Another point that Shrimali raises pertains to the localized use of coins. He points out that under the Śilāhāras, specific coin types were current locally and were exclusive to that area, a situation that prevented them from 'penetrating deep into the economic ethos'.[436] During the Pratīhāra rule in north India we also come across coins which were probably local in nature, like the *pañciyaka dramma*, or those which coincided with the

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[435] *Ibid.*, p. 371.

[436] *Ibid.*, p. 361-362.

territorial expanse of the state, like the *ādivarāha dramma*. There was a great deal of private minting also happening.[437] B. N. Mukherjee has cited an important evidence from the *Hudūd al-Ālam* (of the later tenth century AD) to show that not only indigenous series, but also outside or in fact non-indigenous series were allowed to trade in an area which had its own series of coinage. The text refers to transactions in various kinds of coins, like *bārāda, nākhvār, shābani, kabuhra, kīmavān* and *kūra,* of different weights at Slabūr in the territory of the king of Kanauj, which was a large town with markets, merchants and commodities.[438] The point is also corroborated by the discoveries of hoards such as the one found at Khajausa containing 3.75 Kg cowries and 638 billon *vigrahapāla* and *ādivarāha drammas,* and the other at Bhondri (Lucknow district) comprising 9834 cowries along with 54 billon *vināyakapāla drammas.*[439] The evidence from the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription, which refers to a wide range of metallic coins along with cowries and *kākiṇī,* is a clear testimony to simultaneous use of a variety of coins and other media of exchange in a single market domain. The rate of exchange between various types of indegenus and foreign coins current in a domain would have depended on their intrinsic worth.

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[437] For a detailed discussion, see, Mukherjee, 1992, Chapter 1, part B.

[438] *Ibid.,* p. 73.

[439] Deyell, 1990, p. 34; Mukherjee, 1992, p. 72.

This point bring us to the complex question of the monetization under the Pratīhāras. Notwithstanding the complex problem of quantification, i.e., the volume of money current within the Gurjara-Pratīhāra dominions, there is sufficient evidence to show, both from the physical coins and hoard analysis, as well as from their references in contemporary inscriptions, that the Pratīhāra economy was monetized to a considerable extent. Deyell's study shows that the 'imperial coinage' of the Pratīhāras 'underwent a long term decline in the intrinsic value because of a steady increase in the base metal alloyed with its constituent precious metal'.[440] B. N. Mukerjee attributes this gradual decline in the intrinsic worth of the coins in general in the period, to the private minters. He points out, on the basis of textual evidence, that private minters could continue minting a popular coin, like Gadahiya, long after its official or unofficial use, and were also prone to consistently, and quite surreptitiously, debase their quality or weight, out of their greed to make more profit. This would have compelled the state mints also to either debase their coins, because of the compulsion of Gresham's law, or to stop minting.[441] Deyell quite rightly points out that such a situation would not have gone undetected if the minting operation was contracted to private moneyers.[442] Moreover, it

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[440] Deyell, 1990, p. 36-37.

[441] Mukherjee, 1992, 21-23. Gresham's law basically says that if there are two currencies with same nominal price but different intrinsic worth are current simultaneously, then the currency with lower worth will drive the better one out of circulation because there will be an increased tendency to hoard it.

[442] Deyell, 1990, p. 36.

is difficult to accept that, even if the state and the private minters were minting simultaneously, the state would have tamely conceded to the machinations of greedy moneyers without taking any corrective steps. In Deyell's view, this consistent debasement was due to 'an intentional policy of the state'.[443]

References to coins in the Pratīhāra inscriptions indicate that various types of *drammas*, while they were struck to the same weight standard were named, were named differently, thereby suggesting that they had differential intrinsic worth. Moreover, the spatial distribution of the Pratīhāra 'imperial series' clearly suggests, that they were current largely within the territories of the state. These points imply that the Pratīhāra coinage did not pass as denomination by convention and that it, especially the *dramma*, was not a fiduciary coinage.[444]

The possible rationale such a monetary policy is located by Deyell in the acute shortage of silver in the whole of the Asian world in the tenth century. The debasemsnt in the silver content, both by the state as well as by private minters, may have been directed towards conrolling the inflationary pressures due to the price of silver, which would have seen an upswing especially in areas which were far away from the centres of international trade. Deyell believes that such a debased currency would have served two purposes—one, that, it would have kept a check on the inflation in the general price

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[443] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[444] *Ibid.*

structure, and two, it would have discouraged movement of coins, and thereby of already scarce and precious metal, out of the realm.[445] This kind of an argument is new and certainly complex in a historiographical context where coins have generally been used for all possible purposes except for their use in the monetary history. In any case, this engagement, based largely on the arguments presented by John Deyell, B. N. Mukherjee and K. M. Shrimali, tends to show that neither the economy was undermonetized, nor was the state indifferent to the efficacy of transactions through money.

There is hardly any explict inscriptional evidence to look for trade linkages, or for that matter linkages in general, between various settlements. There are very few, only indicative evidence to show this. One, of course, is the reference to *skandhaka* and *mārgaṇaka* in the second record of the Pratabgarh inscription and in the Rajor inscription. These tax terms, as we have seen, were clearly associated with movements of goods. The second part of the Rajor inscription refers to imposition of certain taxes, which were perhaps additional to the normal ones and included, *inter-alia*, cess of three *viṁśopakas* on every sack (of agricultural goods) and fifty leaves from every *collikā* of leaves brought from outside the town. In fact, the existence of *maṇḍapikā* and *dāna* (or *haṭṭa-dāna*) was symptomatic of movement of goods which were taxed at certain points both in urban as well as in rural contexts.

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[445] *Ibid.*

Besides the references to *mārgas* and *rathyās* which are mentioned in the Sīyaḍoṇī and

Ahar inscriptions, we also come across references to *vartma*,[446] *vartinī*,[447] and

rājavartmanī,[448] (a highway?) all meaning roads, from the Pratabgarh inscription. Most of

these references, though, are located in the context of a town or a settlement and were

probably used only for linkages within a town. It is quite possible though that these

terms may have been used for inter-settlement linkages. *Deśīnāmamālā*, dated in the

eleventh century, refers to *rathyā*, explained as a 'carriage street or a highway', and to

lagurathyā, 'a small carriage street or a small lane'.[449] The three kinds of roads mentioned

by Manu are explained by Medhātithī as, roads 'through the open country, through

marshy grounds or such as is cut by water courses, and through forests'.[450] Al-Birūnī

also furnishes a detailed list of the distances between various important towns or cities

of India.[451]

Commercial Ethos of the Period

We may now move ahead to analyze the nature of transactions that took place at these

trading centres. We may again underline that we are not dealing with the records of

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[446] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 187, l. 29.

[447] *Ibid.*

[448] *Ibid.*, l. 32.

[449] Jain, 1990, p. 143.

[450] Cited in Jain, 1990, p. 44.

[451] Ahmad, Q., 1988, pp. 95-99.

some ledger or a rate list of commodities transacted in markets. What we are engaged

with are records of donation or endowments, and this remains a consistent impediment

in formulation of an argument on the basis of explicit evidence. At the same time

though, it needs to be understood that nature of socio-economic activities in the

religious context are not detached from the secular domain. The pattern of donations

and transactions in relation with temples or religious groups would at some level only

highlight the nature of dominant pattern of such activities in secular domain. B. D.

Chattopadhyaya writes, "...it is the pattern of donations and more generally the

activities centring around these temples that suggest the commercial ethos of these

urban centres".[452] We may begin by making a list of various kinds of donations from

whichever centre they come. Numbers in parenthesis indicate the frequency of such

instances in each case.

Ahar

- Investment in shops for a period of 99 years through a sale deed (5).[453]

- Donation of only a partial rent later purchased by the temple for the whole rent (2; records IV and VIII).[454]

- Investment of temple money in purchasing a shop (1).[455]

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[452] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 143.

[453] *EI*, vol. XIX, pp. 58-62, Document 5, ll. 11-14; Document 6, ll. 14-16; Document 7, ll. 16-20; Document 9, ll. 22-24; Document 10, ll. 24-28.

[454] *Ibid.*, Document 4, ll. 7-11; Document 8, ll. 20-22.

Kaman

- Donation of two *āvārīs* (enclosures probably containing commercial spaces) by means of a written deed (*lekhya viśodhitaṁ*) (1).[456]

- Investment by the temple in purchasing two *āvārīkās* (enclosures) containing *vīthīs* (shops) (1).[457]

- Gift of fields within the town inside the fort (2).[458]

- Investment with guilds against payment in cash (2).[459]

- Investment in guild with payment in kind (1).[460]

Bhilsa

- Donation of three shops, each providing regular rent, which is specified (1).[461]

Gwalior

- Donation of cultivable fields by the whole town (3).[462]

- Monthly supply of oil by the whole guild of oil-millers (1).[463]

- Daily supply of flowers by the guild of gardeners (1).[464]

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[455] *Ibid.*, Document 2.

[456] *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 333-336, Document 7, ll. 21-22.

[457] *Ibid.*, Document 8, ll. 22-24.

[458] *Ibid.*, Document 3, ll. 13-16; Document 6, ll. 19-21.

[459] *Ibid.*, Document 3, ll. 16-17; Document 5, ll. 18-19.

[460] *Ibid.*, Document 4, ll. 17-18.

[461] *EI*, vol. XXX, pp. 214-215.

[462] *EI*, vol. I, p. 159-160, ll. 3-11.

[463] *Ibid.*, ll. 11-17.

[464] *Ibid.*, ll. 17-21.

Siron Khurd

- Donation of *avāsanikās, grhas* or *vīthīs,* all by merchants (16).[465]

- Donation of piece of land by the whole town (1).[466]

- Donation of cash, to be paid daily, from the *maṇḍapikā* associated with Sīyaḍoṇi (1).[467]

- Deposition of money with artisanal organizations for regular payment by them in cash or kind (3).[468]

- Regular donation in cash (3) or kind (2) by occupational groups.[469]

- One record, which mentions Mātaṅgas (record 12) and perhaps involves some kind of cess, we are not able to understand fully.[470]

Pehowa

- Voluntary self-imposition of cess on the sale and purchase of each horse (1).[471]

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[465] *Ibid.,* record 3, p. 174, ll. 7-8; record 6, p. 174, ll. 11-13; record 7, pp. 174-175, ll. 13-15; record 8, p. 175, ll. 15-16; record 9, p. 175, ll. 16-17; record 10, p. 175, ll. 17-18; record 13, p. 176, ll. 21-22; record 14, p. 176, ll. 22-23; record 15, p. 176, ll. 23-24; record 16, 176, ll. 24-25; record 17, p. 176, ll. 25-26; record 19, p. 176, l. 27; record 24, p. 177, ll. 31-33; record 25, p. 177, ll. 33-34; record 26, p. 177, ll. 34-36; record 27, p. 178, ll. 36-39.

[466] *Ibid.,* record 1, p. 173, ll. 1-4.

[467] *Ibid.,* p. 173, ll. 4-6 and footnote 375.

[468] *Ibid.,* record 4, p. 174, ll. 8-10; record 5, p. 174, l. 10; record 11, p. 175, ll. 18-20. Record 12, ll. 20-21 which involves an arrangement between Nāgāka and the *Mātaṅgas* in the town wherein *Mātaṅgas* were to pay some amount in *kauris* to a deity, we are not able to understand fully.

[469] *Ibid.,* record 22, p. 177, ll. 29-30; record 18, p. 176, l. 26; record 20, p. 176-177, ll. 27-28; record 21, p. 177, ll. 27-28; record 23, 177, ll. 30-31.

[470] Supra Note 407.

[471] *EI,* vol. I, pp. 186-188.

Rajor[472]

- Imposition of cess in cash on each sack of grain brought to the market for sale (1).

- Imposition of cess in kind (1).

- Yearly cess on every shop (1).

- Cess in kind on the betel leaves brought to the town from outside (1).

Bayana[473]

- Three *drammas* each from the *maṇḍapikās* located at Śrīpathā (Bayana) and Vusāvaṭa (Bhusavar).

- One *dramma* to be given to the god on every horse at the *dāna*.

The list provides us with a number of ways in which donations and endowments were made to the temple, deity etc. Two ways though stand apart on the basis of their numerical strength; one, donation of houses or shops in market places by merchants and artisans to a temple or a specific deity or investments in such assets by temple committees from the resources of temples, in both cases, the aim was to derive a rent in cash towards regular expenses of these temples; two, depositing a large amount of money with guilds or other occupational organizations against a regular payment of cash and donations made by some artisanal groups to temples in kind. Besides these, the other less numerous methods included, imposition of voluntary cess in cash (Pṛthūdaka), donation in cash through the *maṇḍapikā* (Sīyaḍoṇī) and other unspecified

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[472] *EI*, vol. III, p. 267, ll. 21-23.

[473] *EI*, vol. XXII, p. 124, ll. 122-23.

form of endowment for a regular return in cash (Sīyaḍoṇī, record 18). Instances of donations of measured cultivable land within the urban domain or in the hinterland in vicinity are also mentioned. While at Ahar, temples were using their own resources in buying, on lease for long duration, non-liquid assets like shops and houses, to derive regular flow of currency, at Sīyaḍoṇī, donations were being made of such assets with same purpose. In some cases the amount of rent that the specific property could derive has been explicitly mentioned. In one case at Ahar, for a donation of a certain part of rent accruing from a shop as a perpetual endowment, the shop was given as a surety. Later though, the shop was taken on ninety-nine years lease towards appropriation of the whole rent. Similar was the case of investing money with artisanal organizations against payment in cash. This kind of investment could not only keep the principal amount intact but ensure a regular supply of cash which would have been a coveted resource in these times when exchange processes were driven by only partial monetization. The whole scenario indicates a movement towards increasing monetization in an economic environment which was not driven by foreign trade, rather which evolved from agrarian bases, something that we have already commented upon. It is in light of this that the necessary linking of foreign trade with monetization needs to be questioned and problematized. We come across a number of references to coins, predominantly *drammas* of various denominations, in one case *paṇa* and in Sīyaḍoṇī

inscription, to cowry shells. Not all of these have been empirically identified though John Deyell[474] has identified some of them. Lallanji Gopal[475] and B. N. Mukherjee[476] have attempted to examine their relative worth. In any case, references to these coins in epigraphs and literature without their actual specimen may not be construed as 'devoid of any significance'.[477] The question, in our view, is not so much of quantification which Deyell tries to stretch a little too far, but of genesis of a pattern in a specific socio-economic context which saw full bloom in the early centuries of the second millennium. The argument generally put forth that in the want of actual coins, the references to various denominations of these coins would only mean that while the assessment was done in cash, payment would have been made only in kind, needs to be verified in the light of the fact that there are instances of donations in kind also. We have come across only garlands and oil as the commodities which were donated in kind. Both of them would have constituted a substantial demand in the religious domain almost on a daily basis. Many other items, certainly liquor, would not be required by temples on a regular basis. These kinds of references in the religious domain, it is strongly indicated, were a clear reflection of the commercial ethos of the secular domain.

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[474] Deyell, 1990.

[475] *ELNI.*

[476] Mukherjee, 1992.

[477] Sharma, R. S., 1969, p. 7.

Table 3: Grants Made by the Pratīhāra Sovereign

Locality	Date	Donor	Recipient	Unit Granted	Remarks
Village Badhal (Phulera *tehsil* in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan)[1]	815 AD	Nāgabhaṭa-II	*Śrī bhaṭṭa brahmacārī* Durgilla belonging to the *kauthumat chāndogya* branch of the Veda and the Bhārgava *gotra*	Lambakūpa-grāma	Resources granted along with the village are not specified; the language of the grant is compact and crisp
Village Surapura in the Kadipur *tehsil* of Sultanpur district in U. P.[2]	827 AD	Nāgabhaṭa-II	Meritorious brāhmaṇa children of *bhaṭṭa* Indragurū who belonged to the Dālibhya *gotra* and was a student of the *bahvric śākhā* of the Rig-Veda	Cchinnapallik-āyutāshilak-āgrahāra	Same as above
Sambhal (Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh)[3]	828 AD	Nāgabhaṭa-II	Brāhmaṇas – *bhaṭṭa* Sūryarūāta, *bhaṭṭa* Nāgarāta, *bhaṭṭa* Ravirāta and Nārāyaṇarṇāta – born of the family of *bhaṭṭa* Prabhākararāta of the Bhāradvāja *gotra* and the *mādhyandina-vājasaneya śākhā*	Śambhupallik-āgrahāra	Same as above

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[1] Mishra, 1990, pp. 43-47.

[2] *Pragdhara*, vol. 8, pp. 199-201.

[3] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, pp. 105-111.

Locality	Date	Donor	Recipient	Unit Granted	Remarks
Village Barah (four miles to the east of Akbarpur in Uttar Pradesh)[4]	836 AD	Bhoja-I	Brāhmaṇas born of the family of Kācarasvāmin who belonged to the Bhārdvāja *gotra* and was a student of the *vājasaneya śākhā*	Valākāgrahāra	The grant is essentially an endorsement of a grant made earlier by Maukhari? Sarvvavarmma later confirmed by Nāgabhaṭa-II; during the reign of Rāmabhadra, though it was discontinued
Village Badhal (Phulera *tehsil* in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan)[5]	841 AD	Bhoja-I	*Bhaṭṭa* Khokhra belonging to the Śarkarakṣi *gotra* and *śāṅkhāyana* recension of the Vedas	Jāhumāputraka-grāma	Resources given along with the grant are mentioned as *sarvāya sameta*
Village Sivā (approximately seven miles NNE of Didwana on the border of Churu-Sikar districts[6]	843 AD	Bhoja-I	*Bhaṭṭa* Harṣuka	Sivā-grāma-agrahāra	The grant was originally made by Vatsarāja to Harṣuka's great-grandfather Vāsudeva through a *śāsana*
Village Jiragaur near Kamalganj in the Farrukhabad district of U. P.[7]	862 AD	Bhoja-I	*Bhaṭṭa brahmacārī* Chaṭhila belonging to Lakṣyagaṇya *gotra*, *śāṅkhāyana śākhā* of the Ṛg-Veda	Svasaṁbaddhā-vicchinnapāṭak-opeta Duḍā-grāma	-
Village Dighwa-Dubauli (25 miles to the SE of Gopalganj, Bihar)[8]	898 AD	Mahendrapāla-I	*Bhaṭṭa* Padmasāra of the Sāvarṇa *gotra* and a student of the Kauthuma-Chāndogya *Śākhā*	Pānīyaka grāma	-

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[4] *EI*, vol. XIX, pp. 15-19.

[5] Mishra, 1990, pp. 47-50.

[6] *EI*, vol. V, pp. 208-213.

[7] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, pp. 145-150.

Locality	Date	Donor	Recipient	Unit Granted	Remarks
Precise provenance is not known but the donated village has been identified with village Tikhri, a few miles to the south of Kosam[9]	931 AD	Vināyakapāla-II	*Bhaṭṭa* Bhullāka of the Darbhi *gotra* and a student of the Atharva-Veda	Ṭikkarikā grāma	-
Pratabgarh (Pali district, Rajasthan)[10]	946 AD	Mahendrapāla-II	Goddess Vaṭayakṣiṇīdevī connected with the *maṭha* of Hari-Ṛṣiśvara, member of the *Caturvaidya* community of Daśapura	Kharparapadra-ka grāma	The said village which was granted by Mahendrapāla-II is clearly stated to be under the enjoyment of *talavarggika* Hariṣaḍa; the grant was written on the orders of śrī Jajjanāga and ratified by signatures by śrī Vidagdha
Jhusi (near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh)[11]	1028 AD	Trilocanapāla	Six thousand brāhmaṇas, of various *gotras* and *pravaras*, belonging to Pratiṣṭhāna	Lebhuṇḍāka grāma	There is not a single reference to any customary tax being given away
Kara (five miles to the NW of Sirathu in the Kaushambi district of Uttar Pradesh)[12]	1036 AD	Yaśaḥpāla	Māthura Vikaṭa of Pabhosā	Payalāsa grāma	Here only customary taxes are mentioned as given along with the grant and no resources

[8] *IA*, vol. XV, pp. 105-113.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 138-141.

[10] *EI*, vol. XIV, pp. 176-78.

[11] *IA*, vol. XVIII, pp. 33-35.

[12] *ASI-An. Rep.*, 1923-24, pp. 122-124.

Table 4: Resources and Taxes in the Agrarian Context

Grant	Date	Issuer	Term(s) Referring to Grant of Taxes and Resources
Gujarat			
Balavarman's copper plate grant from Una	893 AD	Cālukya ruler Balavarman (a subordinate of Mahendrapāla-I)	*sabhogabhāgaḥ sahiraṇyadānaḥ sodrangaḥ savṛkṣamālākulaḥ saparikaraḥ collakavaiṇivaigikakoṣyādi-sahitah*
Avanivarman-II Yoga's copper plate grant from Una	899 AD	Avanivarman-II-Yoga (son of Balavarman and a subordinate of Mahendrapāla-I)	*savṛkṣamālākulaḥ sabhogabhāgaḥ sahiraṇyadānaḥ sābhajamānaveṣṭikaḥ*
Wadhwan grant of Dharaṇīvarāha	914 AD	Cāpa Dharaṇīvarāha (a subordinate of Pratīhāra Mahīpāla-I)	*sadāṇībhogabhāgaḥ savṛkṣamālākulaḥ sotpadyamānaveṣṭīkaḥ*
Rajasthan			
Badhal copper plate grant of Nāgabhaṭa-II	815 AD	Nāgabhaṭa-II Pratīhāra	*sarvvāya-sameta*
Badhal copper plate grant of Bhoja	841 AD	Bhoja-I	*sarvvā-samaita*
Daulatpura copper plate of Bhoja	843 AD	Bhoja-I	*sarvvāya-sameta*
Pratabgarh Inscription– record-I	946 AD	Mahendrapāla-II Pratīhāra	*svasīmātṛṇa-prati-gocaraparyanto sarvvādāya-sameta diyamāna bhāga-bhoga-kara-hiraṇya*
Pratabgarh Inscription – Record-II	Undated	*Tantrapāla mahāsāmanta mahādaṇḍanāyaka śrī* Mādhava (perhaps a local ruler of Ujjain area and a high official under Mahendrapāla-II)	*savṛkṣamālākulaṁ sakāṣṭatṛṇagopacāraṁ sajala-sthala-sametaṁ catuṣkaṇṭaka viśuddha bhāgabhogakarahiraṇyādiskandhakamārgaṇakādirā jabhāvyaissahitaṁ*

Grant	Date	Issuer	Term(s) Referring to Grant of Taxes and Resources
Rajor Inscription	960 AD	Mathanadeva of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra lineage (a subordinate ruler of Vijayapāla Pratīhāra)	sva-sīmātrṇa-yūti-gocara-paryantaḥsodraṅgah savṛkṣamālākulaḥ sajalo bhoga-mayut-ādāyābhyām-api samasta-sasyānāṁ bhāga-khala-bhikṣā-prasthaka-skandhaka-mārgganaka-dāna-nidhi-nidhān-āputtrikādhana-naṣṭi-baraṭ-ucitānucita-nibaddhānibaddha-samasta-pratyāya-sahitas
Uttar Pradesh and Bihar			
Surapura copper plate grant of Nāgabhaṭa-II	827 AD	Nāgabhaṭa-II	sarvvāya-sameta
Sambhal copper plate of Nāgabhaṭa-II	828 AD	Nāgabhaṭa-II	sarvvāya-sameta
Barah copper plate of Bhoja	836 AD	Bhoja-I	sarvvāya-sameta
Dighwa Dubauli copper plate grant of Mahendrapāla-I	898 AD	Mahendrapāla-I	sarvvāya-sameta
Bengal Asiatic Society's plate of Vināyakapāla	931 AD	Vināyakapāla-I	sarvvāya-sameta
Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla	1028 AD	Trilocanapāla	sva sīmā-trṇa-yūti-gocara-parṣabhaḥ sajala-sthala sā (vra) mra-madhūkaḥ saloha-lavaṇākarah sānūpa-jaṅgalah sapāṣāṇa-khānih sagarh [tta]-osarah sādha-ūrddhvah
Kara Stone inscription of Yaśaḥpāla	1036 AD	Yaśaḥpāla	bhāga bhoga kara hiraṇya pratyādādhikaṁ together with tenth part of the produce (daśa-bandhena-saha........alabhrata(?))

Table 5: Grants Other than the Royal Grants

Locality	Donor and Date	Sovereign	Recipient	Unit	Remarks
Pehowa (Kurukshetra district of Haryana)[1]	Gogga, Purṇarāja and Devarāja of the Tomara family; Undated	Mahendrapāla-II	Temple(s) of Viṣṇu which were built by these three brothers at Pehowa	Three villages - Yakṣapālaka, Gejjara and Pāṭala	The reference to the grant made in all probability by the three brothers is quite cursory. The verse only says that the three villages were given for the enjoyment of the deity (*bhogāya*)
Kaman (Bharatpur district in Rajasthan)[2]	Name lost but perhaps an act of personal donation; 835 AD	Not mentioned explicitly but the inscription falls in the reign of either Rāmabhadra or	Deity Kāmyakeśvara (identified with Śiva)	Two plots of land (*bhūmikhaṇḍa*) within the *koṭṭa* (the fort at Kāmyaka)	Boundary references of the granted plot suggest that it was not used for agriculture

[1] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 242-250.

[2] *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 329-336.

Locality	Donor and Date	Sovereign	Recipient	Unit	Remarks
Kaman[3]	A person named Untaṭa, in all probability a local level official; 835 AD	Mihira Bhoja Not mentioned but the grant is dated in the period of Nāgabhaṭa-II's rule	Deity Kāmyakeśvara	Land tilled by three ploughs in the village under the enjoyment of the donor (*svabhujyamāna grāme*)	The initial portion of the inscription which is completely effaced mentions on Untaṭa whose ancestors belonged to Rohitaka and who apparently had built this temple
Gwalior (in Madhya Pradesh)[4]	The whole town of Gopagirī; 876 AD	Bhoja-I	Temple of Navadurgās	A measured piece of land in the village Cūḍāpallikā for a flower garden	The land in question is said to have been under the enjoyment of the whole town
Gwalior[5]	The whole town of Gopagirī; 876 AD	Bhoja I	Temples of Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin and Navadurgās	A field under cultivation in the chief grain land (*mūlavāpa*) held in common (?) (*hāra?*) and another field situated to the north of the first one in the village Jayapurāka which was under the enjoyment of the whole town	The first field is said to have been cultivated by one Dhallaka and the second, by Memmāka who belonged to the kṣatriya family

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[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 154-162.

[5] *Ibid.*

Locality	Donor and Date	Sovereign	Recipient	Unit	Remarks
Una (Southern Kathiawar, Gujarat)[6]	*Mahāsāmanta* Balavarman of the Cālukya family; 893 AD	Mahendrāyudha (Mahendrapāla-I)	Temple of Sun god Taruṇāditya	Village Jayapura	While the grant is typical Gujarat grant but forced labour is missing in the list of privileges
Pushkar (District Ajmer in Rajasthan)- First Record[7]	*Baṭṭasura* Malhaṇa; 926 AD	-	The Temple of the god Puṇḍarikākṣa at Jyeṣṭha Puśkara (Pushkar)	Khāta *kṣetra* within the Khaḍḍhāra *kṣetra* lying in the area of Nandāgrāma	The purport of the second part recording some grant by the *bhūpa* Durggarāja dated 938 is not very clear
Thanwala (near Pushkar in Rajasthan)[8]	Some personal donations of fields ratified by Durggarāja, *mahantaka* of the Cāhamāna ruler Simharāja; 956 AD	-	The temple of Raṇṇāditya (Sun god)	A. Durggarāja gave through a grant some land situated in Nandāgrāma for god Raṇṇāditya B. Other Grants 1. Kāliūaka (a field?) given by Durggarāja 2. Camḍoaka (a field?) given by Malhaṇa 3. A Kedāraka (marshy field) given by Śrīdhara 4. Cālukamdara-*kṣetra* given by Sīla	-

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[6] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 1-10.

[7] *EI*, vol. XXXV, pp. 239-246.

[8] *Ibid.*

Locality	Donor and Date	Sovereign	Recipient	Unit	Remarks
				5. A *pāḍikā* called Uḍubhā given by Mocā 6. A field(?) given by Yauvaka 7. An *agamakṣetra* given by Matuāka 8. Some *kṣetra* given by Gugaka 9. A *kedāraka* given by Sāva 10. A *pāḍikā* associated with Āditya given by Vāta 11. Dāḍimakām, a field(?) given by Silā	
Pratabgarh in Pali district of Rajasthan[9]	*Tantrapāla mahāsāmanta mahādaṇḍanāyaka śrī* Mādhava (apparently a subordinate ruler and official under Mahīpāla-II on the request of Indrarāja of Cāhamāna family; 942 AD	-	Temple of Indrādityadeva in Ghonṭāvarṣika *sthāna*	Village Dhārāpadraka which was under the enjoyment of *śrī* Vidagdha and a *kacchaka* to the northern part of the said village which was irrigated by an *arahaṭa*	-
Pratabgarh [10]	Personal donations; Undated	-	Various Temples	1. Gift of a field named Chittullāka by Devarāja, son of Cāmuṇḍarāja for Indrādityadeva 2. Gift of a field called Uṁdiāka by Indrarāja in favour of Trailokyamohanadeva within the precincts of Indrādityadeva 3. Gifts of two fields, Dhāḍivāhā and Mocca by some unnamed persons	-

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[9] *EI*, vol. XIV, pp. 176-188.

[10] *Ibid.*

Locality	Donor and Date	Sovereign	Recipient	Unit	Remarks
Bayana in the Bharatpur district of Rajasthan[11]	Citralekhā, wife of a chief known as Maṅgalarāja and daughter of a local chief of Bayana, a subordinate of Mahīpāla-II; 956 AD	Mahīpāla -II	The temple of Viṣṇu built by Citralekhā	Two villages known as Gograpura and Nāgapallī and certain fields in Hāḍhapallī	The inscription also mentions some donations in cash from the *maṇḍapikās* located at Śrīpathā and Vusāvaṭa
Rajorgarh (Paranagar) in the Alwar district of Rajasthan[12]	*Mahārājādhirāja parameśvara* Mathanadeva, the local ruler of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra lineage; 959 AD	Vijayapāla	In favour of Lacchukeśvara Mahādeva (Śiva) named after the donor's mother	Vyāghrapāṭaka village associated with Vaṁśapoṭaka *bhoga* which was under the enjoyment of the donor along with neighbouring fields cultivated by the Gurjaras	-

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[11] *EI*, vol. XXII, pp. 120-127.

[12] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 263-267.

4

The Lord and the Ring:
Political Organization under
the Pratīhāras

Royalty

Early Indian political tradition subsumed two major strands of governance, Monarchy

and Republics. By the early post-Gupta phase, the Republics, both in the eastern and the

western parts of India, were, more or less, either exterminated or had fallen into

oblivion.

In the post-Gupta period, monarchy was the predominant norm. The period saw

emergence of small local or regional level polities many of which surfaced as more and

more, hitherto forested and tribal areas, came in contact with the Brahmanical

worldview and its established adjuncts. Monarchy was one such form. B. D.

Chattopadhyaya conceptualized the process, perhaps of detribalization,[1] in terms of

expansion of state societies which were basically marked by stratification between

[1] Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 205, fn. 62.

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producing and non-producing groups.[2] There are some tangible and others not so concrete evidence to show this transformation.[3]

Early centuries of the Christian Era saw beginnings of composition of a whole corpus of normative and didactic literature—the Smṛtis, and the *Śāntiparva* and *Anuśāsanaparva* parts of the *Mahābhārata*. These texts explicated mainly the Brahmanical construct of how things were ideally to be, and subsumed, *inter-alia*, questions relating to ideas of laws of social order, kingship etc. The period from 800 to 1200 AD saw the composition of various commentaries and digests on the Smṛti literature. The period has been seen in terms of crystallization of the constructive phase and genesis of the critical phase in the development of the Smṛtis.[4] The early part of this time span saw the Pratīhāra rule virtually in the whole of north India.

There is a huge amount of literature available on the theoretical discourse of kingship and social order. The two prominent ninth century commentators, Medhātithī and Viśvarūpa, who wrote commentaries on Manu and Yājñyavalkya respectively, reproduced willy-nilly the ideas expounded by the early *smṛtikāras*. But they also made observations which were original and marked a departure from the earlier ideas. Two relevant aspects may be discussed here.

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[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206, fn. 64.

[3] For some inscriptional references to the process, see, Chakravarti, 2002 (b), p. 83-86.

[4] Ghoshal, 1966, p. 407.

The first pertains to the authority of the king to formulate and apply laws within his domain. On the statement of Manu which requires the king to give consideration to distinctive usages of different groups of people for settling the law applicable to each, Medhātithī comments by giving four different alternative explanations of the 'difficult and ambiguous phrase', *jātijanapadān*.[5] First explanation understood the term as local usages of the castes and the king was supposed to first make sure that they were not contradictory to the canon and second, that they were not oppressive for the people; the second explanation considered local usages as eternal and were to be used on all 'visible' affairs; in the third explanation the term was seen as 'usages of which the beginning could not be traced and which were observed by the most qualified persons among those born and living in a particular region'. Medhātithī's fourth, and according to U. N. Ghoshal, the most original, explanation refers to the local usages of barbarians (*Mlecchas*) and not *āryas*. He further exhorts 'the paramount ruler' not to forbid such practices for two reasons, 'firstly because the tribal usage (*jātidharma*) is followed by those observing their local customs (*svadeśācāra*), and is sanctioned by their residence in the region concerned, and secondly, because there is, in this case, no conflict with the canon, for such a conflict would hold good for those entitled to perform their duties and not to lower beings'.[6] Irrespective of what Manu actually meant by the term *jātijanapadān*, the

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 411.

[6] *Ibid.*

fact that Medhātithī gave four alternative, and mutually exclusive, explanations is itself

symptomatic of the flux. New developments were warranting these commentators to

interpret certain terms which were ambiguous to them also. Even when these

commentaries themselves were not quite detached from the realm of normative, they

were beginning to acknowledge and incorporate aberrations. Local usages were perhaps

not as relevant when the *Manusmṛti* was composed as they were in the early medieval

period when newly emerging polities, at least to begin with, were deeply entrenched in

their local contexts—politically, economically and ideologically.

The last explanation of Medhātithī, which Ghoshal calls the most original, pertained

to *Mlecchas*, which term seems to be more appropriately applicable to aborigines and

tribals, rather than foreigners, low castes and Muslims, and the two reasons that he gives

for not forbidding local usages are symptomatic, in the first reason quite explicitly and

in second, rather implicitly, of his emphasis on the utter inapplicability of the

Brahmanical norms on these groups. The relative importance of the fourth explanation is

also borne out by the detailed treatment that it received in the commentary.

The second aspect relates to title to rights and duties of kingship. Medhātithī, unlike

the early *smṛtikāras*, applies the term *rājan* not only to a kṣatriya king but also to a

territorial lord coming from a non-kṣatriya stock.[7] Commenting on Manu's statement

regarding exemption of king from ceremonial impurity, Medhātithī says, 'although the

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[7] *Ibid.,* p. 415.

title *rājan* applies to a man of kṣatriya caste (sic), still for the reason given in the text (namely the king's occupying the position of sovereignty) it signifies by implication a territorial lord: the king's right to instant purification is founded not upon his birth alone, but upon his function of protecting people: therefore even a non-kṣatriya is entitled to this privilege, if he is capable of protecting his subjects'.[8] The idea is in fact repeated many a times in his commentary.

It is significant that the Medhātithī extended the title of kingship to any person who was capable of protecting people and possessed attributes for receiving consecration etc., which also means that he, even if implicitly, acknowledged the claim of those who were either beyond the pale of Brahmanical social structure or had non-Brahmanical antecedents. This, if holds, is significant concession in the present context. But the problem is, if this concession meant anything in reality. One gets a feel of a curious negotiation. Commentators like Medhātithī were interpreting a narrative which was meant to impose certain structure, emanating essentially from Brahmanical worldview, perhaps because this structure was not functional in reality. Medhātithī perhaps came to terms with contemporary reality of the fact that not every thing explicated in the narrative could be applicable and made some concessions, important one being acknowledging any king as *rājan* thereby taking away the exclusive privilege of kṣatriyas. Almost at the same time we find ruling houses like the Pratīhāras, who clearly

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[8] *Ibid.*

had tribal antecedents, making explicit claims to kṣatriyahood by connecting themselves to the solar lineage. One would wonder whether texts like the *Manusmṛti* and commentaries thereon had any legal status at all and also whether they had the requisite clout, acceptability and pervasion to legitimize a power structure.

One of the most prominent of the motifs used by early Indian rulers to claim sovereignty was the *cakravartī* status. The literal meaning of *cakravartin* has been explained as 'one moving everywhere without obstruction' or 'a ruler, the wheels of whose chariots roll everywhere without destruction'.[9] Conceptually though, the term implied a paramount status without owing allegiance to any overlord. The idea of *cakravartī-kṣetra* first found mention in the *Arthaśāstra* where its boundaries coincided with those of the Bhāratavarṣa of the Epic-Purāṇic tradition.[10] At the same time, Aśoka, who claimed a modest tile of *rājā-magadhe* in his inscriptions, in his Minor Rock Edict-I seemed to refer to his empire as Jambūdvīpa. He is described in the Buddhist tradition as a *dvīpa-cakravartin*, i.e., the ruler of the entire Jambūdvīpa.[11] It is important to note here that if one goes by the rules of early Indian ideas of geography, the Bhāratavarṣa formed but a miniscule part of the Jambūdvīpa of Aśoka.[12]

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[9] Sircar, 1971, p. 4.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[12] Ali, 1983, *passim.*

During the Gupta period, the idea of *dig-vijaya* seems to have become more prominent and appears to have drawn ideological impetus from both, the conquests of Samudragupta and the *Raghuvaṁśa* of Kālidāsa, which probably traced the *dig-vijayas* of Raghu from the Epic-Purāṇic construct of *dig-vijayas*. It is line with this that the Gupta rulers are repeatedly portrayed as having conquered the earth as against the Jambūdvīpa or the Bhāratavarṣa.[13]

In the post-Gupta period the most important and perhaps the earliest literary reference to *cakravartī-kṣetra* comes from the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* of Rājaśekhara. In the chapter *Kāvyapuruṣotpatti*, Rājaśekhara, drawing largely from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, refers to four regions—the eastern, the Pāñcāla, the Avanti and the southern—travelled by the Kāvyapuruṣa and Sāhitya-Vidyā-Vahu. Each one of these regions is stated to be comprised of a number of *janapadas* and formed a unique and coherent cultural identity. He further says that the entire greater region comprising these four regions is called the *cakravartī-kṣetra* which stretches from the southern sea to the Himālayas in the north covering an area of one thousand *yojanas*.[14]

In the chapter *Deśa Vibhāga*, he says that the Bhāratavarṣa has nine divisions—Indradvīpa, Kaseumān, Tāmraparṇa, Gabhastimān, Nāgadvīpa, Saumya, Gandharva, Varuṇadvīpa and Kumārīdvīpa. These divisions, each one of which is stated to be one

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[13] Sircar, 1971, p. 3-4.

[14] *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* (tr. Parashar), p. 36–40

thousand *yojanas* in measurement, are spread from the ocean in the south to the Himālayas in the north and are mutually inaccessible.[15] Rājaśekhara further says, 'The one who gains victory over these islands is called a *samrāṭ*. The area between Kumārīdvīpa and Bindusara is one thousand *yojanas* and is called a *cakravartī-kṣetra*. The king who gains victory on this entire area is called a *cakravartī*'.[16] The author then enumerates the seven signs of a *cakravartī*: disc, chariot, ruby, wife, treasure, horses and elephants.[17] Two points are important here:

- According to the author, Bhāratavarṣa consists of nine divisions, spread from the southern ocean to the Himavant, and each division is a hundred *yojanas* in area. One who is victorious of all these divisions, i.e., Bhāratavarṣa, is a *samrāṭ*.

- *Cakravartī-kṣetra* extended from Bindusara to Kumārīdvīpa. The latter is also mentioned among the nine divisions. It is further stated to be containing seven Kula mountains—Vindhyas, Pāriyatra, Sūktimān, Ṛkṣa, Mahendra, Sahaya and Malaya— which seems to suggest that Kumārīdvīpa may be identified with the Indian Peninsula.

So technically, according to Rājaśekhara, Bhāratavarṣa was not synonymous with the *cakravartī-kṣetra* but since he does not elaborate upon the nine divisions of Bhāratavarṣa,

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 260.

[17] *Ibid.*

the difference is not very clear. At any rate, Rājaśekhara's *cakravartī-kṣetra*, both in terms

of four consistent regions or in relation with the area from Kumārīdvīpa to Bindusara,

coincides broadly with the territory of, what is now called, the Indian Subcontinent.

Now, even when Rājaśekhara categorically refers to both, *cakravartī-kṣetra* and

cakravartī, the term, quite intriguingly, is conspicuous by its absence in the contemporary

inscriptional sources of the three major ruling houses, the Pālas, the Pratīhāras and the

Rāṣṭrakūṭas.[18] Surprisingly the motif of winning the four quarters finds repeated

mention in these inscriptions but not the term. Even Rājaśekhara, who in his

Bālabhāratam credits Mahīpāla with victories over Murala, Mekala, Kaliṅga, Kerala,

Kulūta, Kuntala and Ramaṭha, nowhere mentions the term *cakravartī*.[19]

There are many references in the Pratīhāra inscriptions which suggest implicit or

explicit claims to sovereignty *sans* the term *cakravartī*. The Gallaka's inscription of 795

AD says about Vatsarāja that by virtue of his victories over the Gauḍa king and the

emperor of *Dakṣiṇāpatha* as also by virtue of his victories over the *Mleccha* and the Kīra

kings respectively of the western and northern quarters, he attained the status of a

sārvabhauma nṛpati.[20] One of the fragmentary pieces of the Sanichara inscription (undated

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[18] Sircar has cited many references where the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas describe rather exaggerated account of their sovereign status but there is not a single explicit reference to the term. See, Sircar, 1971, p. 11.

[19] *Bālabhāratam* (tr. Rai), p. 5.

[20] *EI*, vol. XLI, p. 56, ll. 8-9.

or date lost) says, 'There is a king whose footrest is rubbed by the dangling gems of the crowns of kings, by the name *śrī* Bho[jadeva]'.[21] The undated Gwalior *praśasti* says that Mihira ruled over many kings (*bhūbhṛt*) after having overcome them, and was therefore called Bhoja.[22] The Garh stone inscription (921 AD), which records an act of personal donation, refers to Mahīpāla as one at whose feet all the *sāmantas* respectfully placed their services.[23]

It is difficult to ascertain as to why the *cakravartī* motif was not used in the inscriptions even when very explicit claims were being made with regard to an all powerful king with sovereign status. We do not know whether it was just about preferences of individual composer, compulsions of metrical compositions, or a deliberate attempt by the three major contemporary powers to avoid using the term perhaps because, even if implicitly, each one of them acknowledged the sovereign status of the other two. Gaining victories in all directions to attain sovereign status was not synonymous with obtaining a *cakravartī* status insofar as to be a *cakravartī* a ruler was to be in control of all the four quarters, a situation virtually impossible to obtain in the Pāla-Pratīhāra-Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. It is perhaps because of this that Rājaśekhara

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[21] Prāgdhārā, no. 2, p. 120, Part A, l. 1.

[22] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 109, l. 11, *ākramya bhūbhṛtāṁ bhoktā yaḥ prabhur bhoja ityabhāt.*

[23] *EI*, vol. XXXIX, p. 194, l. 4, *sāmanta-cakra-vihit-ādara-pāda-sevaḥ.*

addressed Mahendrapāla-I as the king of Āryāvarta.[24] Harirāja, a scion of a collateral Pratīhāra family ruling in the Sīyaḍoṇi area in the last quarter of the tenth century, though is addressed as *nṛpa cakravartin* in an inscription, which does not seem to have been issued by him but probably by a Śaiva ascetic.[25]

Subordinates

The Pratīhāras was a large state comprising of many local ruling houses who acknowledged the suzerainty of the Pratīhāra sovereign. Many of these subordinates were also entrusted with official and administrative responsibilities. References to subordinate chiefs in the Pratīhāra inscriptions can be categorized into two groups: those addressed as bearing a *sāmanta* status and those who are mentioned without it. It is also important to note here that the data, we are dealing with is quite meagre vis-à-vis the vastness of the Pratīhāra kingdom.

For the period between 600 and 1200 AD the Indian polity is seen to have imbibed the features of European feudalism and its political context is based on the emergence of *sāmantas* who are seen as local centres of power bound together both vertically and horizontally by paying homage to a weak overlord. It is in this context that a major adherent of the Indian feudalism model called the Pratīhāra polity as similar to the

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[24] *Bālabhāratam* (tr. Rai), p. 6.

[25] *EI*, XXXVII, p. 124, l. 19.

feudal Frankish Carolingian Empire. Unfortunately, the learned scholar does not elaborate on the point.[26]

The term *sāmanta*, in the early medieval context, has been understood largely in terms of vassal or feudal chief. It literally means 'being on all sides', 'neighbouring', or 'bordering'.[27] In earlier references it was used in this sense. In fact as late as in the commentaries of Kulluka (on Manu) and Mitākṣarā of Vijñāneśvara (on Yājñyavalkya) *sāmanta* was used in the sense of 'villagers living on the four sides'.[28] According to Lallanji Gopal, the term was used in the *Arthaśāstra*, as also in Aśoka's inscriptions, in the sense of a neighbouring king.[29]

From around the late fifth or the early sixth century the term came to be used for a subordinate ruler.[30] The idea of subordination seems to have emanated from the defeat of a smaller king (or his acceptance of suzerainty at his own volition), who was considered neighbouring to the sovereign king. In all probability they were subordinated with conditional reinstatement on their throne. In a sense the *sāmanta*

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[26] Yadava, 1973, p. 139.

[27] *ELNI*, p. 264

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

status was complementary to that of the governor in the directly administered areas of the sovereign.

But conquest does not seem to be the only way through which subordination could be effected. D. Devahuti has cited a passage in the *Harṣacarita* where Bāṇa enumerated different kinds of subordinates present at Harṣa's Manitara encampment. Among them were 'conquered enemy *mahāsāmantas* towards whom the king was now favourably disposed', 'lesser kings, who overawed by Harṣa's power, had come to pay him homage' and others 'who had come to see him out of devotion of attachment'.[31]

Both R. S. Sharma and B. N. S. Yadava have understood the emergence of the *sāmanta* system in terms of the growth of feudal relations in the post-Gupta period and have explained the term *sāmanta* as a feudal lord. According to R. S. Sharma, 'during the sixth century AD the term was used for conquered feudatories' and 'gradually it was extended from defeated chiefs to royal officials'.[32] In fact, the evolution of the categories of *sāmantas* has been explained mainly through the idea of *dig-vijayas* or *dharma-vijayas*, where the conquered prince or any member of his family was allowed to rule the territories provided he paid obeisance to the sovereign and sent regular tributes.[33] R. S. Sharma also takes *mahāsāmanta* to be a title and, perhaps because of this, believes that

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[31] Devahuti, 1970, p. 153.

[32] IF, pp. 19 and 20.

[33] *ELNI*, pp. 272-274.

the term was being used even for officials as a title, thereby ignoring a more plausible

possibility that *mahāsāmantas* were increasingly being incorporated into the official and

administrative hierarchy. In fact the exact meaning or connotation of the term is difficult

to ascertain primarily because meanings of terms associated with the political and

administrative structure kept changing. Two points are important: one, that there is no

explicit evidence, at least for the early phase, to show as to how *sāmantas* came to be

subordinated. B. N. S. Yadava who traces the use of the term for a vassal to the Śaka-

Kuṣāṇa period[34] does not dwell upon the reasons for complete absence of the term in the

Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta, which provides us with an explicit evidence to

show the process of subordination through the policy of *grahaṇamokṣānugraha*.[35] Second

point, which is more like a corollary of the first, is that most of the early references to

sāmanta status come from the inscriptions of those who were subordinates, and were

seemingly proud of their of their *sāmanta* status. Relations among the subordinates, and

between the Sovereign and subordinates, as also the kind of services rendered for the

sovereign would have constituted primary basis towards gradations within the *sāmanta*

category and granting of such honours as *pañcamahāśabda*. Perhaps the development of

the *sāmanta* system may equally plausibly be explained in terms of the emergence of

multiple power centres, big or small, in the post-Gupta period, not so much by political

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[34] Yadava, 1973, p. 136.

[35] CII, vol. III, p. 7, l. 20.

fragmentation, but through the process of the expansion of the state society. It is also important to understand that these small local level polities willingly made attempts to associate themselves with big ruling houses as subordinates for the purpose of security and further political ascendancy and then expressed this association, and that of their ancestors, in their inscriptions with a sense of pride.

In relation with the Pratīhāra rule, a number of references are forthcoming. Bhārtrvrddha, who was a subordinate of Nāgāvaloka, identified with Nāgabhaṭa-I Pratīhāra, in his Hansot plates dated 756 AD, calls himself *samadhigata pañcamahāśabda mahāsāmantādhipatiḥ*.[36] In the Deogarh pillar inscription, which records some personal donation in the temple of Śāntinātha, refers to *śrī* Viṣṇurāma who is said to be enjoying the territory of Luacchagiri (modern Lalitpur) as *pañcamahāśabda mahāsāmantā*.[37] In the same context two records from the Sīyadoṇi inscription may be seen. The second record of the inscription (dated VS 964) addresses *śrī* Undabhaṭa as *mahāprātihāra-samadhigatāseṣamahāśabda-mahāsāmantādhipati*.[38] The first record is fragmentary and the only visible part of the name of the ruler suggests that he was Undabhaṭa and the place was under his enjoyment. He is addressed with the same epithets as in the second record. The copper plate of the Cālukya chief Balavarman (dated 893 AD), which was

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[36] *EI*, vol. XII, p. 202, ll. 10-11.

[37] *EI*, vol. IV, p. 310, ll. 3-4.

[38] *EI*, vol. I, p. 173, l. 5.

recovered from Una in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, styles him as *samadhigata pañcamahāśabda mahāsāmanta*,[39] while that of his son Avanivarman-II Yoga (dated 899 AD), from the same area, addresses him as *mahāsāmanta*.[40] The undated second record of the Pratabgarh (district Pali in Rajasthan) inscription, which probably belonged to the reign of Mahendrapāla-II, refers to *mahāsāmanta-daṇḍanāyaka śrī* Mādhava in Ujjayini.[41] The very next line says that *tantrapāla-mahasāmanta-mahādaṇḍanāyaka śrī* Mādhava had come to Ujjayini for some work.[42] Possibly he was a prominent local ruler of Ujjain area who was also entrusted with the responsibilities of *tantrapāla* and *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*.

Two points may be highlighted here. First, that all the references to *mahāsāmantas* in the Pratīhāra inscriptions come from outlying areas with reference to Kanauj. We have some evidence to suggest that areas around modern Gwalior were certainly under direct administration and in that sense Sīyaḍoṇi, Lalitpur, Ujjain, Saurashtra and Pratabgarh were relatively outlying areas. This kind of evidence surely suggests that at least some of these *mahāsāmantas* were local rulers who accepted subordination of the Pratīhāras and were allowed to rule in their territories on conventional terms. The divergence in the terms for territorial units and official designations mentioned in the grants of these

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[39] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 3.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 9, l. 45.

[41] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 185, l. 19.

[42] *Ibid.*, ll. 19-20.

subordinates, as will be shown in the next section, indicates at least some degree of

administrative autonomy but when it came to granting of land, surely the sovereign had

some overarching superior rights. We saw in the last chapter that the rulers of Una had

to seek the consent of royal representative, addressed as *tantrapāla*, in Saurashtra region.

Record one of the Pratabgarh inscription shows as to how Mahendrapāla-II made a

grant of a village, being enjoyed by an official in the areas around Pratabgarh which

were being ruled over by the local Cāhamāna *mahāsāmanta*. If our understanding of the

Jiragaur copper plate of Bhoja as originally associated with the mainland coastal Gujarat

holds, then it would show that Bhoja was making a grant in the faraway Lāṭa region,

which, in all likelihood, would have been under some kind of local control. What is

significant here is a clear geographical demarcation of areas which yielded references to

mahāsāmantas. Also their number, as indicated by the inscriptional evidence, does not

seem to be as high as is brought out by the *Harṣacarita*.[43] Seemingly exaggerated account

of a teleological composition aimed towards only showering encomium on the patron,

have been taken too literally, and quite uncritically, to understand the *sāmanta* System. It

is quite intriguing to note that a term which was sparingly heard of in the inscriptions

and literature of even the later Gupta period had come to be christened as a formidable

institution under Harṣa, with such complex categorization and gradations which are

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[43] See, Devahuti, 1970, pp. 163-170; IF, pp. 21-25.

somehow not corroborated by any other complementary source except for the two

known copper plates[44] of Harṣa which refer to *mahāsāmantas* as addressees in the grants.

The second point pertains to the dichotomy within the *mahāsāmanta* status in relation

with the nature of control over areas under possession. While Sīyaḍoṇi and Luacchagiri

are mentioned as under enjoyment of their respective *mahāsāmantas*,[45] in more peripheral

areas, the associated *mahāsāmantas* are addressed without this rather important element.

The element of enjoyment suggests that both Undabhaṭa and Viṣṇurāma were given

territories either as remuneration for their administrative and military services or were

bestowed with the responsibility of looking after a territory more in the sense of a

Jagirdar under the Mughals.

The case of Undabhaṭa is interesting and brings forth the constant flux in the power

relations. In the first record of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription, dated 903-04 AD, a donation by

the whole town was recorded. The name of the local ruler invoked at the beginning has

been broken partially but may be restored as referring to Undabhaṭa, who is stated to

enjoying the place.[46] The second record dated 907 AD refers to Undabhaṭa as

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[44] The Madhuvan and the Banskhera copper plate inscriptions.

[45] *EI*, vol. I, p. 173, l. 2; *EI*, vol. IV, p. 310, l. 4.

[46] The edited version says, '...*samvat 960 śrāva[ṇa]*...(about 15 letters lost)... *gatāśeṣamahā[śa]bda-ma[hā]sāmantādhipati [śrīmadu]—[ndra?]*...(about 5 letters lost)... *[bhu]jyamānasta[tpādādhiṣṭhita] [va?]*...(about 5 letters lost)... *ñ[ku]*...(about 7 letters lost)... *[kau]ptike śrīpañ[sthā?]*....' *EI*, vol. I, p. 173, l. 2.

mahāsāmantadhipati and *mahāprātihāra* but without the element of enjoyment.[47] The record is about a grant by Undabhaṭa, of some money on daily basis, to a temple, from the local *maṇḍapikā*.[48] One would wonder whether dropping the term *paribhujyamāne* in the second record was only coincidental. A pillar inscription recovered from Terahi in M.P. and dated in the year VS 960 = 903-4 (same as the first record of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription) records that 'on the fourth day of the dark half of the month of *bhādrapada* there took place on the Madhuveṇī, a fight between the *mahāsāmantadhipatis*, *śrī* Guṇarāja and *śrī* Undabhaṭa in which the *koṭṭapāla śrī* Caṇḍiyāna, an adherent of Guṇarāja was killed'.[49] Record 11 of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription refers to one *mahārājādhirāja* *śrī* Dhūrbhaṭa, under whose enjoyment the place is said to be.[50] Significantly Dhūrbhaṭa and his successor Niṣkalaṅka (known from the records dated 948,[51] 951[52] and 968 AD[53]) are not mentioned with the *mahāsāmanta* status. Second part of the inscription, which is undated, refers to one Harirāja as the ruler at Sīyaḍoṇi, and quite clearly an independent

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[47] *Ibid.*, l. 5.

[48] *Ibid.*, l. 6.

[49] Dwivedi, 1947, Part II, p. 4, no. 4; IA, vol. XVII, pp. 201-202.

[50] *EI*, vol. I, p. 175, ll. 18-19.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 177, ll. 28-29.

[52] *Ibid.*, ll. 30-31.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 178, ll. 36-39.

one.[54] He is known from other inscriptions also[55] where he is addressed as a scion of the Pratīhāra family.

Now, there is nothing to suggest about the possible relation between Undabhaṭa and Dhūrbhaṭa but some connection is surely discernible between Dhūrbhaṭa, Niṣkalaṅka and Harirāja. The Kadwaha fragmentary stone inscription says that Harirāja belonged to the family of the Pratīhāras, who belonged to the Gurjara stock, in which was born a mighty ruler named Durbhaṭa.[56] The name of Harirāja's father unfortunately has been lost in the inscription but the Bharat Kala Bhavan plates of Harirāja refer to one Nīlakaṇṭha (Niṣkalaṅka of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription?) as the father of Harirāja.[57] At any rate, Dhūrbhaṭa seems to have been the first prominent ruler of this dynasty and in that sense seems to be unrelated to Undabhaṭa.

Undoubtedly this is not sufficient data to be conclusive but it seems Undabhaṭa, a highly positioned royal officer, who was given areas around Sīyaḍoṇi for his enjoyment soon started to make endeavours to enhance his clout in the local pocket. This brought him in conflict with a rival *mahāsāmanta*, probably from the same region, whom he seems to have defeated. This kind of instability within the dominion would have been a

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 179, l. 49, *rājñaḥ śrīmanta harirāja.*

[55] See the table in the Chapter 2.

[56] *EI*, vol. XXXVII, p. 124, ll. 19-22.

[57] *EI*, vol. XXXI, p. 312, l. 1.

source of great discomfiture for a monarch like Mahendrapāla-I and perhaps because of

this reason we find him replaced in 912 AD by a relatively safer option, a scion of the

Pratīhāra family. Here it may be pertinent to emphasize that the element of enjoyment

did not, by default, mean compromise or parcellization of the sovereign authority.

The *mahāsāmantas* in areas to the south-west of Sīyaḍoṇi seem to have been the local

rulers who accepted the Pratīhāra sovereignty after being defeated or by voluntarily

accepting subordination. The reference from Ujjain is not very clear. A detailed

statement on Mādhava would be made later in the chapter, but it seems he was a local

ruler of the Ujjain area, who gained a special position in the royal court as *tantrapāla* and

mahādaṇḍanāyaka. As against this *mahāsāmanta* Indrarāja of the Cāhamāna family[58] was a

local ruler ruling in the Pratabgarh area of Rajasthan. His ancestors seem to have done a

great service to Bhoja with whose invocation the inscription begins.[59] It was perhaps

because of the fast waning power of the Pratīhāras in the mid-tenth century that a local

mahāsāmanta ruler approached another one, who was much more powerful owing to his

status as *tantrapāla*, for making a grant of a village which was under the enjoyment of

another royal official (*śrī* Vidagdha). The current sovereign's name was ignored and the

past association of the family with Bhoja was brought up.

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[58] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 186, l. 21, *cāhamānānvayamahāsāmantaśrī indrarāja*.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 184, l. 14.

In Gujarat, the *mahāsāmantas*, Dharaṇīvarāha of the Cāpa family ruling in Wadhwan, and Balavarman and Avanivarman of the Cālukya family at Una, were clearly local rulers. *Praśastis* in the grants of Dharaṇīvarāha and Avanivarman seem to indicate that their roots were firmly embedded in their respective areas of control. In fact Balavarman, in his grant, claims to have obtained *Nakṣiśapuracaturaśitikā* through his own efforts. [60] Just as in other areas under Pratīhāra control, local polities within the Pratīhāra structure were inimically placed against each other to enhance their clout in the Saurashtra region also. The reference in the Una plates of Avanivarman about his victory over Dharaṇīvarāha of Wadhwan may or may not be true but it surely points towards the intent.[61]

It seems under the Pratīhāras the appellation *sāmanta* came to denote a status which was bestowed on both, the state officials and the subordinate rulers. Probably, the discrepancy between the actual status of officials and subordinates was sought to be eradicated by giving high administrative positions to subordinate rulers on one hand, and by giving territories to officials for enjoyment. In our opinion, political structure such as the one under the Pratīhāras had the possibilities of both fragmentation and integration since it had the seeds of both. We may now proceed to have a look at the

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[60] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 10.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 9, l. 40.

second category subordinates; those who are mentioned without an explicit *sāmanta* status.

The Gallaka's inscription of 795 AD, which seems to have been associated with north Rajasthan or the Punjab or Haryana, refers to Śrīvarmaka, the son of Grahīyaka of a royal family (*nṛpānvaya*) which had sprung from Kācara, as the 'most beloved servant of Vatsarāja unto whom he was like a son'.[62] His son Gallaka was also a subordinate of Vatsarāja. Besides this the Pehowa *praśasti* of the three Tomara brothers, of the time of Mahendralapāla-II, addresses one of their ancestors as *rājā* who is said to have gained prosperity by looking after the affairs of his sovereign.[63] He might have been a contemporary of Bhoja. These two references coming broadly from the north-western part of the state do not categorically mention the subordinates as having the *sāmanta* status. At the same time it needs to be acknowledged that in *praśasti* like inscriptions at times grandiloquent titles were ignored. At any rate, the Gallaka's inscription tends to indicate that the sovereign-subordinate relations were sought to be projected as personal, transcending any element of formality. Śrīvarmaka's introduction as a servant of Vatsarāja does not go in line with his royal pedigree. One of the three brothers in the Pehowa *praśasti*, Gogga, is addressed as *bhūnatha*[64] which indicative of his status as a

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[62] *EI*, vol. XLI, p. 56, l. 9, *tasyātmajena sadṛśaḥ prakaṭa prabhāvaḥ śrīvarmako-bhavad abhīṣṭatamaḥ subhṛtyaḥ*.

[63] *EI*, vol. I, p. 245, l. 6.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 246, l. 12.

local chief. In fact it seems that Jaula (who was seen as a *rājā* by the posterity) started his career as an official who (or any of his successors) was given some areas around Pehowa for his enjoyment. In the *praśasti*, which in our view belongs to the reign of Mahendrapāla-II and not Mahendrapāla-I, their allgiance to the sovereign sounds only nominal.

An important and seemingly indespensable part of the Pratīhāra political organization was the kin-group of the Pratīhāras, who seem to have contributed immensly to the contemporary political process. We saw earlier that sometime before 912 AD, areas around Sīyaḍoṇi were bestowed on Dhūrbhaṭa, who seems to have belonged to the Pratīhāra stock. We do not know as to who was the Pratīhāra sovereign at that point of time. He seems to have been succeeded by Niṣkalaṅka, whose known dates are 948 AD, 951 AD and 968 AD. As regards his connection with Dhūrbhaṭa, if he is identified with Nīlakaṇṭha, father of Harirāja mentioned in the Bharat Kala Bhavan plates, then he was a descendant of Dhūrbhaṭa. The second part (undated) of the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription, which records the construction of a temple dedicated to Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa) by a brāhmaṇa, refers to Harirāja as *rājā*. His other known dates as independent ruler are VS 1040 = 984 AD[65] and VS 1055 = 998 AD.[66] It seems under Harirāja, the element of enjoyment, which was, even if nominally, acknowledged up to

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[65] *EI*, vol. XXXI, pp. 309-313.

[66] *EI*, vol. XL, p. 105-108.

968 AD, was done away with and then onward the area was ruled over by this collateral Pratīhāra line with full sovereign authority. A later inscription, recovered from Chanderi in the Guna district of M.P. and palaeographically dated to the eleventh or twelfth century, of Jaitravarman, mentions as many as twelve rulers, the first two being Nīlakaṇṭha and Harirāja.[67]

Because of the rather casual way in which the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription seems to have been composed, a more concrete evidence to see successive stages of the evolution of this Pratīhāra family is elusive.[68] Significantly though, while Undabhaṭa is addressed as

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[67] *EI*, vol. XXXI, p. 310.

[68] One way to demonstrate this would be to see as to how chronologically sequenced references to local rulers invoke the name of the sovereign and mention the element of enjoyment (see the table below).

Date	Subordinate	Sovereign mentioned?	Element of Enjoyment mentioned?
903-4 AD	Undabhaṭa	Yes	Yes
907-8 AD	Undabhaṭa	Yes	No
912 AD	Dhūrbhaṭa	No	Yes
948 AD	Niṣkalaṅka	Yes	Yes
951 AD	Niṣkalaṅka	No	No
968 AD	Niṣkalaṅka	No	Yes

If one goes by the mention or omission of Sovereign's name or of element of enjoyment to comprehend family's movement towards independence would virtually reach nowhere.

mahāsāmantadhipati, both Dhūrbhaṭa and Niṣkalaṅka are referred to as *mahārājādhirājas*.[69]

This is symptomatic of some sort of distinction that was maintained between those subordinates who belonged to the Pratīhāra kin-group and others. Similar seems to have been the case of Mathanadeva. In the Rajor inscription of 959-60 AD, he claimed to have belonged to the Gurjara-Pratīhāra family and styles himself as *mahārājādhirāja parameśvara*. His father Sāvaṭa is addressed as *mahārājādhirāja*.[70] The latter is also known from the Garh inscription, dated 921 AD, of the time of Mahīpāla-I. This inscription of a wealthy architect of the area refers to Mahīpāla as a sovereign and to Sāvaṭa as a *bhūpati*,[71] perhaps an appellation signifying the status of a subordinate local ruler. It seems this collateral Pratīhāra family was given areas around modern Alwar as subordinates of the Pratīhāras sometime before 921 AD. By 960 AD, Mathanadeva had become, for all practical purposes, an independent ruler.

We also saw while discussing Bhoja's dominions, a reference in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* which related to the capture of Ṭakka land by Bhoja and its bestowal by the latter to Alakhana, who belonged to the Gurjara family.[72] We do not know whether Alakhana belonged to the Pratīhāra kin-group. But two points are important here:

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[69] *EI*, vol. I, p. 173, l. 5; p. 175, l. 18; p. 177, ll. 29 and 30; and p. 178, l. 36.

[70] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 4.

[71] *EI*, vol. XXXIX, p. 194, l. 5.

[72] Supra Chapter 2.

(1) When the Pratīhāra state had reached its maximum stretch under Bhoja, Mahendrapāla-I and immediately after latter's reign, pockets contiguous to the directly administered areas (which would have probably coincided with an imaginary line linking Gwalior, Bulandshahr and Pehowa) were given to members of collateral lines of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj.

(2) Such a policy in areas, which were under direct control but were difficult to administer from Kanauj, would have not only diminished the threat of breaking away of the peripheral areas, but would have also created a buffer zone for the core Pratīhāra territory. That it was politically correct can be said on two counts. One, that even when with time the Pratīhāra prowess started to take a down turn, these rulers kept the façade of nominal allegiance. Two, that rulers other than the Pratīhāra stock had the tendency to do away with the Pratīhāra subordination at the very first opportunity. Cases in point would be Undabhaṭa and Vākpati, the Cāhamāna ruler of Śākambharī (Ajmer area) who was a contemporary of Mahīpāla-I, and who, according to the Harṣa inscription of Vigraharāja (977 AD), harassed the *tantrapāla*, who was coming to deliver a message of his sovereign.

The Buchkala inscription (815 AD),[73] recovered from a place near Bilara in the Jodhpur district, clearly shows that modern Jodhpur area was under the control of Nāgabhaṭa-II which would also mean that local Mandor family of the Pratīhāras had

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[73] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 198-200.

been subordinated. But three subsequent inscriptions, one of Bāuka (dated 837 AD),[74] recovered from Jodhpur, and two of Kakkuka (both dated 861),[75] both recovered from Ghatiyala near Jodhpur, contemporaneous with the reign of Bhoja, do not make any reference to either the Pratīhāras of Kanauj or to any other ruling house as sovereign. From the available evidence it is difficult to acsertain the nature of political relations between these two Pratīhāra families.

Territorial Organization

The vast territorial reach of the state under the Gurjara-Pratīhāras is clearly brought out by the find spots if inscriptions referring to them. One has to be careful in looking at the sources to comprehend the nature of administration—both in terms of territorial divisions as well as of officials—so as to be able to sift divergences from a standardized, monolithic and garbled depiction. Large territorial states have always posed this problem. Recent perspectives have tended to shift the focus from the Mauryan state as a highly centralized one.[76] On the same lines the state under the Guptas has been acknowledged as having elements of 'proto-feudal polity'—a term signifying devolution of power at local levels, even if through fragmentation.[77]

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[74] *EI*, vol. XVIII, pp. 87-99.

[75] *JRAS*, 1895, pp. 513-523; *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 277-281.

[76] Thapar, 1987.

[77] Sharma, R. S., 1996, p. 386.

Territorial divisions and hierarchy of administrative functionaries was at one level

reflective of the extent of direct or effective royal control over near and distant parts of

the dominion. And here the geographical context of a reference, more in relation with its

distance from Kanauj, the seat of the royal government, becomes germane. In this

section we look at the territorial divisions of the state under the Gurjara-Pratīhāras. It is

important to take cognizance of regional variation in a large state like that of the

Pratīhāras. As in case of other aspects, the data regarding territorial divisions under the

Pratīhāras is by no means exhaustive or perhaps even adequate, but the positive point is

that references come from geographically varied areas. So, they give only indications,

albeit significant ones.

To begin with, we look at the core areas of the state which coincide willy-nilly with

modern U.P. and parts of Bihar. Pratīhāra copper plate grants from this region clearly

evince continuity from the past. Here *bhukti* seems to have been the largest territorial

division. The Surapura (827 AD)[78] and the Bengal Asiatic Society's (BAS) copper plate

grant (931 AD)[79] refer to Pratiṣṭhāna *bhukti*; the Sambhal copper plate (828 AD),[80] to

Ahicchatra *bhukti*; the Barah copper plate grant (836 AD),[81] to Kānyakubja *bhukti*; and the

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[78] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 8, p. 200, l. 4.

[79] *IA*, vol. XV, p. 141, ll. 9-10.

[80] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, p. 107, l. 5.

[81] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 18, l. 6.

Dighwa-Dubauli copper plate (898 AD)[82] refers to Śrāvastī *bhukti*. In the Pratīhāra grants, thus, the term *bhukti* comes only from areas contiguous to the Ganga-Yamuna plains, something that is quite evident also from the Gupta[83] and the Puśyabhūti sources.[84]

The next unit or rather units of territorial organization were *maṇḍala* and *viṣaya*, which formed a part of *bhukti*. The Surapura copper plate (827 AD) refers to Candārika *viṣaya-maṇḍala*[85] while the Sambhal copper plate (828 AD), to Guṇapura *maṇḍala-viṣaya*.[86] These two units, though, were different with *maṇḍala* standing higher up in the hierarchy. The Barah copper plate mentions Udumbara *viṣaya* forming a part of *śrī* Kālañjara *maṇḍala*.[87] The Dighwa-Dubauli copper plate refers to Śrāvastī *maṇḍala*, and of which Vālayikā *viṣaya* formed a part.[88] It seems sometimes a particular name was used to designate different territorial units. There are, though, some problems with such neat

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[82] *IA*, vol. XV, p. 112, ll. 7-8.

[83] The *bhuktis* known from the Gupta inscriptions are Puṇḍravardhana (north Bengal), Vardhamāna (west Bengal), Tīrabhukti (north Bihar), Śrāvasti(Awadh), Ahicchatra(Rohilkhanda). All these were situated in the Ganga valley. Majumdar, 1980, p. 161.

[84] Both, the Banskhera and the Madhuban copper plates of Harṣa refer to the *bhukti* as the highest territorial unit. The former records the grant of a *grāma* in the western *pathaka* of a *viṣaya* that lay in the Ahicchatra *bhukti*. The latter refers to *bhukti*, *viṣaya* and *grāma* but omits *pathaka*. See Devahuti, 1970, p. 195.

[85] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 8, p. 200, l. 4.

[86] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, p. 107, l. 5.

[87] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 18, ll. 6-7, *śrī kālañjara maṇḍalāntapāti udumbara viṣaya*.

[88] *IA*, vol. XV, p. 112, l. 8, *śrāvasti maṇḍalāntapāti vālayikā viṣaya*.

inferences. Both the Surapura copper plate (828 AD) and the Bengal Asiatic Society's copper plate grant (931 AD) are associated with Pratiṣṭhāna *bhukti* (Pratiṣṭhāna is the ancient name for Jhusi situated near Allahabad on the opposite bank of the Ganga), but while the former refers to Candārika *viṣaya-maṇḍala*, in the latter we find Kāśīpāra ﹑*pathaka* attached to Vārāṇasī *viṣaya* in the Pratiṣṭhāna *bhukti*.[89] Even when the two grants were separated from each by good hundred years, it is quite unlikely that major changes would have been carried out in such longstanding structures. It may be a possibility that within a *bhukti* different formats of territorial administration were followed perhaps in response to revenue needs. We shall return to *pathaka* later. A very recently discovered copper plate from Jiragaur[90] near Farrukhabad in U. P. (which is also quite near to Kanauj) provides us with a case which is typologically very different from the concrete pattern in the region. It refers to *śaṅkharikāhārabhoga* forming a part of the Lāṭa *maṇḍala*.[91] Both *āhāra* and *bhoga* are very uncommon terms from the Ganga valley region. Also, Lāṭa reminds of the part of Gujarat. *Āhāra* as a territorial unit is known from some of the Sātavāhana and Maitraka records.[92] It is also to be considered that the find spot of the inscription (even when the editors have not attempted to identify the areas mentioned) is very near to Kanauj. If it is then presumed that the grant was associated with Jiragaur

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[89] *Ibid.*, p. 141, ll. 9-10, *pratiṣṭhāna bhuktau vārāṇasī viṣya sambaddha kāśipāra pathaka.*

[90] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 13, pp. 169-179.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 176, ll. 6-7, *lāṭamaṇḍalāntapāti śaṅkharikāhārabhoga.*

[92] Majumdar, 1980, pp. 157 and 168.

or its contiguous areas, then absence of Kānyakubja *bhukti* is quite intriguing insofar as if the areas around modern Akbarpur were a part of the Kānyakubja *bhukti* (Cf. the Barah copper plate), it is quite logical to believe that areas around Farrukhabad would have formed a part of the same *bhukti*. In any case, it is difficult to be conclusive about any possible solution. If at all the inscription belonged to Jiragaur area, it would seem that *āhāra-bhoga* constituted an official endowment meant for personal enjoyment of either the sovereign of any other official. We believe though that movement of plates from one place to another is not impossible and so the internal evidence of the inscriptions has to be given more credence in comparison to the actual find spot in identifying their geographical association if there remains any discrepancy between the two.

The next level of organization was *grāma* or *agrahāra*. Instances of reconfirmation always referred to the village in question as an *agrahāra* or *grāmāgrahāra*. So, in the core areas of the Pratīhāra state, we come across almost a standard hierarchy of *bhukti* – *maṇḍala* – *viṣaya* – *grāma* or *agrahāra*. The plates found at Jiragaur, in our view, do not seem to have belonged to this area. There is some indication that these were actually shifted to this area from the mainland coastal Gujarat.

From north and east Rajasthan we have six relevant inscriptions—the Badhal copper plate of Nāgabhaṭa,[93] the Badhal copper plate of Bhoja,[94] the Daulatpura copper plate,[95]

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[93] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, 1998-99, pp. 145-150.

[94] Mishra, 1990, pp. 47-50.

the Buchkala inscription,[95] the Bayana inscription[97] and the Rajor inscription.[98] The important point here is the complete absence of the term *bhukti*. It seems in this region *viṣaya* was the highest territorial division. The Daulatpura copper plate (843 AD) refers to Deṇdavānaka *viṣaya* in the Gurjjarattrā *bhūmi*[99] but possibly, as suggested by B. N. Puri, *bhūmi* here implied, in general sense, the 'land of the Gurjaras'.[100] Another problem relates to change in the status of a unit. The Badhal copper plate grant of Nāgabhaṭa (815 AD) mentions Paścima *pathaka* forming a part of the Gayaṭṭapura *viṣaya*.[101] As against this, the grant issued by Bhoja around 25 years later (841 AD) in the same area reads, Paścima *pathaka* attached to the Gayaṭṭapura *bhoga*.[102] This is a clear instance of conversion of Gayaṭṭapura *viṣaya* into *bhoga* which in our view would have meant transfer of a state administrative division to territory for the enjoyment of the sovereign or state officials or both. It is also important here to acknowledge the distinction between *bhukti* and *bhoga*. Even when both these terms in their literal sense are associated with

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[95] *EI* vol. V, pp. 208-213.

[96] *EI* vol. IX, pp. 198-200.

[97] *EI*, vol. XXII, pp. 120-127.

[98] *EI*, Vo. III, pp. 263-267.

[99] *EI*, vol. V, p. 211, ll. 6-7, *gurjarattrā bhūmau deṇdavānaka viṣaya*.

[100] Puri, 1975, p. 108.

[101] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, p. 148, ll. 5-6, *gayaṭṭapura viṣayāntaḥpāti paścima pathaka*.

[102] Mishra, 1990, p. 48, l. 6, *gayaṭṭapurabhoga sambaddha paścima pathaka*.

enjoyment, the former denoted state control while the latter meant an endowment for the personal support of the sovereign, governors or other state officials. The Rajor inscription (959-960) of *parameśvara mahārājādhirāja* Mathanadeva refers to the village of Vyaghrapāṭaka, pertaining to Vaṁśapoṭaka *bhoga* which Mathanadeva held possession of (*svabhogāvāpta vaṁśapoṭaka bhoga sambaddha vyāghrapāṭaka grāme*).[103] The term *āvāpta* would suggest that the said area was given to Mathanadeva by his sovereign even when he was practically an independent ruler at the time of making of the grant. At the same time we believe that *bhoga* was not a part of the standard hierarchy of territorial divisions but could replace any one of the levels depending upon the size of the endowment. While both Gayaṭṭapura and Vaṁśapoṭaka were units larger than a *grāma*, the second record of the Pratabgarh inscription (undated) refers to Dhārāpadraka *grāma* which was obtained for the enjoyment of *śrī* Vidagdha,[104] who, in all probability, was a royal authority in the local Cāhamāna court. Even in the inscriptions of the Cāhamānas of Śākambharī who replaced the Pratīhāras in north Rajasthan, *viṣaya* has been depicted as the largest territorial unit of administration.[105] In the early medieval period, Rajasthan saw, unlike in the Ganga valley region, emergence of numerous small local ruling families which would have prevented evolution of such large administrative units as

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[103] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, ll. 4-5.

[104] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 186, l. 21.

[105] Sharma, D., 1959, p. 227-228.

bhukti. This is also corroborated by the grants of last two Pratīhāra rulers. The Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla refers to Lebhuṇḍāka *grāma* in the Asurābhaka *viṣaya*.[106] *Bhukti* is conspicuous by its absence. While the places in question have not been identified, the tenor of the inscription seems to suggest that they were situated in around Jhusi. The grant was made in favour of six thousand brāhmaṇas from Pratiṣṭhāna. Traditionally the area was a part of the Pratiṣṭhāna *bhukti* but since Trilocanapāla was ruling in an area which was perhaps too small to incorporate a *bhukti*, his inscription only refers to *viṣaya* and not to *bhukti* and *maṇḍala*. On similar grounds reference in the Kara stone inscription of Yaśaḥpāla (1036 AD) to Payalasa *grāma* (identified with Pras, 30 miles from Kaushambi) within the Kauśāmba *maṇḍala* may be explained.[107]

The next level of territorial division in the region was *pathaka*. The term, like *viṣaya*, is known from areas beyond Rajasthan. In addition to the Badhal grants of Nāgabhaṭa and Bhoja and the BAS copper plate of Vināyakapāla, the first record of the Pratabgarh inscription refers to the phrase, *śrī* Daśapura Paścima *pathake*.[108] The phrase has been explained variously as 'western *pathaka* of Daśapura' [109] or 'Paścima *pathaka* which

[106] *IA*, vol. XVIII, p. 34, l. 3.

[107] Ghosh, N. N., 1985, p. 100, ll. 5-7.

[108] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 183, l. 9.

[109] *ACHI*, p. 770.

included Daśapura'.[110] In our view *pathaka* formed a part of *viṣaya* and in many cases was expressed in terms of its location within the *viṣaya* indicated by such words as Paścima *pathaka* or Kāśīpāra *pathaka*. There are many references though where a *pathaka* had a proper name. In the light of available evidence we tend to disagree with D. P. Dubey who considers the Paścima *pathaka* of the Pratabgarh inscription as identical with that in the Badhal inscription and leading from that, argues that a *pathaka* might have included more than one *viṣaya* within it.[111] *Viṣaya* actually seems to have evolved as a unit above the *grāma* and its importance in the organization of revenue administration is indicated by its presence across regions.

The Una plates of Balavarman (893 AD) and his son Avanivarman-II (898 AD) refer to an interesting unit of territorial administration immediately above the *grāma—Nakṣiśa-puracaturaśitikā*[112]*/Nakṣiśapuracaturaśīti*[113] (Nakṣiśapura group of eighty four). It seems Nakṣiśapura served as headquarter of the eighty four attached villages, perhaps for revenue purposes. Balavarman's claim, to have acquired *Nakṣiśapuracaturaśitikā*, would suggest that such a system was quite prevalent and change in political situation made virtually no effect. Besides these two references from Una, a similar unit is also known

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[110] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, p. 147.

[111] *Ibid.*

[112] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, l. 10.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 9, l. 53.

from a contemporary inscription found at Kapadavanj in Gujarat. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa grant of Kṛṣṇa-II dated in SS 832 = 910-11 AD,[114] in relation with the grant of the village Vyāghrāsa to brāhmaṇa Brahmadatta, states this—the village Vyāghrāsa included in the Rūriddha (group of) ten which was attached to Karppaṭavāṇijya group of eighty four which in turn formed a part of *śrī* Harṣapura group of seven hundred and fifty villages.[115] While the Una plates do not give us information of such detailed gradation, there is no doubt that in this period, new formats of revenue administration were evolving in Gujarat. At the same time conventional patterns were also prevalent. Dharaṇīvarāha's Wadhwan grant refers to the village Viṁkala which was attached to Kanthikā *sthalī* which in turn was situated in Maḍḍāṇaka *deśa*.[116] *Deśa* was used in the sense of dominion. *Sthalī* as a territorial unit is also known from the Maitraka records.[117]

Even with this limited data it may be said that under the Pratīhāras different regional constituents evolved or persisted with such units which, to some extent, were embedded in their own historical contexts. At the same time the Pratīhāra sources, as also those beyond them, indicate that *grāma* and *viṣaya* were two units which transcended local or regional limits. The reason perhaps lies in their close association with the revenue

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[114] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 52-53.

[115] *Ibid.* p. 55, ll. 35-36, *śrī Harṣapurārddhāṣṭamaśatāntahpāti-Karppaṭavāṇijya-caturāśītikā-pratibaddha-Rūriddhada-śakāntahpāti-Vyāghrāsagrāma.*

[116] *IA*, vol. XII, p. 193, plate II, l. 10.

[117] Majumdar, 1980, p. 168.

system. Having said that, it needs to be conceded that, the data is too meagre and nebulous to be conclusive about a standard and uniform hierarchy.

Administrative Machinery

Much of our understanding about officialdom in the early medieval period is based on the list of officials addressed at the time of making of a grant. Under the Pratīhāras though, as a result of the standardized format of the grants, instead of addressing all the officials separately, an all-subsuming term, *yathāsthāna-niyuktān-prativāsinah*,[118] had been used. The land grant inscriptions of the last two rulers, Trilocanapāla and Yaśahpāla, were exceptions. It is thus virtually impossible to glean through the administrative structure of the sovereign dynasty. As against this, the grants of the subordinate rulers give detailed lists of officials. Taking into consideration the internal administrative autonomy of these subordinates, it seems unlikely that references were made to royal officials. It is quite difficult also to believe that such relatively small subordinates had such detailed official hierarchy. Possibly rubrics that were current in those times were adopted even by small states but the actual authority of these officials would have been negligible in comparison to those serving the sovereign dynasty. In fact many of these subordinates themselves served as officials under the sovereign. Besides the copper

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[118] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, p. 148, l. 6; Mishra, 1990, p. 48, l. 7; *Prāgdhārā*, no. 8, p. 201, ll. 5-6; *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, p. 107, l. 6; *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 18, ll. 7-8; *EI*, vol. V, p. 211, l. 7; *Prāgdhārā*, no. 13, p. 176, ll. 7-8; *IA*, vol. XV, p. 112, l. 9; *IA*, vol. XV, p. 141, l. 11; *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 184, l. 10.

plate grants, even otherwise, references to administrative functionaries are very few. Notwithstanding the want of relevant data, just as we saw the continuation of territorial terms in the Ganga valley from the times of Harṣa, quite possibly, though it only remains a speculation, administrative officialdom under the Pratīhāras, at least for centrally administered areas, was carried from the earlier period.[119] There are though stray references to officials in the inscriptions of the Pratīhāras and list of officials in the grants of the Pratīhāras which we may now have a look at.

The most prominent of the royal officials mentioned in the inscriptions is the *tantrapāla*. The term has been explained variously as 'chief of the army', 'an officer like *charge d'affaires*', 'an officer of the king's bodyguard or royal retinue', and 'a councillor'.[120] The Una plates of Avanivarman-II Yoga refer to *tantrapāla* śrī Dhīika who had been appointed by (*tanniyukta*) Mahendrapāla. The grant is said to have been made only after securing the prior approval of *tantrapāla* śrī Dhīika (*anumatyā*). In the Una plates of Avanivarman's father, Balavarmana, the sign manual of śrī Dhīika appear at the end of the grant without his official designation. B. N. Puri identified him as 'the representative of the king in the feudatory state'. The second record of the Pratabgarh inscription refers to a subordinate ruler Mādhava as *mahāsāmanta-daṇḍanāyaka* śrī

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[119] Harṣa's Banskhera and Madhuvan copper plates address the officials in the following order— *Mahāsāmanta, Mahārāja, Dauḥssādha-Sādhanika, Pramātāra, Rājasthānīya, Kumārāmātya, Uparika, Viṣayapati, Bhaṭa, Cāṭa*, etc. (Devahuti, 1970, p. 176) For the explanation of each of these, see relevant entries in *IEG*.

[120] *IEG*, s.v.

Mādhava who was based at Ujjayinī. In the very next line though, the same person is addressed as *tantrapāla-mahāsāmanta-mahādaṇḍanāyaka śrī* Mādhava. Mādhava seems to have been an important functionary in the Malwa area who was entrusted with the dual responsibilities of *tantrapāla* and *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*. Mādhava was requested by *mahāsāmanta* Indrarāja of the Cāhamāna family, who seems to have been ruling in areas around modern Pratabgarh, to make a grant in favour of the Sun god, *śrīmat-*Indrarājadeva. The inscription has an interesting context. It says that *tantrapāla-mahāsāmanta-mahādaṇḍanāyaka śrī* Mādhava, having come to Ujjayinī, made the gift of village Dhārāpadraka, identified with Dharyavad situated near the boundary of the erstwhile Pratabgarh state, which was under the enjoyment of *śrī* Vidagdha, to the temple of Indradityadeva at Ghoṇṭāvarṣikā (identified with modern Ghotarshi, 6 miles to the east of Pratabgarh).[121] Interestingly, in this grant, as also in the first record which was a royal grant made by Mahendrapāla-II, sign manual of *śrī* Vidagdha appear at the end.[122] Few points may be seen:

1. *Śrī* Mādhava, the *taṁtrapāla*, with headquarters at Ujjayinī was not a resident in the Cāhamāna court of Indrarāja. In our view *taṁtrapāla* was more like governor appointed by the king to look after a specified area, usually in the outlying parts of the state. He could either be purely an official (like Dhīika) or a subordinate ruler entrusted with

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[121] *EI*, vol. XIV, pp. 183-184, ll. 9-12.

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 184, ll. 13-14 and p. 187, ll. 27, *svahastoyaṁ śrī vidagdhasya.*

administrative responsibility (as in the case of Mādhava), but his main function was to keep a check on local subordinate rulers.

2. The *taṁtrapāla* was not always the ratifying authority of the grants made by subordinate rulers. *Śrī* Vidagdha who ratified the first few grants of the Pratabgarh inscription was not a *tantrapāla*, but a royal representative in the local Cāhamāna court. Even if it is construed that his sign at the end of the second record was, in a sense, his consent for the donation of the village which was under his enjoyment, his sign manual at the end of the first record would indicate that in fact he was signing these documents in the capacity of a ratifying authority.

3. Even when the inscription states Ujjayini to be the headquarters of Mādhava, the fact that he came to Ujjayini for some work and took bath at the Mahākāla temple before worshipping Śiva, tends to indicate that he was more like an absentee-governor which would have made the role of still subordinate officials, like *śrī* Vidagdha, more important.

Another, rather tangential reference, to *tantrapāla*, in the context of the Pratīhāras, comes from the Harṣa inscription (957 AD) of Cāhamāna Vigraharāja. With reference to Vākpati-I, who is believed to have ruled in the first quarter of the tenth century, it says that he harassed the *kṣamāpāla tantrapāla*, who was coming haughtily towards the Ananta (country) with the behests of his overlord. When *tantrapāla's* haughtiness was

curbed down, Vākpatirāja met him and propitiated him.[123] The overlord here seems to be Mahīpāla-I.

Significantly all the three references in the Pratīhāra records come from areas which may be considered outlying with Kanauj as the reference point. In the specific context of the Pratīhāras, it seems, *tantrapāla* was an official, sometimes a subordinate ruler, who was made responsible for a specific area in outlying regions of the state. It is also important to note that under the Pratīhāras there is no evidence to show a standard territorial division of the state. Inscriptions from Rajasthan and Gujarat clearly demonstrate this. Divisions like *bhukti*, if at all be seen as province, were absent in Rajasthan and Gujarat and in that sense *tantrapāla* does not seem to have denoted a provincial head as designated by the state. Areas under his jurisdiction seem to have been defined or delineated on the basis of more conventional divisions.

Both the inscriptions of the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple at Gwalior[124] refer to *koṭṭapāla* Alla who, as the second inscription shows, was also a part of the town administrative council. It seems *koṭṭapāla* was to take care of the fort and its hinterland and was appointed directly by the sovereign. Alla belonged to a brāhmaṇa family which had

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[123] *IA*, vol. XLII, p. 58; see also, p. 62, l. 15.

[124] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 159-162.

migrated from the Lāṭa *maṇḍala*,[125] and in that context, his appointment as *koṭṭapāla*, a job that would have only been entrusted to a person with proven military attributes, is significant. Further, that his father had also served as *maryādādhūrya* (translated as the Warden of the Marches or the Chief of the Boundaries) under Rāmabhadra and that Alla claims to have taken up the burden of his father's office, not because he was desirous of worldly power, but because he could not hear it said that a son had never been to his father's affairs,[126] indicates, though only as a solitary example in the context of the Pratīhāras, that administrative posts could be inherited. Also, if Alla replaced his father in his office then *koṭṭapāla* and *maryādādhūrya* should ideally be synonymous but clearly Gwalior, under Bhoja, seems to have been administered directly from Kanauj, and certainly was not at the periphery of the state. In that case, either *maryādādhūrya* meant something else or Alla was shifted to the office of *koṭṭapāla* only later by Bhoja.

The next royal official mentioned in the Pratīhāra inscription is *balādhikṛta*. In the Gwalior inscription referred to above next to the *koṭṭapāla* was mentioned *balādhikṛta* Tattaka.[127] Besides this, another interesting reference to this term comes from the Pratabgarh inscription. The second grant refers to the appointment of one *śrī* Śamma to

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[125] *Ibid.*, p. 156, l. 1, *ati lalita lāṭāmaṇḍala-tilakānandapura-nirggato guṇavāna varjjārānvaya-nāgarabhaṭṭa-kumārobhavadyena.*

[126] *Ibid.*, ll. 2 and 3.

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 159, l. 2.

look after the affairs of the state at the *maṇḍapikā* (custom house/toll collection centre)[128]

associated probably with Ujjayini by *balādhikṛta śrī* Kokkaṭa, who was serving at the feet

of *parameśvara* (a reference probably to Mahendrapāla-II). *Balādhikṛta* has generally been

explained as commander of an army but sometimes also as the head of a territorial

unit.[129] The Gwalior reference seems to indicate that even if the *balādhikṛta* headed an

army unit, he had an important role to play in maintaining law and order at Gopagirī.

Also his incorporation in town administration at Gopagirī indicates that the office was

not a part of central administration. In this context the reference from the Pratabgarh

inscription where a *balādhikṛta*, serving at the feet of the Sovereign, was making an

appointment, essentially concerned with the Finance department, at Ujjayini is

significant. These are difficult codes to crack. One of the many possible explanations

would be that Kokkaṭa had been appointed at Ujjayini, to look after the administration

of the town, but like Mādhava, was serving at the royal court. He seems to have

appointed *śrī* Śamma as in charge of the *maṇḍapikā* at Ujjayini, perhaps in the capacity of

the head of the town administration. He, as a royal official at Ujjayini, would have kept a

check at Mādhava, the subordinate ruler and *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*, at Ujjayini.

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[128] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 185, ll. 19-20, *tathā maṇḍapikāyāṁ parameśvara pādopajīvi balādhīkṛta śrī kokkaṭa niyukta śrī śamme ca vyāpāraṁ kurvvate.*

[129] *IEG*, s.v.

There are some other terms for which we have solitary reference in the Pratīhāra records. The Pratabgarh inscription refers to Mādhava, besides as *mahāsāmanta* and *tantrapāla*, as *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*.[130] The term *daṇḍanāyago* can be traced back to the Kuṣāṇa times.[131] Early references to the term are found in the inscriptions of the Kuṣāṇa rulers, Huviṣka and Vasudeva.[132] The term has generally been explained as commander of forces, but there are problems with this explanation. The Ikṣavāku inscriptions mention both *mahāsenapati* and *mahādaṇḍanāyaka* which have been translated quite appropriately as the commander in chief and the chief judge.[133] Similarly in the context of the central administration of the Guptas, we come across the terms, *mahābalādhikṛta* and *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*.[134] Of the two, *mahābalādhikṛta* appears more appropriate for association with army. It seems *mahādaṇḍanāyaka* was a high functionary associated with the judicial system.[135] It was perhaps because of this reason that Mādhava, despite being a *tantrapāla* at Ujjayini, was stationed probably at the royal court.

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[130] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 185, l. 19, *śrīmaujjayanyaṁ mahāsāmanta daṇḍanāyaka śrī mādhavaḥ*; l. 20, *ihaiva śrīmadujjayanyaṁ kāryābhyāgata tantrapāla mahāsāmanta mahādaṇḍanāyaka śrī mādhava*.

[131] Majumdar, 1980, p. 56.

[132] *Ibid.*

[133] *ACHI*, p. 742.

[134] *Ibid.*, p. 750-51.

[135] D. Devahuti cites some credible evidence though, to show the term was probably used as a military title. Devahuti, 1970, p. 173, fn. 4.

The first record of the Ahar stone inscription refers to *daṇḍapāśika* Amarāditya who was the *dutaka* and at whose bidding the *praśasti* was engraved.[136] In the contemporary copper plate grants the term is, more often than not, found along with *cauroddharaṇika*. The designation was seemingly local in nature. It has been explained as 'a policeman', 'an official who was probably the leader of a group of *daṇḍikas*', 'officer in charge of punishment', and 'an official entrusted with the punishment of criminals'.[137] In the present context he seems to have been entrusted with policing responsibilities at Tattānandapura.

The second record of the Sīyaḍoṇi stone inscription (VS 964), and probably the first record (VS 960) as well, refer to *mahāprātihāra-samadhigatā-seṣamahāśabda-mahāsāmant-ādhipati śrī* Undabhaṭa.[138] This, seemingly powerful functionary, is addressed as the *adhipati* of the *mahāsāmantas* and was given the important post of *mahāprātihāra* (same as *mahāpratīhāra*). Scholars are almost unanimous in identifying the term as 'head of the doorkeepers of the palace or the king's chamber or of the capital city' or as the high chamberlain.[139] In the *Tilakamañjarī*, the *mahāprātihāra* is found 'imposing the vow of silence on all those who talked too much' making all officials do their duties and turning

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[136] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 58, l. 2.

[137] *IEG*, s.v.

[138] *EI*, vol. I, p. 173, ll. 2 and 5.

[139] *IEG*, s.v.

out those who had no right to be there (at the court).[140] It is quite interesting that the *mahāpratihāra*, who should have ideally attended and maintained the decorum of the court and looked after the king's apartments, was stationed at the faraway situated *pattana*. Possibly Undabhaṭa was an official who was later given the status of a subordinate ruler and made in charge of the Lalitpur area.

The Pratabgarh inscription refers to the term *talavarggika*,[141] which, though identified as an official has remained unexplained. A similar term, *talavātaka*, is known from the Maukhari records and has been explained as 'modern *talāti* or village accountant'.[142]

Many scholars have considered *dutaka* to be an administrative designation. To us, it seems *dutaka* was more of an ad-hoc designation which was bestowed upon the person who carried the royal charter to its destination. Most of the Pratīhāra copper plate grants mention the name of the heir Apparent as *dutaka*. In some other cases influential people like Bālāditya performed the duty.[143] In this sense it seems that while some kind of protocol was attached to the office of *dutaka*, the office itself was not permanent in nature.

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[140] RTA, p. 320.

[141] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 183, l. 9, *talavarggika hariṣaḍa bhujyamāna*.

[142] Pires, 1934, p. 170.

[143] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 18, ll. 15-16.

We now move on to see the administrative designations mentioned in the inscriptions of the subordinates. The Una plates of Balavarman (898 AD) refer to the following officers in this order – *rāja-rājanya* (persons having royal pedigree); *rājasthānīya* (officers working in place of the king; generally believed to be the provincial governor); *uparika* (explained as a Viceroy; the governor of a province); *amātya* (minister); *cāṭa-bhāṭa* (police constables comparable to paiks or *piadas*); *bhaṭṭas* (minstrel); *daṇḍapāśika* (official responsible to carry out punishment); *daṇḍoddharaṇika* (literally, collector of fines); *drāṅgika* (collector of custom duties); *mahattara* (village headmen); *cāru-cara* (spies); *bhaṭa* (probably repetition of the *bhāṭa* of *cāṭa-bhāṭa*); *hastyaśvārohaka* (elephants and horse riders); *prabhṛti* (perhaps the term was used for 'so on and so forth'); and *āyuktaka-niyuktān* (does not seem to be a specific designation as it is used after *prabhṛti*; probably used in the sense of appointed officers (Cf. *yathāsthānaniyuktān* of the Pratīhāra copper plate grants)).[144] The available evidence tends to suggest that Balavarman was ruling in a small area around Una. This is also corroborated by contemporary inscriptions from Saurashtra which belonged to some of the other ruling houses. The family of Cālukya Balavarman is known from only two inscriptions. Balavarman, in his inscription, claims to have obtained through his own efforts the *Nakṣiśapuracaturaśitikā* (Nakṣiśapura group of eighty four villages) and this remains the only reference to domain under his control. The nature of officialdom mentioned in the grant does not quite go in line with

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[144] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 5, ll. 4-6. For meanings, see relevant entries in *IEG*.

territories which the Cālukya line in question seems to have had under control. Many names especially the high-sounding ones seem to have been incorporated on the basis of convention or as an imitation of larger states.

As against these, the grant of Dharaṇīvarāha seems to be much more realistic in its references to officials who have been mentioned in the grant in the following order: *rāṣṭrapati, grāmapati, bhogika, mahattara, kuṭumbika, pāncakulika, daṇḍapāśika* and *madhyaga*.[145] It seems except for *rāṣṭrapati*, all other officials were associated with village or perhaps *sthalī* level administration. *Rāṣṭrapati* has been explained as ruler of a *rāṣṭra* which could be a province, district of even its subdivision.[146] While the term *rāṣṭra* has not been mentioned in this inscription, one of the Vākāṭaka inscriptions refers to *pakkaṇa-rāṣṭra* within which was situated Pravareśvara-*saḍviṁśaka*, i.e., a subdivision of 26 villages, of which, the town called Pravareśvara was the head-quarter.[147] In the Pallava kingdom also *rāṣṭra* seems to have been a subdivision of *viṣaya*.[148] At the same time under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, *rāṣṭra* seems to have been a unit larger than a *viṣaya* and a *bhukti*.[149] The term is not mentioned in the Dharaṇīvarāha's grant and in that case *rāṣṭrapati* can best be taken as a high-ranking official. Among other terms, *grāmapati*

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[145] *IA*, vol. XII, p. 193, plate II, ll. 7-8.

[146] *IEG*, s.v.

[147] Majumdar, 1980, p. 165

[148] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[149] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

meant head of the village granted; *bhogika* has been explained as the head of a *bhoga*, equivalent to later Jagirdar,[150] but in the present context it is not clear whether he was an official or a beneficiary; *mahattara* and *kuṭumbika* were village elders and residents respectively; *pāncakulika* has been explained as 'scribes'[151] but the exact meaning is difficult to ascertain; *daṇḍapāśika* was possibly an official looking after the law and order in the village or the *sthalī*; and *madhyaga* probably functioned as mediator in disputes or in economic transactions.

The second record (undated) of the Pratabgarh inscription, which seems to have been made at the local initiative also mentions very general terms to address officials and others—*sarvvarājapuruṣān* (people with royal status which probably would have included higher officials and the *sāmantas*); *brāhmaṇottarīyān* (the chief brāhmaṇas); *pratinivāsī janapadāṁśa* (residents of the village in question and of neighbourhood).[152] The inscription, in a way, maintained the standardized format of the Pratīhāra copper plate grants insofar as, like the latter, it expressed, in very general terms, the dichotomized categories of *rājapuruṣas* and *pratinivāsīs*. The Jhusi grant of Trilocanapāla (1028 AD) is

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[150] *IEG*, s.v.

[151] *IA*, vol. XII, p. 195.

[152] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 186, ll. 21-22.

same as the Pratabgarh record discussed above with an additional reference to 'all the heads of the villages' (*samasta mahattamas*).[153]

Since we have seen the extent of divergence in various parts of the Pratīhāra dominions as far as territorial and administrative organizations are concerned, it would perhaps be naive to expect a standard pattern of 'municipal' administration.

The second of the two inscriptions[154] of the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple is particularly important for our purpose. The inscription, dated to the year 933 (in Vikrama Saṁvat) = 876 AD, records four donations to two temples, built by Allā, at Gopagirī (ancient Gwalior), referred to as *sthāna*. It refers to Bhojadeva as the reigning monarch, under whom Allā was serving as the guardian of the fort (*koṭṭapāla*).[155] The inscription addresses *parameśvara* Bhojadeva as the *svāmi* of Gopagirī and refers to *koṭṭapāla* (in charge of the fort) Allā, *balādhikṛta* Tattaka and *sthānādhikṛta*, comprising *śreṣṭhī* Vavviyāka and *Sārthavāha-pramukha* (head of the caravan merchants) Icchuvāka, constituting the board or committee of the *savviyākas* (*savviyākānāṁ vāre*).[156] Seen in

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[153] *IA*, vol. XVIII, p. 34, ll. 3-4.

[154] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 159-162.

[155] *Ibid.*, p. 159, l. 1-2.

[156] *Ibid.*, l. 2; *savviyākānāṁ vāre* is a little problematic. *Vāra* as the term for a committee entrusted with the responsibility to run the civic administration of a town is also know from the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription. The term *savviyāka* is not clear to us. It seems to be a proper noun and the use in genitive plural would mean '(board) of the *savviyākas*' which would mean that each member of the board was called *savviyāka*. One of the

relation with immediately preceding reference to *balādhikṛta* Tattaka, it seems, the term *sthānādhikṛta* refers to a board which was looking after the civic aspects of the fort town certainly including markets and commerce. Inclusion of two members of merchant community in the board clearly brings out the importance that was given to the commercial activities.

The otherwise important Ahar inscription is rather poor in providing any information on local administration. The inscription refers to Bhoja but not to any other subordinate ruler which suggests that the place, like Gopagirī and unlike Sīyaḍoṇi, was under the direct administration of the Pratīhāras. The only official mentioned is *daṇḍapāśika* who might have been in charge of law and order of Tattānandapura. There is another committee mentioned in the inscription, the *uttara sabhā*. This organization or committee has not yet been identified though explained tentatively as, the supreme assembly.[157] The *sabhā* finds mention at two places—in IIIrd record[158] and in the beginning of the VIII.[159] Its mention just before the IVth record is particularly interesting.[160] The VIIIth

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meanings of the term *sava* (√sū) is instigator, stimulator or commander (Monier Williams, s.v.). Perhaps the term *savviyāka* was used as a derivation of *sava* in this sense.

[157] *IEG*, s.v.

[158] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 59, ll. 6-7.

[159] *Ibid.*, p. 61, ll. 20-22.

[160] For the context of these two records see the section of Commercial Ethos in the last chapter, especially footnote 454.

record is a modification of the IVth and it seems that the mention of the *uttara sabhā* in the VIIIth record was as a ratifying authority of the modified arrangement. Its reference just before the IVth record might have been in relation with the annulment of that transaction. It seems that any modification or change in existing state of arrangement especially in relation with sale deeds or perhaps even sale and purchase of immovable assets would have required ratification from the *uttara sabhā* which indeed seems to have been an important civic body quite in line with the *vāra* of Sīyaḍoṇī or Gopagirī. Another point which may be made here is that both Tattānandapura and Pṛthūdaka were under direct Pratīhāra rule, at least during the reign of Bhoja, which seems to have ended by around 885 AD.

The Sīyaḍoṇī stone inscription,[161] though erratic in its language, provides rich data on town administration. The place has been referred to in the inscription as a *pattana* and an *adhiṣṭhāna* but these terms have been invoked only when the local ruler was introduced. Otherwise the term *sthāna* has been used, usually along with the term for the local council, *vāra*, in the general sense of the place. Of the twenty seven records only five invoke the detailed reference to local administrative bodies, perhaps in the hierarchy, and of which the relevant portion of the first record is almost completely lost.

It is perhaps important, to contextualize the problem, to reproduce the four instances:

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[161] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 162-179.

1. Record eleven says "...Here today in *śrīmat* Sīyaḍoṇi, (which is) under the enjoyment of *mahārājādhirāja śrī* Dhūrbhaṭa, on whose feet are sitting Lodhuāka etc. in the *pañcakula;* Rasthāka is the *kauptika* in the *maṇḍapikā;* and Avuā and Narasingh are heading the *vāra* attached to the (read, looking after the affairs of the) *sthāna*...."[162]

2. Record twenty one says, "... Here today in *śrīmat* Sīyaḍoṇi *pattana,* (which is) under the enjoyment of *mahārājādhirāja śrī* Niṣkalaṅka, Sīhapa etc. *pañcakulas* are in the *maṇḍapikā* and Pāhū and Dedeka are heading the *vāra* with the consent of the *sthāna*...."[163]

3. Record twenty three says, "...Here today in the Sīyaḍoṇi *pattana,* (which is) under the enjoyment of *mahārājādhirāja śrī* Niṣkalaṅka, on whose feet are sitting Purandara etc. in the *pañcakula;* Mādhava is the *kauptika* in the *maṇḍapikā* and Tuṇḍi and Praddyumna are heading the *vāra* (which is) sitting in (i.e., looking after the affairs of) the *sthāna*...."[164]

4. Record twenty seven says, "...Here today in the Sīyaḍoṇi *pattana,* (which is) under the enjoyment of *mahārājādhirāja śrī* Niṣkalaṅka, on whose feet are sitting Keśavarāja etc. in the *pañcakula* and Pāhū and Dedeka are heading the *vāra* with the consent of the *sthāna*...."[165] (translations mine)

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[162] *EI,* p. 175, ll. 18-19.

[163] *Ibid.,* p. 177, ll. 28-29.

[164] *Ibid.,* l. 30

[165] *Ibid.,* p. 178, ll. 36-37.

By looking at these four translations, dichotomy between the *maṇḍapikā* and the *vāra* comes out quite clearly. Both these terms were essentially used for/associated with Sīyaḍoṇi but still a distinction was made. *Maṇḍapikā*, in many early medieval inscriptions especially from north India, was used in the sense of toll or tax collection centre usually in an urban domain.[166] At one place our inscription refers to *Sīyaḍoṇi-satka-maṇḍapikā* (*maṇḍapikā* belonging to or associated with Sīyaḍoṇi).[167]

Nos. 1 and 3 of the translations above clearly point to two inferences—one, that the *pañcakula* was appointed directly by the local ruler and the sovereign Pratīhāra ruler was nowhere in the scene; second, that *kauptika* was an official was associated in some manner with the *maṇḍapikā*. The other two translations, though, clearly show that the *pañcakula*, as a council or a committee, was also, in some way, involved with the functioning of the *maṇḍapikā*. The exact meaning and job description of *kauptika* has remained oblivious but something can surely be explored about the *pañcakula*. The more contextual explanation of the term would be 'an assembly of administrators and arbitrators usually consisting of five members; a board of administration charged with control of the custom house, with the deposit of property of persons dying with heirs, into the royal treasury, etc."[168] The term is quite commonly found in the Caulukya

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[166] See, supra chapter 3, section on 'Socio-Political Organization of Resources-The non-Agrarian Context.'

[167] Supra, Chapter 3, note 121.

[168] *IEG*, s.v.

records. A. K. Majumdar, who did an in-depth study on the Caulukyas, noted the references to the *pañcakula*, in both, the inscriptions and the literature of the Caulukya period, with great interest. He believed that 'no instrument of modern government can serve as an apt analogy to the system of government by the *pañcakula*'.[169] He concludes further, "We find them associated with the highest dignitary in the land, namely the Chancellor, and find another committee bearing the same designation employed in rural administration. They are appointed to supervise the construction of a temple, sent normally to seize a dead man's property, and presided over the royal kitchen."[170] The nature of evidence thus suggests that *pañcakula* or *pañcakulika* was a term current in the early medieval period especially in the central and western India. It stood, in all probability, as a generic rubric for any committee comprising of five persons and at any stratum of administration. The *pañcakulika* mentioned in the Wadhwan inscription of Dharaṇīvarāha seems to have been a similar committee at the village or *sthalī* level but the exact nature of its function is not known. At Sīyaḍoṇi, the *pañcakula* was looking after the work at the *maṇḍapikā*. The four references to *maṇḍapikā* in the inscription mention Lodhuāka (record 11 dated VS 969),[171] Sīhapa (record 21 dated VS 1005),[172]

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[169] Majumdar, 1980, p. 205.

[170] *Ibid.*

[171] *EI*, vol. I, p. 175, l. 18.

[172] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 29.

Purandara (record 23 dated VS 1008)[173] and Keśavarāja (record 27 dated VS 1025)[174]

probably as the head of the *pañcakulam*. Record 23rd mentioned above also refers to

Purandara[175] who had built the temple of Viṣṇubhaṭṭāraka in the town and record 8

(undated), to *garhapatikatāmbolika* Keśava.[176] There is nothing to prove that Purandara

and Keśava of these records were same as those mentioned as the heads of the *pañcakula*

but if they were, then there is a great deal of probability that the *pañcakula* comprised of

local merchants and their role in the *maṇḍapikā* was essentially economic. If this holds

then *kauptika* might have had duties related to the policing of the *maṇḍapikā*.

Sthāna, the second part of *maṇḍapikā-sthāna* dichotomy, has been explained variously,

as 'a place', a temple', and 'a sacred centre' etc.[177] In the present context the term seems

to have been used for the town, especially in relation with municipal administration.

The term is mentioned quite frequently in the records which is indicative of its

importance as a functional category in comparison to the sparingly used *adhiṣṭhāna* and

pattana.

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[173] *Ibid.*, l. 30.

[174] *Ibid.*, p. 178, l. 36.

[175] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 31.

[176] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 15.

[177] *IEG*, s.v.

We have already seen that at Gopagirī, the *vāra* was the council looking after the town administration including both, police and civic, aspects. At Sīyaḍoṇi also, *vāra* was a body, headed probably by two persons, looking after the town administration as suggested by terms *sthānāropita*[178] and *sthānādhiṣṭhita*.[179] Repeated use of terms *sthānānumatena*[180] (by the consent of the *sthānā*) and *sakala sthānānumatena*[181] followed by reference to *vāra* endorses the point that it was a council, which looked after the affairs of the *sthāna* (the town) and also that *vāra* was an important decision making council and such decisions were deemed as 'consent of the town.' The inscription also refers to *vārapramukha-sakala-sthānena*[182] and *vārapramukha-sthānena*.[183] *Vārapramukha* is generally translated as chief of the council, and the use of the term in instrumental would tempt one to translate it as 'by the *vārapramukha* of the *sthāna*.' There is though a reference in the inscription which suggests something else. Record 6 contains the phrase *vārapramukha-sthāne*.[184] Use in locative would suggest that *vārapramukha-sthāna* was not a reference to the head of the *vāra*, but to the office of the *vārapramukha*. Use of this term in

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[178] *EI*, p. 175, l. 19.

[179] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 30

[180] *Ibid.*, p. 176, l. 23; p. 177, l. 29; p. 178, l. 36.

[181] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 4.

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 173, ll. 2-3

[183] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 7.

[184] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 11.

the inscription would suggest that for making any donations it was necessary to seek *vārapramukha-sthāna's* permission. The *vāra* also seems to have had some control over groups trading in local markets. Reference in the record 5 to *vārapramukhasthāna-sambaddha-kandukānāṁ*[185] (Sweet makers attached to the office of the *vārapramukha*) indicates that some, if not all, of those who worked in the town markets were registered with the office of the *vārapramukha*. This way, the *vāra* could keep a check on those who were outsiders to the markets. The *vāra*, it seems from the reference, interacted with traders and artisans on personal basis and not through any guild.

We have no clear idea about the composition of the *vāra*. It seems two persons headed the council. We wish to highlight two points:

• Usually the reference to *vāra* was preceded by the names of the two persons heading it. The fragmentary first record (dated VS 960), though, mentions *dvāviṁsati-kacchittarākayorvvāre*.[186] Probably the phrase stood for twenty two (members) and/including Cchittarāka in the *vāra*. There is another reference to one Cchittarāka as one of the donors of an *avāsanikā* in a record dated in VS 991.[187] At any rate, it seems, *vāra* comprised of 22 or 23 with two members serving as the heads.

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[185] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 10.

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 173, l. 2.

[187] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 33.

● There are numerous references in the inscription to 'heads in the *vāra*.' We find

Vahulū and Rudragana heading the *vāra* in VS 964,[188] Aivuā and Narasingh in VS

967[189] and 969,[190] Pāhu and Dedeka in VS 1005[191] and 1025,[192] and Tundi and

Praddyumna in 1008.[193] That Pāhu and Dedeka, who were replaced by Tundi and

Praddyumna, again became the heads as the record dated 1025 shows, for sure

means that either the *vāra* was periodically reconstituted or at least its members were

made heads on rotational basis. The evidence is tangential but still quite significant.

Military Organization

Military organization and warfare *per se* and their role in state formation and its

character have been comparatively neglected arenas in the historiography. Conventional

perspectives on warfare and military were, more often than not, compilation of materials

for corroborating arguments sometimes in a rather anachronistic fashion.[194] Not much

contribution has been made on the question from the perspectives of feudalism and

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[188] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 7, *vahulūrudraganayorvvāre.*

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 174, l. 11, *aivuānarasinghayorvvāre.*

[190] *Ibid.*, p. 175, l. 9.

[191] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 29, *pāhūdedekayorvvāre.*

[192] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 30, *tundipraddyumnayorvvāre.*

[193] *Ibid.*, p. 178, l. 36.

[194] For example B. P. Mazumdar, in the chapter on military, extensively uses references from the *Śukranīti* which, it is now established was composed as late as eighteenth or nineteenth century A.D. See, Mazumdar, 1960, chapter II.

Segmentary state models even when it is established that the period was marked by internecine warfare between various regional kingdoms and an almost unabated exertion on the part of the Arabs, and later, the Turks, from the north-western and western corridors.

B. N. S. Yadava has highlighted the rise of personal arrogant chivalry as an important marker of early medieval period.[195] The notion, it is argued, crystallized with the 'accentuation of the feudal tendencies during the post-Gupta period, under circumstances more or less similar to those existing in Europe'.[196] A fragmented political situation, where petty states and principalities were keen on both expanding and defending their dominion, and hence compelled to fight constantly, along with genesis of 'parochial tendencies and rise of Rājpūt clans', gave impetus to its rise and growth.[197] While aspects of military and warfare are seen in terms of continuities of the early historical period, the departure is mainly emphasized in relation with the degree to which some of these became crucial in the period under consideration. Army, it is argued, was predominantly composed of 'feudal levies'.[198] While there are references to *bhṛta bala* (mercenary forces) and *maula bala* (hereditary forces), which are seen to have

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[195] Yadava, 1973, pp. 201-206.

[196] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[197] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[198] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

been commonly in vogue, the other two traditional constituents, *śreṇi bala* and *mitra bala* are shown to have relegated to the background.[199] One authority equates *maula bala* to feudal levies on the ground that even Kauṭilya highlighted their importance as the King maintained them. It is argued, after Kane, that in the early medieval period *maula bala* comprised of persons who, or whose ancestors, were remunerated by grants of land.[200] The rise of chivalry is seen to have given prominence to man to man combat because of which chariots gave way to horses and bow-arrows to swords.[201] Heterogeneity in the army, mutual jealousy owing to sense of superiority, commitment only towards an individual rather than the country etc. have been seen as some of the defects of the impact of feudalism on military.[202]

Our understanding of the military organization of the Pratīhāras is rather inadequate primarily because of the dearth of relevant sources. All the copper plate grants of the Pratīhāras up to the first record of the Pratabgarh inscription (946 AD) except the Badhal copper plate grant of Nāgabhaṭa-II (dated 815), begin with the expression, *śrī-mahodayāvāsitāneka-nau-hastyāśva-ratha-patti-sampanna-skandhāvārāt...* (From the royal residence, furnished with many boats, elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers, and

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[199] *Ibid.*, p. 207; Mazumdar, 1960, pp. 44-46.

[200] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

[201] Yadava, 1973, p. 213-14.

[202] *Ibid.*, p. 208-209.

which is situated at the glorious Mahodaya). The Badhal copper plate grant of Nāgabhaṭa is stated to have been issued from the royal residence at Bhadrāsana (modern Badhal in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan) near the bank of river Ānandikā. The expression is clearly symptomatic of the fact that, at least theoretically, the armed forces comprised of above mentioned five branches.

It has been pointed out and probably quite rightly that 'out of the fourfold division of the army the chariots had disappeared by the eighth century'.[203] There is, in fact, some evidence to show that horses had become as important, if not more, as elephants, in the military organization of the period, especially in the context of the Pratīhāras. The Pehowa Horse dealers' inscription (882 AD) clearly points to trade in horses in north India possibly through guilds of horse traders/agents operating in the north western frontier areas. Most of the traders mentioned in the inscription seem to have belonged to this area. The inscription also confirms that kings and members of ruling aristocracy were the most important of the potential buyers. Besides this, the Bayana inscription (956 AD) also talks of imposition of certain cess on the horses passing through the granted village(s) for the purpose of trade. We have at least one inscriptional reference relating to the Pratīhāras which tends to highlight the importance that was beginning to be attached to the cavalry. About Rāmabhadra, the Gwalior *praśasti* says that he punished his enemies rulers through his subordinate kings rich in cavalry and thus

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[203] Yadava, 1973, p. 207.

attained the fame which was unto him even as a consort.[204] While a detailed discussion on the accounts of early Muslim writers with regard to the military strategy and organization would be done in the next chapter in the section 'The Arabs and Ideology',[205] it may be important point out here that statements of these writers tend to suggest that the Pratīhāras, perhaps because they were more vulnerable to the Arab threat, were paying more attention to cavalry in comparison to the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pālas. The Chatsu inscription[206] of Bālāditya refers to one of his ancestors Harṣarāja who is said to have conquered kings in the north and presented horses to Bhoja.[207] The reference, irrespective of whether is true or not, is a testimony to the fact that in the period under consideration capturing enemy's horses in battle was considered so precious a booty, that presenting it to the sovereign could result in considerable enhancement of status.

With regard to the composition of military, we have very tangential evidences. The large number of subordinates, who are celebrated in the inscriptions of their successors as having fought probably for their Pratīhāra sovereign, would have pooled in forces, in addition to those of the sovereign, to increase their numbers. This is also indicated by

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[204] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 108, l. 9.

[205] See Infra.

[206] *EI*, vol. XII, pp. 10-17

[207] *Ibid.*, p. 15, l. 14

the Bagumra copper plate inscription (867 AD) of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Dhruva of the Gujarat line, which says, like the Aihole *praśasti* composed by Ravikīrti, that, 'while Mihira (Bhoja-I) was united to fortune and surrounded by crowds of the noble kinsmen, though owing to his courage he conquered all regions of the world...'.[208] While the use of the term kinsmen might have been used to highlight the role of the collateral Pratīhāra branches, it seems the reference was being made to all subordinates fighting for Bhoja. About the Pratīhāras, Ma'sūdī refers to two contingents, which were permanently posted in the northern and the southern borders, and two others which marched whenever there was an attack from any side.[209] The reference, if taken to be true, would suggest existence of both, standing army stationed on the frontiers and reserves. It is primarily on the basis of this evidence that Deyell argues for the use of money forms. He goes on to call the *vigrahapāla dramma*, the *ādivarāha dramma* and the *vināyaka dramma* as imperial coinages. We do not know whether the standing armies were comprised exclusively of the imperial forces or an amalgam of imperial or subordinate forces.

We may end this section by citing a reference, important from the perspective of military organization, from the Gwalior *praśasti* which says about Bhoja-I, that he, 'like Kumāra (Kārttikeya) along with his Mātṛkās, subdued the terrible Asuras with the help

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[208] IA, vol. XII, p. 189.

[209] See infra, Section 'The Arabs and Ideology' in the next Chapter.

of a band of women that lived upon arms'.[210] The reference, though a part of a eulogistic

praśasti, points towards the presence of fighting units, comprised exclusively of women

warriors.

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[210] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 114.

5

Negotiating Identity-Status Issues: Legitimation and Patronage

Between Ethnic Identity and Royalty

Ethnic identity of the Pratīhāras has remained a huge bottleneck when it comes to understanding their origins. We have briefly touched upon the question in the first chapter. While much has been written about this aspect, there has been no analytical study about the sources which provide us with the Gurjara identity of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj. This is particularly significant in the light of complete absence of this term in the inscriptions of the Pratīhāras or of their subordinates. The most important sources in this context are the inscriptions of perhaps their most hated enemies, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, both of Mānyakheta and the Gujarat branch.[1] All the references to the word Gurjara, *Gurjareśa,*

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[1] The undated and fragmentary Daśāvatāra cave inscription mentions that Dāntidurga gave presents at Ujjain and that the king's camp was located in a Gurjara palace (in all probability at Ujjain) (*ACHI,* p. 443). The Sanjan copper plate inscription of Amoghavarṣa (SS 793 = 871 AD) credits Dāntidurga for making the Gurjara lord of Ujjain his doorkeeper (*EI,* vol. XVIII, p. 243, ll. 6-7), perhaps a pun at the Pratīhāra identity. The Baroda plate of Karkka-II (812-13 AD) extols Indradeva who is said single-handed to have put the lord of the Gurjaras to flight (*IA,* vol. XII, p. 160, ll. 33-34). The same inscription later says about Karkka that he gave protection to the ruler of Malwa in the direction of the lord of the Gurjaras who had become insolent by his victory over Gauḍa and Vaṅga (*ACHI,* p. 455). The Bagumra copper plate of Dhruva-III of the Gujarat branch (867 AD) says with reference to Dhruva-II that 'he had to face the Gurjaras on one side and Vallabha on the other' (*IA,* vol. XII, p. 188). Nilgunda inscription of Amoghavarṣa (866 AD) eulogises Govinda (also

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2q*Gurjareśvarapatiḥ* and *Gurjarāṇāṁ*, in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscriptions, have been identified as applicable to the Pratīhāra ruler of Kanauj. While we can not be sure of every reference being associated with the Pratīhāras as the Gurjara was a term common in the areas of Gujarat and in central India from the days of the Gurjaras of Bharuch, the context of these references for certain indicates that most of these were indeed made to the Pratīhāras of Kanauj.

Besides these, a rather clear testimony comes from the work *Vikramārjunavijaya* written by Pampa, a Kanarese poet, for Narasiṁha-II, father of his patron, the Cālukya subordinate of Vemulavāḍa, who is said to have taken part in the northern expedition of Indra-III. The Vemulavāḍa inscription describes his victory over the Mālavas and the Gurjaras at some length and Pampa, in his account, remarks, "When preparing for victory he captured the champion elephants which marched in front, and penetrating and putting to flight the army of the Gūrjjara-rāja, secured the victory and eclipsed Vijaya (or Arjuna) – this Narasiṁha. Terrified at the army of this Naraga, which fell like

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called Jagattuṅga) for having 'fettered the people of Kerela and Malwā and Gauḍa, and together with the Gurjaras, those who dwelt in the hill fort of Citrakūṭa...' (*EI*, vol. VI, pp. 102-103, ll. 6-7). The Karhad Plates of Kṛṣṇa-III (959 AD) say, "He who spoke pleasant words, who terrified the Gurjara..." (*EI*, vol. IV, p. 283, l. 22).The same plates further say that on hearing the conquest of all the strongholds in the southern region simple by means of angry glance, the hope about Kālañjara and Citrakūṭa vanished from the heart of the Gurjara (*Ibid.*, p. 284, l. 44). The Nesarika grant of Govinda-III (805 AD) also refers to the defeat of the Gurjara at his hands (*EI*, vol. XXXIV, p. 130, l. 24). In a later set of verses, he is said to have deprived fourteen kings of their royal insignia one of whom was the Gurjara (Infra).

a thunderbolt, Mahīpāla fled in consternation, not stopping to eat or sleep or rest".[2] The identity of Mahīpāla as Gūrjjararāja is clear in the passage.

With reference to the question under consideration, early Muslim writers also provide valuable information. Among the important kingdoms of India they mention *inter-alia* Balaharā, Juzr or Jurz, and Ruhmi or Rahma (synonymous with Dhm [read Dhaum] or Dharma which term, initially used for Dharmapāla, later came to denote, in general, a Pāla ruler), which have been taken to mean Vallabha (the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king), Gurjara and the Pāla ruler of eastern India respectively. The earliest of these writers, merchant Sulaimān, who is known to have written in around the middle of the ninth century, mentions Balaharā as the most eminent [of the] princes of India whose superiority was widely acknowledged.[3] About Jurz, Sulaimān says that he was at war with Balaharā, had numerous forces and was inimical to the Arabs.[4] Abū Zaidu-l Hasan of Sirāf, who made additions to the work of Sulaimān, provides us with more concrete evidence of the identity of Jurz. While making observation on various social and occupational groups, he refers to 'Kanauj, a large country forming the empire of Jurz'.[5]

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[2] *ACHI*, p. 380.

[3] *HIED*, vol. I, p. 3; *ACAIC*, p. 42.

[4] *HIED*, vol. I, p. 4; *ACAIC*, p. 43.

[5] *HIED*, vol. I, p. 10.

Al-Ma'sūdī (d. 956 AD)[6], another prominent early Muslim writer, is said to have visited Multan and Manshura in 912 AD and Cambay in 916.[7] He must have written his account in around this time. With regard to Rahma, he says that his dominions border on those of the king of Jurz on one side and those of the Balaharā on the other with both of whom he was at war.[8] Ibn Khurdādhbih also refers to the king of Al-Jurz as amongst the prominent kings of India.[9]

It is only in the later inscriptions of some of the local rulers belonging perhaps to the collateral lines of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj that we first come across the projection/self projection of the Gurjara identity. Mathanadeva, a ruler of the Alwar area of Rajasthan, in his Rajor inscription of 959-60 AD claims to have belonged to the Gurjara-Pratīhāra lineage.[10] Besides this, the Kadwaha fragmentary inscription,[11] which documents the achievements of the line of sages belonging to Śaivism, refers, in the context of the grant of some villages, to the paramount king Harirāja who belonged to the Pratīhāra family (*prasūtirgotraṁ pratihāramahīśvarāṇāṁ*) and who was the ferocious Gūrjjara (*garjjad-*

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[7] *DNHI*, p. 578, fn. 1.

[8] *HIED*, p. 22.

[9] *ACAIC*, p. 3.

[10] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, l. 4; *ggurjjara-pratihārānvayaḥ*.

[11] *EI*, vol. XXXVII, p. 117-124. The inscription bears no date but Harirāja is known from Bharat Kala Bhavan Plates (VS 1040 = 983 AD) and the Thauban inscription (VS 1055 = 998 AD).

gūrjjara-meghacaṇḍa).[12] Because of the fragmentary nature of the inscription, it is not quite clear whether it was issued by the ascetic or the king. In any case these references also highlight that at local levels and in areas which were traditionally associated with the Gurjaras, the Pratīhāras were not wary of projection of their tribal antecedents. In fact, it might have worked towards consolidation of their authority.

There was thus an attempt, seemingly conscious, made by the Pratīhāras of Kanauj to distance themselves from their Gurjara identity. More importantly, perhaps this very identity was repeatedly referred to in the inscriptions of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. A tribal background, in its pure form, would not have been in line with the idea of kingship at least in normative terms. It is also quite evident in the Sanjan copper plate of Amoghavarṣa dated 871 AD. It says about Dāntidurga that he made the Gurjara lord and others, doorkeepers when *hiraṇyagarbha* was being performed by the *rājanyas* at Ujjayini. While the reference has been used extensively to argue for Ujjain as the original home of the Pratīhāras, an important pun intended in the dichotomy between the Gurjara lord as a *pratiharī* and the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king as a *rājanya* has largely gone unnoticed. The reference is symptomatic of complete denial on the part of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas to acknowledge the royal status of the Pratīhāras, in consonance with Brahmanical norms, even in the later years of Bhoja's rule. Concomitant with this distancing was a concerted effort perhaps during the later years of Nāgabhaṭa's reign,

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 124, ll. 21-22.

but certainly under Bhoja, towards devising strategic paradigms for legitimizing the royal status. We begin by discussing the origin myth.

The Origin Myth

The Pratīhāras of Kanauj began as one of the collateral lines of the Pratīhāra clan of the Gurjara tribe, in all probability, from areas around Jodhpur. Under Vatsarāja and Nāgabhaṭa-II they became one of the most prominent ruling houses of north India and under Mihira Bhoja, territorially the dominions reached limits, hitherto untouched. With the growth of the state, needs for legitimation and political validation were also growing.

The first attempt in any Pratīhāra inscription to claim descent from the solar lineage comes from the undated Gwalior *praśasti* of Bhoja.[13] Unfortunately we have no *praśasti* like inscription from the time of Nāgabhaṭa which would have certainly added to our understanding of the evolution of such paradigms by the Pratīhāra rulers. The Gwalior *praśasti* in some details describes the emergence of sun by the enemy of demons, Viṣṇu, followed by 'a line of kings such as Manu, Ikṣavāku, Kakustha and the Mūla-Pṛthu (son of Veṇa)'.[14] The next verse says as to how Viṣṇu took birth in the family as Rāma and successfully fought with demons led by Rāvaṇa. This is followed by a praise for Rāma's younger brother Saumitri (Lakṣamaṇa) 'who served as the door-keeper of Rāma owing

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[13] *EI*, vol. XVIII, pp. 100-114

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 107, ll. 1-2.

to his commandment not to allow others to enter'.[15] It was in this family that *deva* Nāgabhaṭa appeared as the primeval sage.[16]

Most scholars, based on the third verse of the Gwalior *praśasti*, have argued that the Pratīhāras of Kanauj traced descent from the family of Lakṣamaṇa, the younger brother of Rāma.[17] It is important to note that the term used to connect the solar lineage to the family of Nāgabhaṭa is *tad-vaṁśe* (in that family)[18] and there is nothing to show an explicit connection with Lakṣamaṇa. We believe Lakṣamaṇa as a *pratihāra* of his brother Rāma was used more as a symbol taken from the *Rāmāyaṇa* to link the Pratīhāra identity to that of the family of Rāma. We do not know as to when the Pratīhāra identity of the Gurjaras came to the fore. The present inscription, the inscriptions of Kakkuka and Bāuka of the Mandor line of the Pratīhāras as also the Sanjan plates of Amoghavarṣa provide us the earliest references to Pratīhāra identity, either directly or as a metaphor in relation to the Gurjaras, and more importantly all these records are contemporaneous with the reign of Bhoja.[19] How this Pratīhāra identity came to be associated with the Gurjara families of Rajasthan—as a clan rubric or as an administrative epithet—we may

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[15] *Ibid.*, ll. 2-3.

[16] *Ibid.*, l. 3.

[17] Puri, 1975, p. 34; *ACHI*, p. 614.

[18] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 107, l. 3.

[19] The Jodhpur, the Ghatiyala and the Sanjan inscriptions are dated respectively in 837 AD, 861 AD and 871 AD.

not be able to know with the present state of our knowledge, but for sure this identity was being used by the Pratīhāras of Kanauj and likewise by the Pratīhāras of Mandor for asserting their mandate to rule in a manner that was congruous to their political status.[20] The intention in these claims was to connect one's family to the solar lineage and not to Lakṣamaṇa who was invoked perhaps only to give meaning to the isthmus that was being used to establish the link. There is not a single reference in the inscription of comparisons made of the rulers of the dynasty with Lakṣamaṇa even when Rāma and Sūrya are invoked repeatedly. The point may be elaborated by following references:

- Vatsarāja is said to have resembled the sun in prowess.[21]

- He is further addressed as 'the foremost among the most distinguished kṣatriyas', who 'stamped the noble race of Ikṣavāku with his own name by virtue of his blameless conduct'.[22]

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[20] It seems ruling lineages used certain symbols to explain their exalted ancestry. A comparable, though not similar, case has been argued by Nilakanta Sastri for the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. He writes, "In relatively late copper plate grants beginning from the Sanjan plates, the dynasty claims descent from the lineage (*vaṁśa*) of Yadu. In grants of the reign of Govinda-III, there occurs a verse, which states that the family of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas became proof against assaults of enemies after the birth of Govinda just like the Yādava *vaṁśa* after the birth of Kṛṣṇa (*Madhuripu*). The comparison was obviously suggested to a court poet by the name Govinda of the monarch whose *praśasti* he was composing, and about sixty years later it seems to have given rise to idea of connecting to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa line with the *Yaduvaṁśa*" (*ACHI*, p. 440-441). Such evidences demonstrate that while devising such ideological constructs, attempts were made to invoke such motifs, which could be related or associated with the dynasty and work as an identifier.

[21] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 108, l. 5; *sparddhibhāsvatpratāpaḥ.*

[22] *Ibid.,* l. 6.

* Rāmabhadra, son of Nāgabhaṭa, is equated with Rāma in verse 12 even when we know that he was not a prominent ruler of the dynasty and ruled for even less than three years.[23]

* Verse 15 says that Rāmabhadra obtained a son called Mihira, by the favour of the sun.[24]

* In verse 17, the *praśasti* writer wonders, on account of monumental achievements of Bhoja, 'whether he or Rāma stands foremost when Brahmā counts his own creations'.[25]

Drawing parallels with the rulers of the solar race, especially Rāma, would not only have provided them with a motif to legitimize their rule but would have also helped in moving away from their tribal identity towards kṣatriyahood.

As against this emphatic projection of connection with the solar lineage in the Gwalior *praśasti*, an earlier inscription of the time of Vatsarāja, dated in 795 AD and issued by his subordinate Gallaka, is completely silent on this rather important identifier of the Pratīhāras. It merely refers to a *rājā* named Nāgabhaṭa in whose family (*tasyānvaye*) was born his sovereign, *bhūpati* Vatsarāja.[26] This is clearly symptomatic of the fact that such motifs gained currency as the state started growing territorially. We

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[23] *Ibid.*, l. 8.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 108-109, l. 10.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 109, ll. 11-12.

[26] *EI*, vol. XLI, p. 55, ll. 3-5.

first hear of the origin myth under Bhoja but it may well be possible that such idioms started taking shape during Nāgabhaṭa-II's reign.

Bāuka, the scion of the Pratīhāra family of Mandor which to us seems to be a collateral line of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj, in his Jodhpur inscription also claimed descent from the solar lineage through a similar Pratīhāra motif as did the Pratīhāras of Kanauj.[27] But the similarities end here. While Bāuka, as also Kakkuka in his Ghatiyala inscriptions, claimed a brahma-kṣatra status,[28] the Pratīhāras of Kanauj very explicitly claimed a full kṣatriya status.[29]

But connection with the exalted Purāṇic lineage had to be projected through a much more visible medium than an occasional inscription. One such visible medium, which was also seen as an important identifier of the royal status of a dynasty, was the royal insignia. In the Nesarika grant of Govinda-III dated *Śaka* 727 = 805 AD[30], which would have coincided with either the later years of Vatsarāja's or early years of Nāgabhaṭa's

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[27] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 87 ff.

[28] *Ibid.*; *EI*, vol. IX, p. 277 ff. For an insightful discussion on claims to brahma-kṣatra status among subordinate Rajput lineages and its transitional nature see, Chattopadhyaya, 1994, p. 71.

[29] Linkage sought to the solar lineage by default evinces claim to kṣatriyahood. A more explicit claim though is discernible in the Gwalior *praśasti* wherein Vatsarāja has been described as 'the foremost amongst the most distinguished kṣatriyas' (*ekaḥ kṣatriya puṅgaveṣu ca*) and his son Nāgabhaṭa is said to have 'performed a series of religious ceremonies according to the customs of the kṣatriya families' (*yaḥ kṣattra dhāma vidhi vaddha vali pravandhaḥ*) (*EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 108, l. 6 and 7).

[30] *EI*, vol. XXXIV, pp. 123-134.

reign, verses 20 to 24 describe the carrying away of the *cihnas* (insignias), by Govinda, of

his enemies, numbering fourteen.[31] The twenty second verse refers to *'phalakam*

prativadhārya', the insignia of lord of the Gurjaras. P. L. Gupta, the editor of the

inscription considered the phrase to be faulty and emended it as *phalakam pratihāryam*,

meaning tablet (*phalaka*) having the figure of a door keeper (*pratihāra*).[32] D. C. Sircar, who

wrote a note on the inscription, considered such an emendation arbitrary. He reads the

phrase in question as *phalakaṁ pra(prā)tipa[d]-dhāryaṁ* and translates it as *phalaka* (board)

bearing the *pratipad* (kettle drum) and the *hārya* (snake).[33] Sircar seems to be correct as

the term has a logical meaning and so a rather forced emendation would be quite

unwarranted. The reference is a clear testimony to the fact that in at least the early years

of the ninth century, the Pratīhāras were using kettledrum and snake (the latter perhaps

derived from the name Nāgabhaṭa) as their royal insignia. By the time of Bhoja, as a

result of the concerted effort on the part of the Pratīhāras to highlight their credentials

by being associated with the solar race, a change was carried out. Verse four of the

Gwalior *praśasti* presents the Pratīhāra family as *'Pratihāra-ketana-bhrita'*, i.e. having the

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[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132, ll. 35-40; *gūrya(ja)reśvarā[t] tpha(pha)laka(kaṁ) prativadhārya.*

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

banner bearing the figure of the *Pratihāra*, probably Lakṣamaṇa, as the door keeper of Rāma.[34]

Association with the solar lineage seems to have gained wider currency by the time we enter the reign of Mahendrapāla-I and in subsequent phases of the Pratīhāra rule. As late as in 956 AD we find a testimony to this in an inscription at Osian found engraved at the famous Mahāvīra temple.[35] The inscription records the construction of a *'jinadeva dhāma'* (perhaps a Jaina temple) by a devotee Jindaka whose father (name lost), also a follower of Jainism, had earlier constructed a *maṇḍapa* (porch), in all probability, in the Mahāvīra temple. The inscription refers to Vatsarāja as a scion of the *Pratīhāravaṁśa* as 'Lakṣamaṇa stood as a Pratīhāra for his brother Rāma out of love and affection'. From him came the *Pratīhāravaṁśa* which was originated or caused to be originated by Rāma.[36] Significantly the inscription was meant to be a record of personal donation, and that by a Jaina devotee. It thus seems to be a reflection of the general currency that the motif had gained by the tenth century. Also important is the fact that no such motif is discernible in the Gallaka's inscription of the time of Vatsarāja issued in 795 AD.

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[34] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 107, l. 3.

[35] The inscription was noted briefly in *JRAS*, 1907, p. 1010. For complete text, see Handa, 1984, pp. 216-218.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 216; *tasyākārṣitkilapremnā lakṣmaṇaḥ pratihāratām tatobhavat pratihāravaṁśo rāma samudbhavaḥ.* Interestingly even in such popular unofficial records while the descent is claimed from Lakṣamaṇa, emphasis on association with Rāma is unmistakable.

The Pratīhāra connection with the *Raghukula* is particularly significant in the works of

Rājaśekhara. His dramas, which were written in both Prakrit and Sanskrit and were

performed in front of wide ranging audience, would have surely helped in the

dissemination of the motif. One has to understand that in the works of Rājaśekhara,

quite evidently, instead of the Pratīhāra identity, it is the association with the *Raghukula*

that has been emphasized, something that we find in some of the later inscriptions of the

erstwhile subordinates. This is a subtle but significant shift in relation with the origin

myth of the Pratīhāras. In the *Karpūramañjarī*, Mahendrapāla, introduced as a disciple of

Rājaśekhara, is addressed as 'the crest-jewel of the *Raghukula*'.[37] In the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*,

he is referred to as *Raghukulatilaka*, a distinguished personage of the *Raghukula*,[38] while in

the *Bālarāmāyaṇam*, he is addressed as *Raghukulaikatilaka*, the only distinguished

personage of the *Raghukula*, a step further.[39] Rājaśekhara also received patronage from

Mahīpāla during whose reign he is believed to have written the incomplete

Bālabhāratam. In this work Mahīpāla has been addressed as 'a pearl of *Raghuvaṁśa*' and

'son of *Nirbhayarāja*, the *Mahārāja* of *Āryāvarta*'.[40] The text further eulogizes

Mahendrapāla, a disciple of Rājaśekhara, as foremost or best among those belonging to

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[37] *Karpūramañjarī* (ed. and tr. Konow and Lanman), I.5; *rahu-ula cūḍāmaṇiṇo mahindavālassa*.

[38] *Viddhaśālabhañjikā* (tr. Tripathi), I. 6.

[39] *Bālarāmāyaṇam* (tr. Rai), p. 33.

[40] *Bālabhāratam* (tr. Rai), p. 6.

the *Raghuvaṁśa*.[41] Interestingly in the play, just before the *Sūtradhāra* introduces the king

Mahīpāla and presents a rather exaggerated account of his military achievements, he

looks at the 'knowledgeable audience of Mahodaya' and with folded hands enumerates

the six signs of the *Raghuvaṁśa*—the *sūkti* (by Vālmīki), Kubera's goblet for sport, Sītā's

crest jewel, single strand garland received from sage Agastya, couch made of the branch

of coral and the world renowned throne of *śrī* Rāma'.[42] (Translation mine)

This is the only instance in our knowledge where we come across the six signs or

markers of *Raghuvaṁśa* and if the stated verse was anything beyond the literary genius

of Rājaśekhara then it would perhaps point to attempts made towards popularization

the idea of kingship and its connection with the family of Raghu by creating certain

markers which could gain general acceptance among people. Perhaps Buddhism

provides us with one of the most prominent example of how symbols or signs could

play an instrumental role in popularizing an idea or a faith. Motifs drawn from stories

like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and association with *Raghuvaṁśa* would have provided an

appropriate medium to cater to the needs of legitimacy and political validation.

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[41] *Ibid.*, I. 11; *devo yasya mahendrapālanṛpatiḥ śiṣyo raghugrāmaṇiḥ.*

[42] *Ibid.*, I. 6. It may be pertinent here to reproduce the verse in original:

sā sūktirnidhināthakelicaṣakaṁ veṇīvibhuṣāmaṇiḥ/sītāyāḥ sa ca kumbhasambhavamuneḥ prāptā ca saikāvalī,
paryaṅkaḥ sa ca vidrumadrumamayastadrāmasiṁhāsanamcihnaṁ/ yasya yaśonidhirvijayatāṁ so'yaṁ raghoranvayaḥ.

In fact Rājaśekhara seems to have been quite fond of enumerating markers. At another place he refers to
seven signs of a *cakravartī* ruler. Association of markers or signs with anything would have not only
provided it an exalted position but would have also made it special and coveted.

There are at least two inscriptional evidences to show that the *Raghuvaṁśa* motif had gained wide currency among the subordinate or erstwhile subordinate rulers. The Harṣa inscription of Cāhamāna Vigraharāja,[43] son of Siṁharāja and dated in 970 AD, mentions in connection with Siṁharāja that 'having subdued Salavaṇa, the Tomara leader, he (Siṁharāja) captured and put to flight the princes that had gathered under former's generalship and these captured princes were kept in the prison till his sovereign who belonged to the family of Raghu, did not come to his house personally to liberate them'.[44] Significantly the tenor of the inscription clearly shows that Siṁharāja was practically an independent ruler who only nominally acknowledged the authority of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj but his son, who seems to have completely abjured the overlordship of the Pratīhāras in his inscription, addressed his father's sovereign as belonging to the family of Raghu. The second reference is even more important, for it clearly demonstrates as to how deeply entrenched the imagery had become. Amoda plates of the Cedi king Pṛthvideva-I, dated 1079 AD, while eulogising the military achievements of the first Caidya ruler Kokkala says that he erected, on earth, a pillar of victory after forcibly dispossessing the kings of Karṇāṭa and Vaṅga, the lord of the Gurjaras, the ruler of Konkaṇa, the lord of Śākambharī, the Turuṣka and descendants of

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[43] *IA*, vol. XLII, pp. 57-64.

[44] *Ibid.* p. 62, l. 17.

Raghu, of their treasures, horses and elephants.[45] From the nature of evidence available it seems the connotation 'descendants of Raghu' could be used for none but the Pratīhāras of Kanauj and that, fifty years after the last known local ruler, Yaśahpāla. It is unlikely that the reference to the lord of the Gurjaras was meant for the Pratīhāras. Possibly it was used for the Caulukyas of Gujarat who were, by this time, a powerful ruling house along with other contemporary powers mentioned in the inscription but interestingly were nowhere in the scene in the later half of the ninth century when Kokkala is believed to have ruled!

It seems as the territories of the Pratīhāras started growing from around the time of Nāgabhaṭa and Bhoja, attempts were started to be made to claim descent from one of the popular Purāṇic lineages. The Pratīhāra identity seems to have provided the motif for connection with the solar line through Lakṣamaṇa by appropriating a popular story from the *Rāmāyaṇa* according to which Lakṣamaṇa functioned as a *pratihāra* to his elder brother Rāma. The motif then seems to have been imitated by other local ruling lineages along with brahma-kṣatra status.[46] Gradually the idea of descent from the solar lineage seems to have gained popularity, and by the turn of the ninth century, Pratīhāra rulers

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[45] *CII*, vol. IV, pp. 404-405, ll. 6-7.

[46] Admittedly, we cannot be sure whether Bauka in his Jodhpur inscription was actually imitating the Pratīhāras of Kanauj. His inscription dated in 837 AD coincided with very early days of Bhoja's rule, whose Gwalior *praśasti* is undated. The possibility that the local Pratīhāras pre-empted the more powerful Kanauj line thus cannot be precluded.

like Mahendrapāla and Mahīpāla were addressed as kings, not of the Pratīhāra *vaṁśa* or *anvaya*, but of *Raghukula*, a more conspicuous and categorical connection with the solar dynasty. The motif seems to have gained greater currency through popular dramas written in the period and if one goes by the example of the *Karpūramañjarī* then some of these were composed in more widely spoken and popular Prakrit.

The Royal Image: Claimed and Given

A major impetus in recent writings on ideology has been to conceptualize the nature of genealogies in *praśastis* which were seen as providing a historical basis of political validation. Usually the eponymous ruler was seen as a link between the mythic personages and those historical. Through the antiquity of the dynasty, betrayed by genuine or concocted genealogies, on one hand a legitimate claim for right to rule was advanced, and a rather inflated assortment of achievements was articulated to justify the kṣatriya status on the other.[47] The Pratīhāras did not project a detailed genealogy; the dynasty instead used its clan name to relate to the solar race. The available relevant references always begin from Nāgabhaṭa-I who was the earliest known ruler of the dynasty and a historical personage. The Gwalior *praśasti* of Bhoja remains the only record issued by any Pratīhāra ruler which throws light on the way the military achievements and other kinds of images of the royalty were being projected or were sought to be projected. The land grants issued by the Pratīhāras, as we shall see later,

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[47] Thapar, 1978, pp. 286-316.

were standardized and were being used to portray probably a different imagery. A prominent theme in the inscriptions was to highlight the victories over other contemporary powers which might or might not have comprised of actual feats. While in the *praśasti*, the military aspect of ruler's mien is dominant, some other nuances of their personality have also been portrayed. Nāgabhaṭa's nephew Kakustha is attributed with the strange habit of 'saying welcome things in an inverted manner' and so this 'paramount king was popular in the world as Kakkuka'.[48] Vatsarāja is said to be passionate towards the whole world that 'he had subdued' and his riches are also stated to be 'highly fragrant by reason of flavour of wine of elephant ichors, and shining in the company of the needy, appeared exceedingly beautiful'.[49] Nāgabhaṭa-II is said to have gained eminence by defeating Cakrāyudha even when remained humble through modesty.[50] About Mihira Bhoja, the inscription says that he was 'famous unperturbed, adept in removing the evils of the world, embraced by Lakshmī (sovereign power), but not spoiled by the stain of arrogance, and was affectionate towards the meritorious and an asylum of good and pleasant words'.[51]

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[48] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 107, l. 4.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 108, l. 5.

[50] *Ibid.*, l. 7.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 109, ll. 11-12.

A similar imagery was also portrayed in the inscriptions of their subordinates. The Gallaka's inscription of 795 AD, which was meant to be a *praśasti* of his own family, briefly eulogises the family of his overlord Vatsarāja.[52] Even in this case the emphasis is on military aspect. It has to be noted that this inscription was primarily a *praśasti* of Gallaka's family and the eulogy of the Pratīhāras is only marginal. The subordinate family also claims to have belonged to a royal family but still highlighted the element of affection and servility towards the sovereign instead of a more formal relation.

Except perhaps for the *biruda Ādivarāha*, there was no concerted effort on the part of the Pratīhāras to portray themselves as divine incarnate or as temporal custodians through a legitimate divine sanction. In the Gwalior *praśasti*, Bhoja has been compared with Kumāra (Kārttikeya) but that in a specific context where the king, like Kumāra, is said to have subdued the Asuras (perhaps a reference to the Arabs) with the help of a band of women that lived upon arms.[53] The Nohna-Narasingh inscription of the time of Bhoja records the construction of perhaps a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu, by one Śubhāditya, who claims to be an expert in imparting instructions to kings (*kṣitip-opadeśa-gurū*), or by his wife. Line three of the inscription which introduces Bhoja, likens him with Madhujit, a name for Viṣṇu (*vedhas-īva śrī bhoja de...*).[54]

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[52] *EI*, vol. XLI, pp. 49-57.

[53] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 109, ll. 14-15.

[54] *Śvasti Śrī*, Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra Felicitation Volume, 1984, p. 85, l. 3.

Another important constituent of the royal imagery was the use of honorific titles. These titles have been looked at in terms of the ways through which increasing political hierarchization in the early medieval period could be accomodated both in official records as well as in practice. Ideologically though these titles were a marker of the sovereign status of the monarch which conveyed the sense of power, authority and awe. Both the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, in their copper plate grants, used the most prominent contemporary title *parmabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parameśvara*. The case of the Pratīhāras was quite intriguing. Their copper plate grants did not contain a long *praśasti* like eulogy but a simple genealogy. The following table attempts to make a separation between the sovereign titles in the Pratīhāra records and those of their subordinates. This would help us analyze the pattern, if any, that emerges.

Table 6: Depiction of Royal Titles in the Pratīhāra Inscriptions

Royal Titles in the Pratīhāra Inscriptions	*Royal Titles in the inscriptions of their Subordinates, officials and other Records*
Badhal Copper Plate of Nāgabhaṭa-II (815 AD) *Paramavaiṣṇavo Mahārāja śrī* Devarājadeva; *Paramamāheśvaro Mahārāja śrī* Vatsarājadeva; *Paramabhagavatībhakto Mahārāja śrī* Nāgabhaṭadeva[55]	The Gallaka's Inscription of 795 AD *Śrīmān* Nāgabhaṭa (Nāgabhaṭa-I) who is referred to as *rājā; śrī* Vatsarāja[56]

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[55] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, pp. 147-148, ll. 3-5.

[56] *EI*, vol. XLI, p. 55, ll. 3 and 5.

Royal Titles in the Pratīhāra Inscriptions	*Royal Titles in the inscriptions of their Subordinates, officials and other Records*
Surapura C. P. (827 AD) Same as above except that Devarājadeva is mentioned as Devaśaktideva[57]	**Buchkala Inscription (815 AD)** *Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara śrī Vatsarājadeva; Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara (PMP) śrī* Nāgabhaṭadeva[58]
Sambhal C. P. (828 AD) Same as above[59]	**Deogarh Pillar Inscription (862 AD)** *PMP śrī* Bhojadeva[60]
Barah C. P. (836) Same as above up to Nāgabhaṭa-II; *Paramāditya Bhakto Mahārāja śrī* Rāmabhadradeva; *Paramabhagavatī Bhakto Mahārāja śrī* Bhojadeva; in the later portion of the inscription both Nāgabhaṭa and Rāmabhadra are addressed as *Mahārāja*[61]	**Ahar Stone Inscription-Record 1 (865 AD)** *PMP śrī* Rāmabhadradeva; *PMP śrī* Bhojadeva[62]
Badhal C. P. of Bhoja (841 AD) Same as above[63]	**Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin Temple Inscription at Gwalior-1 (975)** *Śrī* Rāmadeva; *śrī Ādivarāha*[64] **Inscription-2 (976)** *Śrī Gopagirau Svāmini Parameśvara śrī* Bhojadeva[65]

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[57] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, p. 200, ll. 1-4.

[58] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 199-200, ll. 3-7.

[59] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, p. 107, pp. 1-5.

[60] *EI*, vol. IV, p. 310, ll. 1-2.

[61] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 17-18, ll. 1-6.

[62] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 58, l. 1.

[63] Mishra, 1990, pp. 47-50.

[64] *EI*, vol. I, p. 156, ll. 2 and 6.

Royal Titles in the Pratīhāra Inscriptions	*Royal Titles in the inscriptions of their Subordinates, officials and other Records*
Daulatpura C. P. (843 AD) Same as above[66]	The Garibanatha Temple Inscription at Pehowa (872) PMP *śrī* Rāmabhadradeva; PMP *śrī* Bhojadeva[67]
Jiragaur C. P. (862 AD) Same as above[68]	Sirsa Stone Inscription (No Date) *śrī* Bhojadeva[69]
Gwalior *Praśasti* of Bhoja (Undated) No title used	Barton Museum Inscription (No Date) [*Va*]*rāha* or [*Ādiva*]*rāha*[70]
Nohna-Narasingh Inscrption (Undated) *śrī* Bhojadeva[71]	Jhinjhauta Inscription (Undated) *Bhojadevasya Rājñaḥ*[72]
Dighwa Dubauli C. P. (898 AD) Same as other earlier copper plate grants up to Bhoja; *Paramabhagavatī Bhakto Mahārāja śrī* Mahendrapāladeva[73]	Una grant of Balavarman (893 AD) PMP *śrī* Bhojadeva; PMP *śrī* Mahendrāyudha[74]

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 159, ll. 1-2.

[66] *EI*, vol. V, p. 211, ll. 1-6

[67] *EI*, vol. I, p. 186, l. 1.

[68] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 13, p. 176, ll. 1-6.

[69] Phogat, 1978 p. 28, verse, 12.

[70] *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 176, l. 11.

[71] Śvasti Śrī, Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra Felicitation Volume, 1984, p. 85, l. 3.

[72] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 1, p. 2, verse 3.

[73] *IA*, vol. XV, p. 112, ll. 1-7.

[74] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 4-5, ll. 1-3.

Royal Titles in the Pratthāra Inscriptions	Royal Titles in the inscriptions of their Subordinates, officials and other Records
Asni Inscription (917 AD)	**Una Plates of Avanivarman (898 AD)**
PMP śrī Mahiṣa[endra]pāladeva; *PMP śrī* Mahīpāladeva[75]	*PMP śrī* Bhojadeva; *PMP śrī* Mahendrapāladeva[76]
Bengal Asiatic C. P. (931 AD)	**Wadhwan Grant of Dharaṇīvarāha (917)**
Same as in earlier copper plate grants up to Mahendrapāla; *Paramavaiṣṇavo Mahārāja śrī* Bhojadeva (Bhoja-II); *Paramāditya Bhakto śrī* Vināyakapāladeva (Brother of Bhoja-II)[77]	*Rājādhirāja Parameśvara śrī* Mahīpāladeva[78]
Pratabgarh Grants-Record 1 (946 AD)	**Garh Stone Inscription (921 AD)**
Same as in the earlier copper plate grants up to Mahendrapāla; *Paramāditya Bhakto śrī* Vināyakapāladeva; *Paramamāheśvaro Mahārāja śrī* Mahendrapāladeva[79]	*Mahīpāladeva Sāmanta Cakra-Vihit-Ādara-Pāda-Sevaḥ*[80]
Jhusi Grant (1028 AD)	**Rajor Inscription of Mathanadeva (959 AD)**
PMP śrī Vijayapāladeva; *PMP śrī* Rajyapāladeva; *PMP śrīmat* Trilocanapāladeva[81]	*PMP śrī* Kṣitipāladeva; *PMP śrī* Vijayapāladeva[82]

[75] *IA*, vol. XVI, p. 174, ll. 1-4.

[76] *EI*, vol. IX, p. 9, ll. 50-51.

[77] *IA*, vol. XV, pp. 140-141, ll. 1-9.

[78] *IA*, vol. XII, p. 193, ll. 4-5.

[79] *EI*, vol. XIV, p. 183, ll. 5-9.

[80] *EI*, vol. XXXIX, p. 194, l.3.

[81] *IA*, vol. XVIII, p. 34, ll. 1-3.

[82] *EI*, vol. III, p. 266, ll. 1-2.

Royal Titles in the Pratīhāra Inscriptions	*Royal Titles in the inscriptions of their Subordinates, officials and other Records*
Kara Stone Inscription (1036 AD) *Mahārājādhirāja Śrī* Yaśahpāladeva[83]	Sīyaḍonī Inscription-line 1 (904 AD) *PMP Śrī* Bhojadeva *PMP Śrī* Mahendrapāladeva[84] Line 4 (907 AD) *PMP Śrī* Bhojadeva; *PMP Śrī* Mahendrapāladeva[85] Line 28 (948 AD) *PMP Śrī* Kṣitipāladeva; *PMP Śrī* Devapāladeva[86] Bayana (956 AD) *Mahārājādhirāja Śrī* Mahīpāladeva[87]

Clearly, there is a dichotomy in the ways, that the Pratīhāras tried to project themselves in their copper plate grants, and their subordinates tried to project them in their inscriptions. As regards the former, all the Pratīhāra rulers, except for the last two, adhered to a standard pattern of their composition. More importantly, each one of them, by showing his devotion to a specific Brahmanical deity, tried to emphasize his complete loyalty to the Brahmanical faith. In addition, they preferred to underline the religious aspect ignoring the more prevalent military or political aspects. It is difficult to ascertain the possible reasons for this. The earliest known example of this standardized format

[83] Ghosh, N. N., 1985, p. 100, l. 4-5.

[84] *EI*, vol. I, p. 193, l. 1.

[85] *Ibid.*, l. 4.

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 177, l. 28.

[87] *EI*, vol. XXII, p. 124, l. 23.

comes from the time of Nāgabhaṭa-II, during whose reign the Pratīhāra power came to occupy the traditionally Brahmanical Ganga valley region. Perhaps Nāgabhaṭa made an attempt in his copper plate grants to emphasize the element of his devotion and that of his predecessors to a specific Brahmanical deity so as to obviate the adverse political impact of his tribal antecedents and rather close association with Jainism. Successive Pratīhāra rulers then adopted the format as a tradition. The practice was quite unique in the context of their times. Besides the land grant inscriptions, in other royal epigraphs the Pratīhāras used full imperial titles as indicated by the Asni inscription of Mahīpāla, which recorded the gift, in cash, by the sovereign on specific occasions to the temple of Yogasvāmin at Asni. The last two Pratīhāra rulers, Trilocanapāla and Yaśaḥpāla, in their land grant inscription used conventional *PMP* titles but by the time they were ruling, the Pratīhāra sovereignty, largely owing to Mehmūd's invasions, had shrunk to the Allahabad-Varanasi area, and the traditions of the erstwhile Pratīhāra sovereignty seem to have had no meaning now.

The undated Gwalior inscription of the time of Bhoja is the only *praśasti* of the Pratīhāras known till date. What is interesting here is that none of the rulers mentioned in the inscription is appended with any royal title, which is quite unusual for an early medieval *praśasti*. It is stated to have been composed by Bālāditya who was the son of *bhaṭṭa* Dhanneka. The Jhinjhauta inscription found near Kapil Nagar records the construction of a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu by the same Bālāditya who seems to have

composed this inscription also. In this record, his father's name is mentioned as Dhānyapāla. Verse 27 of the Gwalior *praśasti* and verses 3 and 4 of the Jhinjhauta inscription are exactly same for most part, both of which refer to Bhojadeva, as the protector of the world. There is another reference perhaps to the same Bālāditya in the Barah copper plate grant of Bhoja-I (836 AD), where he is referred to as the son of Rājyabhaṭṭārikā and as the *dūtaka* of the record. The responsibility of being a *dūtaka* was generally assigned to the Yuvarāja. If, for any reason, (taking into account the time span of Bhoja's rule, it seems he ascended the throne at a relatively young age) Bālāditya was entrusted with this job by Bhoja, then it would point towards very close and cordial relations between the two, the exact nature of which is difficult to ascertain. The possibility, that he was an elder contemporary, advisor and preceptor (with strong Vaiṣṇavite leanings) of Bhoja, cannot be discounted.

A perusal of the inscriptions of the subordinates referring to the Pratīhāra sovereign shows that all official records—the land grants of subordinates (Una, Wadhwan, Hansot and Rajor C. P. grants); records of donation by mercantile groups through official channel (Sīyaḍoṇī); engraving, by official orders, of land or property transactions in a market area (Ahar); and official sanction to arrangement of diversion of taxes to temples (Pehowa)—carried the name of the reigning monarch and his predecessor with full sovereign titles. Inscriptions recording acts of temple construction and/or other donations in personal capacity, even by officials, even when invoked the name of the

sovereign, did not always contain high-sounding titles. This is indicated by the Gallaka's inscription, the Nohna-Narasingh inscription, the Jhinjhauta inscription, the Alla's inscription of Gwalior (975 AD), the Sirsa stone inscription, the Barton Museum and the Garh stone inscriptions, which contained no honorific titles with the name of the sovereign. As against this, the Buchkala and the Deogarh inscriptions, which were acts of personal donations, still appended full imperial titles (*PMP*) with the name of the sovereign. In fact, use of titles in the inscriptions of subordinate rulers seems to have depended on many factors. First was the nature of relationship that the donor enjoyed with the sovereign. Both Bālāditya (of the Jhinjhauta inscription) and Śubhāditya (of the Nohna-Narasingh inscription) seemingly were respected personalities who shared a close personal relationship with Bhoja, perhaps as his advisors and preceptors. Second was the extent of actual political control of the sovereign over subordinates as in the case of the Pehowa *praśasti* of the Tomara brothers, which seems to have belonged to the reign of Mahendrapāla-II, who has been mentioned in the inscription without any imperial titles. Similarly, the Bayana inscription (Dated 956 AD) refers to Mahīpāla-II only as a *Mahārājādhirāja*. We know that by the middle of the tenth century when these two rulers are known to have ruled, the Pratīhāras were fast loosing their control over the outlying areas of the state. Third and perhaps, the most important factor was the nature of records themselves. Official records were formal documents, which contained the names of subordinates also. This rendered it important, for the purpose of official hierarchy, that appropriate titles be used. Moreover, more often than not, these records

were supposed to be adhered to a standard pattern. As against this, records of personal acts of temple construction of donation were more like poetic *praśastis*, which were composed with the sole purpose of glorifying the family of donor. In these, the concern for proper and correct metres would have been much greater than the use of appropriate titles. It is perhaps this distinction that would explain the divergence, relating to the use of royal titles, in such temporally-spatially contiguous inscriptions as the Rajor and the Bayana.

In any case, need for political validation would have necessitated portrayal of not just the kind of imagery as discussed above but a more deeply entrenched association with popular ideas, which could buttress the question of legitimation. Towards this end, religion was always considered, by the monarchical powers in early India, a potent force and a perfect medium.

The Royalty and Religion

From very early stages of the emergence of monarchy in north India, the Brahmanical model seems to have provided substructure to the established political norm and, leading from that, the need for its validation. Formulation of Brahmanical literature, rituals of royal coronation and brāhmaṇas' claim to ritual superiority, all, in their own ways, functioned as instruments of religious legitimation of the political order.[88]

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[88] Roy, 1994, Chapter 1.

Notwithstanding inherent dynamism and tensions, which are discernible only through a more careful conspectus, the Brahmanical model remained, through the history of early India, perhaps the most potent agency to validate, affirm and reaffirm the power structure, both in social and political contexts on one hand, and to preserve and nurture the navel of this political universe, monarchy, on the other.[89] There is some credible evidence to show that while religious belief systems buttressed the need of legitimation of the political structures in early India, in most cases the political structure reciprocated in a manner that was neither parochial nor too sectarian. Therefore, basis of polity in early India remained rather safely ensconced within what may be referred to as the Brahmanical model or tradition.[90] With some exceptions, personal beliefs of monarchs were never a benchmark to assess the way they articulated with other systems. A close perusal of the sources would perhaps bring this out.

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[89] Sahu, 2001, pp. 3-18.

[90] Roy, 1994, pp. 20-22. Roy, at the same time, highlights 'the possibilities of developing alternative categories of perception' which through constant challenge led to 'a widening and to a certain extent shifting of the definition of the sacred' with a concomitant attempt to assert Brahmanical control over such definitions. The process was not just about 'simple incorporation of new rituals or institutions' but a much more complex process where 'such beliefs were adapted, modified and assigned a specific place within the entire scheme of affairs.' Roy further argues that 'to a certain extent, the dynamism evident within the Brahmanical tradition was a result of attempts to counter alternative traditions—either the practices of groups which were outside the sphere of the influence of the brāhmaṇas or of groups which were within this sphere but attempted, nonetheless, to break away from it' (p. 20).

Every dynasty has its own context of early growth, which also subsumes the ways through which it seeks legitimacy. Even when the Brahmanical model was seen as the most prominent mode of seeking political validation, the ways in which local ruling houses patronized certain sectarian affiliations have to be seen in their cultural and geographical contexts. For long the Ganga valley remained, with all undeniable contradictions and dialectics, the cradle of Brahmanical tradition. Almost all the post-Kuṣāṇa political formations in the region had germinated willy-nilly from this area itself. Even when the nature of political patronage transcended sectarian parochialism, legitimacy was sought largely through the Brahmanical model, which subsumed the Purāṇic tradition. The Pratīhāras provided the first major departure from this pattern. They originated, in all likelihood from a tribal background, in the outlying southern Rajasthan and only later shifted their base to Kanauj. One would wonder whether changing geographical contexts would have brought any change in the ways in which ideological paradigms were constructed. It is significant that areas of their early growth, Jalor and Bhinmal, were formidable Jaina centres while Kanauj was one of the most prominent centres of Brahmanical leanings.

Association of the early rulers of the dynasty with Jainism is unmistakable. Dasharatha Sharma has brought to notice an interesting piece of evidence regarding Nāgabhaṭa-I. He says that a medieval Jaina *Prabandha* within the *Purātana-Prabandha-Saṅgraha* (recension B) refers to Nāhaḍa (identified with Nāgabhaṭa-I), a soldier of

fortune who was the first ruler of his family. He is further stated to have made Jalor his

capital and came in conflict with a Muslim ruler whom he defeated. The *Prabandha* also

informs about his patronage to a Jaina sage Yakṣadeva (apparently, the *kṣamāśramaṇa*

Yakṣadatta Gaṇi mentioned in the *Kuvalayamālā*) and construction of a temple at

Jābālipura by him.[91] A more conspicuous Jaina connection of Vatsarāja may be found in

the inscription (dated VS 1013 = 956 AD) engraved in the Mahāvīra temple at Osian. It

refers to Ukeśa (Osian) as excellent and world-renowned whose brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas,

vaiśyas and śūdras were protected on all sides by Vatsarāja.[92] While there is no explicit

evidence to show that the temple was built by Vatsarāja, invocation of his name by a

Jaina devotee after almost 250 years is perhaps symptomatic of his cordial association

with the sect, which was among the most popular ones in south Rajasthan, not

necessarily as a follower but perhaps as a patron. Nāgabhaṭa-II, the next ruler seems to

have had a much deeper bonding with Jainism or perhaps the evidence to show this is

relatively clearer. The *Prabhāvakacarita* of Candraprabhāsūrī, a later Jaina work, informs

of the event of Nāgabhaṭa's death, which is dated in the text in VS 890 = 832-833 AD.[93]

The king himself has been addressed as Āma, a name used for Nāgabhaṭa in most of the

Jaina sources. It refers to the conversion of Āma to the Jaina doctrine by Bappā Bhaṭṭi,

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[91] Sharma, D., 1958, pp. 74-78.

[92] Handa, 1984, p. 216, ll. 8-9; *JRAS*, 1907, p. 1010.

[93] Puri, 1975, pp. 47-48.

his close confidante.[94] Another later Jaina text, *Prabandhakoṣa* of Rājaśekhara also associates Bappā Bhaṭṭi with Āma. It refers to king Āma, living at Gopālgirī, as the son and successor of Yaśovarman, and also as a contemporary of Dharma, the ruler of Gauḍa.[95] Bappā Bhaṭṭi was appointed by Āma as his Sūrī (Ācārya).[96] Even when both these texts have data and dates arranged in a rather anachronistic manner, *Prabandhakoṣa* does refer to Bhoja as Āma's grandson.[97] There is also a striking similarity in both these texts regarding death of Āma. The *Prabhāvakacarita* mentions that 'in the year 890, in the month of *bhādrapada, śukravāra, śuklapañcamī* in the *nakṣatra caitrā* in the *rāśi tulā*, king Nāgāvaloka gave up his life, while sailing across Ganga somewhere in the kingdom of Magadha, after worshipping *Pañcaparameṣṭi* (the five great ones) pinning his faith in Jina and his own *gurū* Bappā Bhaṭṭi.[98] The *Prabandhakoṣa* in its part says that 'Āma died following the rite of *aṇaśaṇa* in the VS 890 = 832-833 AD'.[99] The similarity of these two later Jaina texts, though historically garbled, would tend to indicate close association of Nāgabhaṭa with Jainism to the extent that he might have even extended a preferred

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[94] *Ibid.*

[95] Awasthi, 1992, p. 186.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 188. The appointment is stated by the text to have caused deep enragement to the brāhmaṇas who said, "Your Majesty sir, these are the śūdras, why this throne to them." (*Ibid.*)

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[98] Puri, 1975, p. 48.

[99] Awasthi, 1992, p. 187.

patronage to the sect. His initiation into Jainism just before his death is perhaps

indicative of construction of a tradition in posterity and is in fact symptomatic of the fact

the while Nāgabhaṭa patronized Jainism, probably under the influence of Bappā Bhaṭṭi,

he never formally joined the order.

Besides Jainism, the other popular cult of Rajasthan that found way into the

ideological strategies of the early Pratīhāras was the cult of Śakti. Seventh-Eighth

centuries saw beginning of the popular phase of Śakti worship in Rajasthan.[100] Most of

these were tribal goddesses who were subsumed later in the Brahmanical pantheon as

forms of Durgā. The copper plate grants of the Pratīhāras contain figure of a goddess

attached to the seal.[101] Iconographic details reveal that this goddess was Kṣemaṅkarī, a

form of Durgā or Bhagavatī. She is depicted on Pratīhāra seals as standing in a

samabhaṅga posture on a lotus and carries a bell (*ghaṇṭā*) and a trident (*triśūla*) in upper

left and right hands, and a water vessel (*kamaṇḍalu*) and a rosary (*akṣamālā*) (with hand

in *abhayamudra*) in the lower left and right hands respectively. Her hair, tied in matted

locks, contain ornamental fillets. Two crouching lions, with mouth opened, are depicted

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[100] Sharma, N. K., 'Śakti Worship in Rajasthan', in Shankar Goyal, ed., *Rajasthan: From Prehistory to the Independence Era*, Jaipur, Book Enclave, 2004, pp. 97-104.

[101] The seal is forthcoming in the Badhal copper plate of Nāgabhaṭa, Daulatpura, Jiragaur and Badhal copper plates of Bhoja, Dighwa Dubauli copper plate of Mahendrapāla-I and the Bengal Asiatic Society's plate of Vināyakapāla.

flanking the goddess on either side.[102] These details are clear enough to identify the goddess as Kṣemaṅkarī. Significantly, the available evidence tends to show that this form of Durgā was rather confined to central and south Rajasthan, and was not quite known beyond these areas. The earliest likely reference to the goddess comes from an inscription dated 625 AD from Vasantgarh in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan.[103] The inscription stone was found lying outside the shrine of Khimel *mātā*, of which it originally formed a part. First verse of the inscription invokes blessings of Durgā and second, of Kṣemāryā Kṣemakarī.[104] It then goes on to record the construction of the temple of *mātā* by the *goṣṭhi* at Vaṭākarasthāna. This remains the only epigraphic reference to the goddess but some temples of Jodhpur and Udaipur areas dated to 9th-11th centuries have yielded images of this goddess. She has been depicted in the south left *karṇa* of the temple no. 1 at Osian,[105] in the west *bhadra* niche of the Dadhīmatimātā temple at Goth-Manglod,[106] in the west *bhadra*, in a seated posture, of what is now known as the Kṣemaṅkarī temple at Chittaurgarh[107] and in the principal back niche of

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[102] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, 1998-99, pp. 145-146. In the Jiragaur C. P. seal though, the goddess carries trident in the upper left hand. *Prāgdhārā*, no. 13, 2002-2003, p. 170.

[103] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 187-192.

[104] *Ibid.*, ll. 1-2.

[105] *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 160.

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[107] *Ibid.*, pp. 302-204, plate 688.

the Piplādmātā temple at Unwas near Udaipur.[108] Besides this, she is also known from

the Sacīyāmātā temple at Osian. Though the present temple belongs to the twelfth

century, confirmed by an inscription dated 1178, an eighth century shrine seems to have

preceded it. Dhaky suggests that an early eighth century image of Kṣemāṅkarī, lying in

the Sacīyāmātā complex could have been the original image of this temple.[109]

The importance given to the goddess by the Pratīhāras is reflected in her depiction on

the copper plate seals of all the grants issued by the Pratīhāras up to the time of

Vināyakapāla, most probably as a family deity (*kula-devī*). Its continued depiction was

perhaps facilitated by a general currency of almost all forms of Durgā through the

popular identity of Bhagavatī, which was known across regions. As many as three most

important rulers of the dynasty, Nāgabhaṭa-II, Mihira Bhoja and Mahendrapāla-I were

referred to in the copper plate grants of the dynasty as *paramabhagavatī bhaktaḥ*. Even

though the goddess was popularized as Bhagavatī, along with other forms of Durgā,

quite evidently, unlike the claim to. *Sūryavaṁśa*, which was certainly a later

development, Pratīhāra association with Kṣemāṅkarī was from the very early days of

the dynasty. Therefore, patronage to Jainism and association with Kṣemāṅkarī were the

two very important ideological identifiers of the Pratīhāras in their early growth at least

up to the time of Nāgabhaṭa-II. In addition, while inclination towards Jainism was

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[108] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, 1998-99, p. 146.

[109] *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 128.

driven more by the personal choice of the ruler, association with Kṣemaṅkarī was much more entrenched and immutable as a family deity, which is perhaps why it found expression through a substantial part of the life of the dynasty. She was also, as Bhagavatī, an inseparable part of the Purāṇic matrix.

Recent discoveries of some important grants of Nāgabhaṭa-II have provided us with some credible evidence to show that while the Pratīhāras were an important player in the political flux of the Ganga valley at least from the time of Vatsarāja, they seem to have shifted their base to Kanauj only under Nāgabhaṭa sometime in between 815 and 827 AD. We saw that at maximum stretch the dominions of Nāgabhaṭa extended from the present eastern U.P. to at least east, central and south Rajasthan. We have also argued in the last chapter based on the recent discoveries that Nāgabhaṭa as the first ruler of his dynasty in the Ganga valley made some endeavour towards looking afresh, the grants given to the brāhmaṇas by previous regimes. Quite possibly, he continued certain grants but resumed many others for which no deed or written document would have been prepared. We can not be very sure about whether his association with Jainism was a force behind such acts as the *Skanda Purāṇa* would make us believe but to us it seems quite unlikely since Nāgabhaṭa does not seem to have adopted the faith and was only a keen patron.

One of the most exhaustive of the early medieval Purāṇas, the *Skanda Purāṇa*, in the chapter on Dharmāraṇya,[110] makes detailed references to Āma, the ruler of Kanauj. According to the legend, Rāma is said to taken pilgrimage in Dharmāraṇya, along with Sītā and his brothers, and after having performed an excellent sacrifice at the city of Moheraka, gave extensive gifts to the brāhmaṇas. He also, at the behest of Sītā, established a city called Sītāpura. Fifty-five villages including Sītāpura were given to eighteen thousand brāhmaṇas and arrangements were made (by Rāma) for thirty six thousand vaiśyas and śūdras to attend to them.[111]

From *treta* until the end of *dvāpara* up to the advent of *kali*, Hanumāna is said to have protected the gifted holy place single-handed. The text further says that when the advent of the *kaliyuga* was *imminent but had not yet started*, there was a king named Āma, who *became* the ruler of Kānyakubja. He was *glorious, knower of dharma, calm, self-controlled, just, of good conduct and devoted to truth and piety.*[112] He was a *powerful and paramount ruler* devoted to protection of people. During *kali*, his subjects became inclined to committing sin under the influence of Kṣapaṇas, gave up their Vaiṣṇava cult, and adopted the Buddhist way of life.[113] Āma's daughter Ratnagaṅgā was secretly initiated

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[110] *Sk. Pu.*, III. ii.

[111] *Sk. Pu.*, III. ii. 35.

[112] *Sk. Pu.*, III. ii. 36. 12-13.

[113] *Sk. Pu.*, III. ii. 36. 34-38.

into the fold of Jainism by Indrasūrī, a Jaina mendicant. The *king of great exploits* (Āma)
gave his daughter in marriage to Kumbhipāla, and at the time of marriage also gave him
Dharmāraṇya along with the city of Moheraka. The son-in-law came to Dharmāraṇya
and established his capital there.[114] Under the influence of Jainism, he deprived the
brāhmaṇas of their legitimate possession given to them by Rāma. They came to the *brave*
king Āma, stationed in Kānyakubja, who was *surrounded by ascetics*. It was only after stay
of a few days that the king called the aggrieved brāhmaṇas to the court. He *did not*
respectfully receive them or bow in front of them. After he enquired about the matter,
the brāhmaṇas apprised him of the grant made to them by Rāma and said that the royal
charter issued by Rāmacandra was always honoured by other kings except his Son-in-
Law. Āma asked the brāhmaṇas to go to Kumārapāla and ask him, *at his behest*, to return
the settlements back to the brāhmaṇas.[115]

Kumārapāla, instead of abiding by the royal charter issued by Rāma, ridiculed the
brāhmaṇas and their sacrifices, and indulged in a polemical debate with them.[116] After a
lot of effort, the expelled brāhmaṇas were able to find Hanumāna, informed him of the
situation and exhorted him to *slay both Kumārapāla*, the perpetrator of sins *and Āma* as
well. Later on the grants are said to have been restored to the brāhmaṇas due to the

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[114] *Sk. Pu.,* III. ii. 36. 39-45.

[115] *Sk. Pu.,* III. ii. 36. 46-62.

[116] *Sk. Pu.,* III. ii. 36. 63-99.

supernatural powers of Hanumāna and people also reverted back to Viṣṇu *bhakti* from *pākhaṇḍa mārga*.[117] (Emphases added)

The legend is categorical about sectarian conflict in early medieval India between two of the relatively more popular sects, Vaiṣṇavism, intricately associated with Brahmanism, and Jainism. However, our focus is more on the aspect of political patronage to these sects. Anachronism notwithstanding, the text chose two rulers separated from each other by good four centuries as main antagonists primarily because of the common factor—their association with Jainism. Quite interestingly, though, while the admonishment for Kumārapāla is rather vehement and scathing, the attitude towards Āma is relatively ambivalent, as the emphasized portions would tend to show. It is important to note that the reference to Kumārapāla (also referred to in the legend as Kumārapālaka and Kumbhipāla), who was in all probability Kumārapāla Caulukya (1143 – 1172 AD), would suggest that the legend, if not the text as a whole, was composed after the last quarter of the twelfth or first quarter of the thirteenth century. A post thirteenth century composition narrating on a ninth century king would only reflect contemporary perceptions and beliefs, which may not be entirely true. A few points may be seen in relation to this legend. Its basic purpose was to show as to how, under the influence of Jainism, the political authority, represented here by Āma and Kumārapāla, was dishonouring the land grant charters given to the brāhmaṇas. The point, at least in

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[117] *Sk. Pu.*, III. ii. 37.

the context of Nāgabhaṭa, is corroborated at one level by a perusal of his charters, or rather their reconfirmation. Interestingly, Nāgabhaṭa has been projected in the legend as the first ruler of the Kali-age. This is perhaps only reflective of the later perceptions about Nāgabhaṭa, not just as the patron of Jaina faith but perhaps also as the first ruler who provided political patronage to the sect in the erstwhile Brahmanical stronghold. It is significant that the Dharmāraṇya legend is geographically associated with Mirzapur and Sitapur areas of Uttar Pradesh. The text seems to indicate that it was under Āma that Jainism grew around Kanauj and later in other parts of present U.P. At the same time, unlike Kumārapāla, Āma is seen as a just, virtuous and powerful ruler who was swayed by the heterodoxy, not out of his own volition, but because of the emerging situation following the advent of the Kali-age, but since he could not, or perhaps did not, impress upon his son-in-law to restore the privileges to the brāhmaṇas, they exhorted Hanumāna to slay him along with Kumārapāla. While his subjects, his daughter and his son-in-law, are all shown in the text as accepting the Jaina faith, he is not explicitly mentioned as having adopted the doctrine. At any rate, he was completely under the Jaina influence as 'the brave king Āma, stationed in Kānyakubja, was surrounded by the ascetics'. Neat explanations for such ambivalence are rather difficult. These kinds of narratives were essentially a part of polemical debates current in the 13th- 14th centuries. The name Āma also seems to have been taken from the Jaina writers and if the composer(s) of the legend was aware of the identity of Āma as Nāgabhaṭa (or Nāgāvaloka), his relation with Mihira Bhoja, like the Jaina authors of the *Prabhāvakacarita*

and the *Prabandhakośa,* and of the popular association of the Pratīhāras with the solar lineage and their credentials as patrons of Brahmanical faith, then possibly he had to account for these aspects in the way Āma was portrayed in the legend. The *Skanda Purāṇa,* in a separate legend, presents Bhoja, the king of Kānyakubja, in a very positive light.

We have tried to show then as to how the early ideological pattern of the Pratīhāras was shaped by their local context. For the post-Nāgabhaṭa-II period, we have no evidence for any Pratīhāra ruler patronizing any heterodox system. However, even Nāgabhaṭa's patronage to Jainism was not exclusive. If one escapes being carried away by texts like the *Skanda* and the *Prabhāvakacarita,* it would then seem that unless the ruling dynasty adopted a cult, like Śaivism under the Coḷas, Vaiṣṇavism under the Coḍagaṅgas and Buddhism under the Pālas, ideologically the individual preferences of a monarch perhaps would have had only momentary impact. Under the Pratīhāras, we come across a different, though not unknown, format. Each Pratīhāra ruler was projected as devotee of a specific Brahmanical deity.

The only source of this articulation of what is generally seen as personal beliefs of the Pratīhāra rulers are their copper plate grants. These grants contain genealogy of the dynasty both on the seal and in the beginning of the grant. In these genealogies, instead of more grandiloquent titles, each king was identified as a devotee of a specific deity. This tends to suggest that there was no one royal cult and each ruler at his own volition

devoted himself to a specific deity. Explanation for such a format is not easy and would always remain subjective. Perhaps it was only reflective of a culturally plural society. At least from the time of Nāgabhaṭa-II, a standard format of composition of copper plate grants was formulated and was followed without any perceptible change up to the time of Mahendrapāla-II, whose date falls in the middle of the tenth century. These grants, which in most cases were given to brāhmaṇas, provided the Pratīhāra rulers a medium through which they could forcefully transmit their allegiance to the Brahmanical faith. Copper plate grants were supposed to be read out in front of officials and the residents of the villages which, or a part thereof, was granted. Besides, the recipients who were always seen as custodians of the Brahmanical faith and who claimed monopoly to the ritual space were no less important audiences. Their support for the needs of legitimacy would have been quite crucial. Pratīhāras, by giving land grants to brāhmaṇas and composing these grants in a manner that they did, perhaps tried to project their credentials as adherents of Brahmanical faith, more so when a more explicit sectarian parochialism was just not possible in a society that was truly plural in religious terms. A close analysis of the inscriptions of the time of the Pratīhāras would tend to show that nature of patronage transcended sectarian parochialism. Subordinate rulers, officials, merchants, individually or in group, and religious organizations were free to extend patronage to their preferred sects and could also invoke the name of the Pratīhāra king in recording such acts. This is symptomatic of the liberal religious outlook of the Pratīhāras irrespective of their personal beliefs. Nāgabhaṭa-I's association with Jainism

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has already been commented upon but one of his subordinates, Bhartṛvṛddha, in his Hansot plates quite categorically called himself *paramamaheśvara*. In Pratīhāra copper plate grants (which date from the time of Nāgabhaṭa-II) Vatsarāja is referred to as *paramamaheśvaraḥ* but as we have seen he was invoked as a just and powerful ruler in the personal donation of a Jaina devotee in an inscription from Osian around 250 years later than his known date. Gallaka, a subordinate of Vatsarāja, in his inscription recording the creation of the blueprint of a temple dedicated to Cāmuṇḍā, with a great sense of glory, recounted the military feats of his overlord and his father. Nāgabhaṭa-II, mentioned as a devotee of Bhagavatī in the copper plate grants, was referred to, as the reigning monarch in an inscription found at Buchkala in Rajasthan and associated with a Vaiṣṇava shrine. Best examples of religious catholicity though come in relation with Bhoja. Known as *bhagavatī bhaktaḥ* in the copper plate grants, he also seems to have been greatly inclined towards Vaiṣṇavism, as is indicated by his title *Ādivarāha* and his construction of a Viṣṇu temple in Gwalior. Some of his officials or their spouses are also known to have constructed temples dedicated to Viṣṇu. An inscription coming from Deogarh near Lalitpur invokes name of Bhoja in relation to a donation to a Jaina temple. He is also mentioned in the Sirsa stone inscription, which recorded the construction of a temple associated with the Pāśupata sect. In addition, Pramāṇarāśi, of the Kaman inscription to whom Bhoja paid some *drammas*, also believed to have been associated with the Pāśupata sect. Mahendrapāla-I, who called himself a devotee of Bhagavatī in his grant, gave permission, through his *tantrapāla* Dhīika, to the local Cālukya rulers of the Una

area of Gujarat to gift villages to the temple of Taruṇāditya, Sun god. Similarly Mahīpāla-I seems to have constructed a temple dedicated to Yogasvāmin (Śiva), but an inscription from Rajor near Alwar in Rajasthan (921 AD), which records the *praśasti* of the Jaina family of architects, invokes the name of Mahīpāla as a powerful sovereign. Besides these inscriptional evidences, the *Karpūramañjarī* makes detailed references to Bhairavanātha, a Kaulacārī, who followed Tāntric practices. His close association with the royal household in the play is indicative of the acceptance that these sects derived not just among commoners but also in higher-up social strata. The Tāntric association of the Pratīhāras is also somehow alluded to in the Gwalior *praśasti* where Rāmabhadra is stated to have propitiated mysterious rites (*rahasya vrata*) for the birth of his son Mihira.[118] While examples such as these are only tangential and quite inadequate to analyze the religious outlook of the Pratīhāras but, for sure, indicate that as the state grew, the Pratīhāras, who in their early period were more closely associated with Jainism, shifted their allegiance more and more towards Brahmanical system on one hand and showed a great deal of catholicity on the other.

Geographical Distribution of Temples, their Sectarian Association and Religious Pluralism under the Pratīhāras

Religion has always had an inextricable association with the conceptualization of state sovereignty in Indian history. Virtually innumerable monographs and research papers

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[118] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 109, l. 10.

have analyzed and highlighted the role of religion, through various paradigms, in the ways that the state, predominantly monarchy in the Indian context, used it as a medium to communicate with people primarily for the purpose of affirming and reaffirming its authority and legitimacy.

The problem has a rather unique context for the early medieval period i.e. between 600 and 1200 AD. The question in the north Indian context in this period needs to be seen in the light of two independent but important developments viz. emergence of the Rajputs as a political power and their need for the validation of this authority, and a rather rapid dissemination of the Purāṇic belief system essentially through composition of the Purāṇas. As Hazra points out, from around AD 600, *tīrtha*, *pūjā* and temple became important constituents of this belief system.[119] The proliferation of temples and shrines belonging to various Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical sects has been analyzed in a variety of ways. One important aspect has been to examine the ideological paradigms within which these early medieval states looked for the furtherance of their legitimacy. Rajputs, as the dominant political factor, emerged in early medieval India as a result of the crystallization of local and sub-regional polities in the outlying areas with Ganga valley region as the reference point. More often than not, their tribal background (as most Rajput ruling lineages seem to have belonged to some or the other tribal stock like the Gurjaras or the Ghonds) rendered it necessary for them to incorporate

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[119] Hazra, 1975, p. 6.

Brahmanical elements, which were by default the most important motifs for the validation of power, especially monarchy. It is perhaps because of this that 'most of the temple building activity, especially during the initial stages, is perceptible not so much in the nuclear sanskritic zone but in outlying regions mostly inhabited by pre-literate tribal groups having a long tradition in enshrining the images of their tutelary deities, local guardian spirits and totem symbols'.[120] It seems that such temples in tribal areas had an important role in the tribal transformation.

Evidently, temple building activity got an almost unprecedented impetus as a result of the dissemination of the Purāṇic worldview, which emphasized '*pūrtadharma*, which involved building of temples, tanks and works of public utility as the highest mode of religion'.[121] It has been pointed out that 'materially the conditions were ideal for extensive temple building. Numerous land owning *sāmantas*, princes and kings of the period wanted to acquire *puṇya* (merit) and fame by building temples and donating land and villages for their maintenance'.[122] The role of temple as an important motif for legitimacy and political validation of the ruling power along with the idiom of *bhakti* has been well researched and documented in the south Indian context especially in relation

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[120] Nath, 2001, p. 36.

[121] Desai, 2000, p. 488.

[122] *Ibid.*, pp. 488-89.

with the Colas.[123] With time, though, the temple seems to have assumed many more roles, one of them being that of 'landed magnate'. *Devadānas* i.e. the revenue free grants of vast tracts of cultivable land to temples gradually led to the emergence of centres where much of the economic activities were driven by such temples. The Brhadeśvara temple of Tanjore can be a classic case of how a temple engaged itself in large-scale economic activities through what has been called, 'the transactional network'.[124] This sort of network not only integrated politically the outlying and peripheral areas with the core region of the Kaveri valley but also brought different kinds of production strategies together. In addition, the activity was a meticulous way of channelizing the resources under the control of temples. The temple also played an important role in the societal change that accompanied the economic restructuring of the period under question. A discernible pattern of social hierarchy emerged from brāhmaṇas as donees to groups associated with temples such as dancers and musicians and menial servants. Thus, it has been pointed out that the temple stood at the centre, creating physical and active space for every aspect of life for early and medieval periods of Indian history. It was a symbol of authority, status, political power and social influence.[125]

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[123] Champakalakshmi, 1989.

[124] Heitzman, 1997, Chapter 4.

[125] Champkalakshmi, R., *The Hindu Temple*, Delhi, Orient Longman, 2000, p. 109.
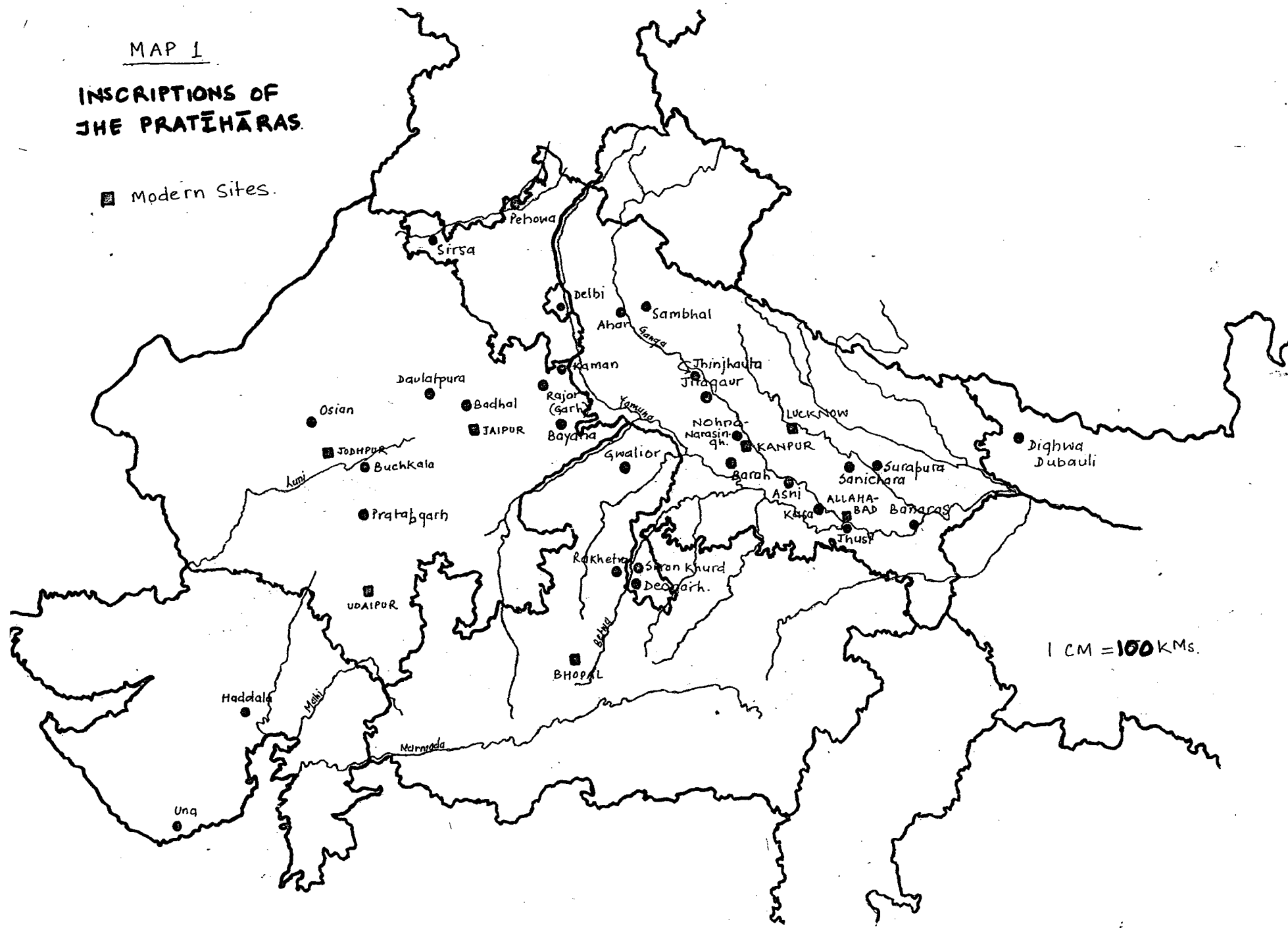
The early growth of the Pratīhāras, as we have seen, was shaped to a great extent by their local context. Their early association with Kṣemaṅkarī, who had already come to be associated with Durgā by the early seventh century, is symptomatic of the process described above. However, by the time Bhoja ascended to throne at Kānyakubja, the Pratīhāras were a pan-north Indian power. Kṣemaṅkarī continued to be depicted on the copper plate grants but perhaps as Bhagavatī, a more popular form of Durgā. The epigraphical references are not quite adequate to state as to how the rulers of the dynasty catered to the needs of legitimacy—but that remains a consistent problem with most contemporary ruling houses. Religious catholicity under the Pratīhāras can be gauged by mapping the available inscriptional and architectural references to temples and sculptures, which can be dated to the period between the eighth and the tenth centuries. It is important to note that the religious policy of the Pratīhāras cannot be comprehended based on a select few inscriptions. The ideological strategies of the Pratīhāras should not be seen in terms of 'from the above approach' or on the basis of a relatively meagre data culled from their inscriptions. The exercise of mapping the geographical distribution of shrines and their sectarian association would surely help us understand the prevailing religious situation between the eighth and the tenth centuries, which would have shaped the way religious outlook, ideological perspectives and strategies of legitimation of the Pratīhāras evolved.

The biggest problem insofar as inscriptional sources are concerned is their frustratingly low numbers especially in relation with the vast territories comprising virtually the whole of north India that the Gurjara-Pratīhāra s seem to have ruled at least as a unit for a century or so. A look at the map 1 highlights the problem in a better way. The total number of the Pratīhāra inscriptions is even lower than that of some of the successor states which controlled but a part of the territories under the control of Mihira Bhoja (c. 835/36-885 AD) and Mahendrapāla (c. 885-914 AD). Data provided by these inscriptions, in our view, is too small to handle, with any dexterity, such questions as the nature of patronage to the temples or their hierarchies. Another problem that needs to be highlighted pertains to the use of the words of local dialects, which have no parallels with the now spoken local dialects. The exact meanings of such words which might have been important to the overall tenor of the inscription, it seems have been lost to us forever. Important inscriptions like Sīyaḍoṇī, Pratabgarh and Ahar have a number of such words.

The other important source of the data relates to the discovery of temples/shrines, sculptural remains and architectural members during the explorations and excavations conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) or through private endeavours. The description of the materials found is often rather flimsy with regard to the provenance and the dating of these artefacts. The dates are usually too broad such as ranging between a few centuries, to be incorporated in a data analysis with time span as

MAP 1

INSCRIPTIONS OF THE PRATĪHĀRAS.

■ Modern Sites.

Pehowa
Sirsa
Delhi
Sambhal
Ahar
Ganga
Kaman
Jhinjhauta
Jitagaur
Daulatpura
Rajor
(Garh
Yamuna
Osian
Badhal
JAIPUR
Bayana
LUCKNOW
Nohna-
Narasin-
gh.
KANPUR
Surapura
JODHPUR
Buchkala
Gwalior
Barah
Sanichara
Dighwa
Dubauli
Luni
Asni
ALLAHA-
BAD
Banaras
Pratabgarh
Kala
Thusi
Rakhetra
Saron khurd
Deogarh.
UDAIPUR
Betwa
Haddala
Mahi
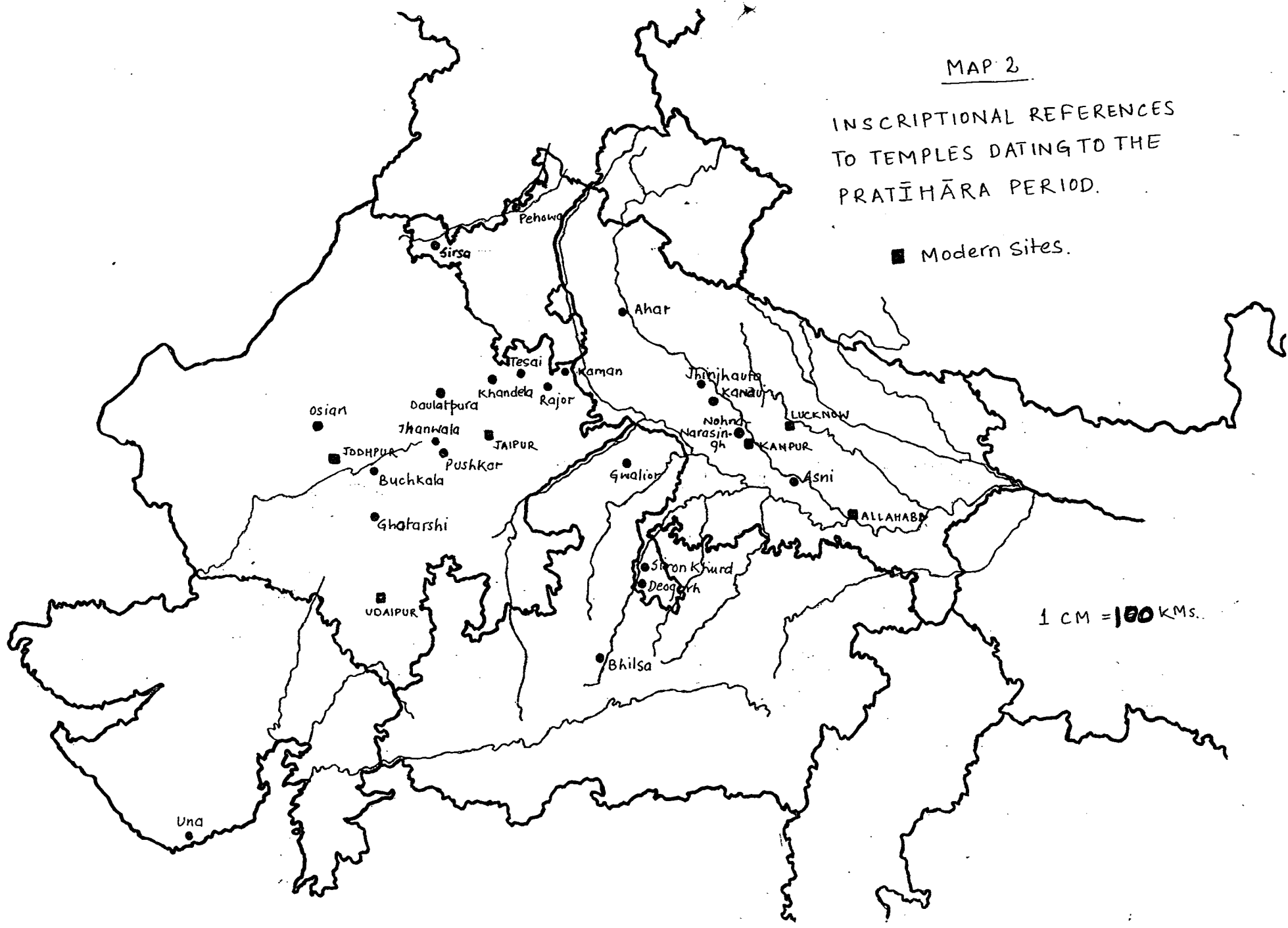BHOPAL
Narmada
Una

1 CM = 100 KMs.

a variable. One cannot but be sceptical in using much of this information for any useful documentation. At times, the information lacks in specificity rendering it difficult to be analyzed. Moreover, most of the temples, their remains and architectural members are devoid of any corroborative epigraphical reference, which could shed some light on their date of construction or information about their patrons. One has to rely largely on the tentative dates given on the basis of stylistic details of sculptures and temple plan and architecture.

Map 2 contains sites, which have yielded references to shrines from the inscriptions of the Pratīhāras, their subordinate rulers or local authorities and other personal acts of donation, construction of temples or their renovation. These are scattered throughout north India, from Pehowa and Sirsa in the north to Buchkala and Pratabgarh in the west, southern Kathiawar in the south-west and up to Asni near Allahabad in the east. There is a conspicuous concentration of temples, as gathered from the inscriptional evidence, in Jodhpur, Nagaur, Jaipur and Shekhavati regions, which, as has been shown in the preceding sections, for certain came under the Pratīhāra control during Vatsarāja's time by the third quarter of the eighth century and remained so perhaps up to the reign of Vijayapāla (ruling in 960 AD). Many of these inscriptions do not refer to the sovereign Pratīhāra ruler but are located in the spatial and temporal domain of the Pratīhāra rule. The map is also important from the perspective that while individual inscriptions

MAP 2

INSCRIPTIONAL REFERENCES
TO TEMPLES DATING TO THE
PRATĪHĀRA PERIOD.

■ Modern Sites.

1 CM = 100 KMs.

Pehowa
Sirsa
Ahar
Tesai
Kaman
Khandela
Rajor
Jhinjhauta
Kanau
Osian
Daulatpura
LUCKNOW
Jhanwala
Nohnd
Narasin-
gh
KANPUR
JODHPUR
JAIPUR
Pushkar
Buchkala
Gwalior
Asni
Ghatarshi
ALLAHAB
Stron Khurd
Deogarh
UDAIPUR
Bhilsa
Una

provide useful information, a geographical-statistical study is virtually impossible owing to a relative dearth of the data.

Map 3 shows sites, which have yielded temples largely through archaeological explorations but sometimes, even through excavations. The picture emerging from the map shows that between the mid-eighth and the mid to late-tenth century, a great deal of temple building activity was concentrated along the Luni River in Rajasthan and along the Betwa River in the present Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Taking into account the fact that temple was an important element of early medieval social, economic and religious life, this kind of pattern certainly demands an explanation for the possible reasons and for the implications of concentration of temples in certain specific areas, especially the river valleys.

Map 4 shows those sites, which have yielded temple remains, architectural members and stray sculptures from excavations and/or explorations within the dominion of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras. We have taken these artefacts separately from the temple sites as sculptures and decorative architectural members can be used in buildings other than shrines. It seems, though, from the nature of our data that these were, perhaps in most cases, associated with temples (or shrines). The map indicates that the sites yielding sculptures or architectural fragments were largely concentrated in Uttar Pradesh, much less in Betwa-Kalisindh area and virtually negligible in Rajasthan. The present map in a sense provides a reversal of the map 3. Rajasthan and Betwa-Kalisindh-Chambal sites

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MAP 3

Sites Yielding Temple
Remains Corresponding
Roughly with the Spatial-
Temporal Context of the
Pratīhāra Rule.

1 CM = 100 kms.

JODHPUR
JAIPUR
LUCKNOW
KANPUR
ALLAHABAD
BANARAS
UDAIPUR
BHOPAL
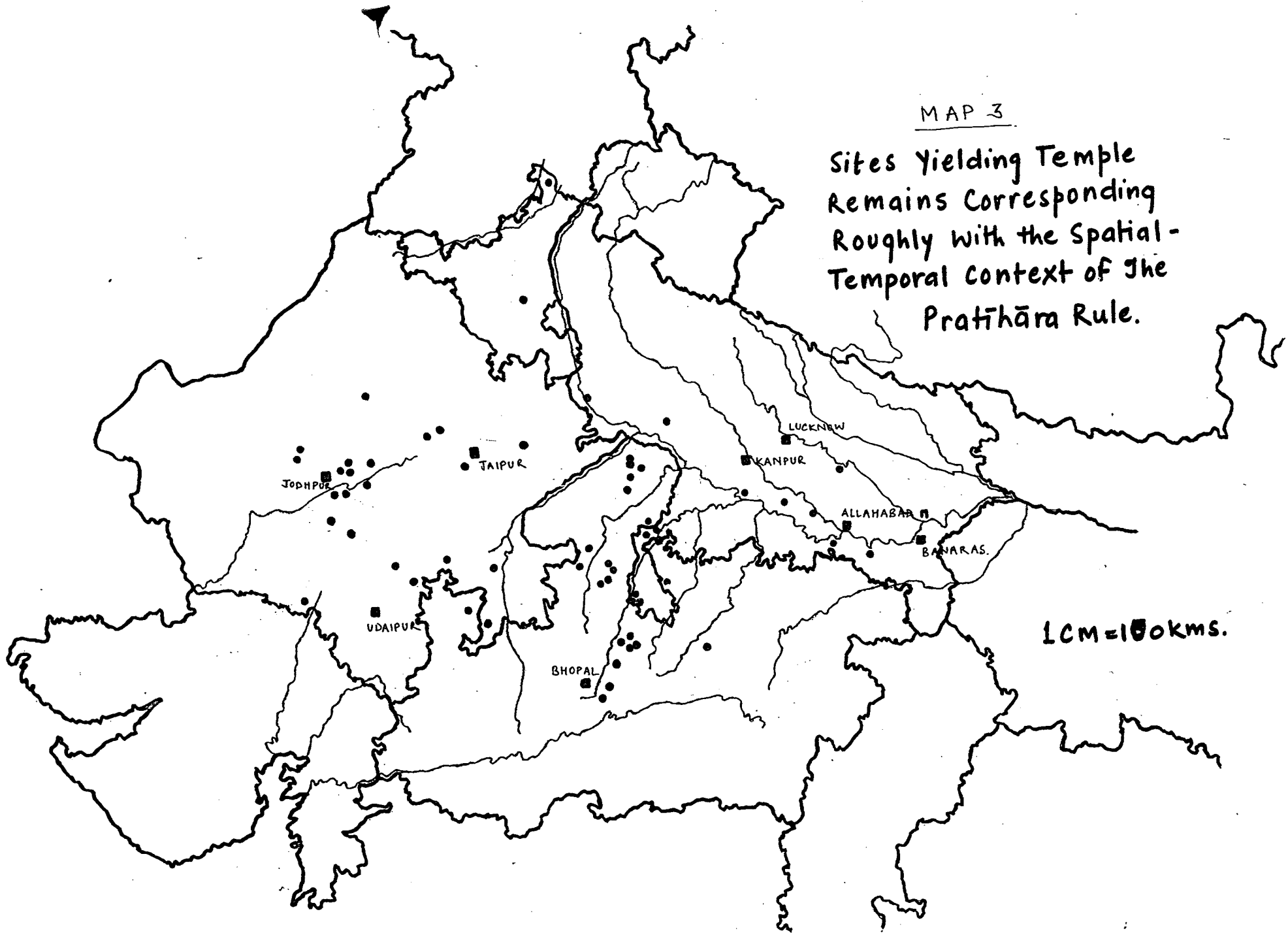
have yielded temples most of which are still intact along with their sculptures and in such cases we have not counted them as separate. Uttar Pradesh with its extremely fertile plains of Ganga and Yamuna has seen through millennia, consistent extension of cultivable land, high incidence of population density and laying of new habitations on the old settlements. These factors along with the destruction of temples in the early phase of the Sultanate would perhaps explain as to why many of the temples, even when referred to in the inscriptions are not extant now.

We may now move on to analyze the sectarian association of these temples and see how, if at all, the scenario changes from the eighth through the tenth century. For the purpose of analyzing this specific aspect, we have divided the data into three spatial groups:

(a) **Western Parts**: Comprising Rajasthan and Gujarat

(b) **Central India**: Comprising areas under the Pratīhāra control in central India (Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh) lying to the south of the river Yamuna.

(c) **Core Areas**: Comprising areas of the Ganga valley extending up to the Indo-Gangetic divide.

Maps 5[126] and 6[127] depict the sectarian association of shrines dating to the 8th and the

9th-10th centuries respectively. The term 'sect' is being used here to denote as to whether

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[126] References of the sites shown in this map are as follows: Amrol, Trivedi, 1990, pp. 86-89; Amvan, *EITA*,

vol. 2, part 2, pp. 307-310; Babai, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 36; Batesara—Bhuteśvara Mahādeva, *EITA*, vol. 2,

part 1, p. 155; NE Group, *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156; Temple to the SE of Bhuteśvara, Trivedi, 1990, p. 83, Bithu, *EITA*,

vol. 2, part 2, pp. 167-170; Dang, Trivedi, 1990, pp. 79-75; Dhamna Khurd, *Review*, 1981-82, p. 101, Gwalior,

Trivedi, 1990, pp. 89-94; Indor, *Ibid.*, pp. 96-100; Jhunjhunu, *Review*, 1981-82, p. 99; Kuchdon, *EITA*, vol. 2,

part 1, pp. 153-55; Lamba, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 170-174; Medta-Phalodi, *Ibid.*, pp. 130-140; Nemiakheda,

EITA, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 76-78; Osian—Harihara # 1, *Ibid.*, pp. 158-167; Harihara # 2, *Ibid.*, pp. 174-182;

Harihara # 3, *Ibid.*, pp. 191-198; Mahāvīra, *Ibid.*, pp. 182-189; Saciyāmātā, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 128;

Satyanārāyaṇa, *Ibid.*, pp. 128-132; Śiva # 1, *Ibid.*, pp. 189-191; Sūrya # 2, *Ibid.*, pp. 140-144; Sūrya, *Ibid.*, pp. 132-

137; Sūrya-Viṣṇu, *Ibid.*, pp. 199-204; Viṣṇu # 1, *Ibid.*, pp. 144-146; Pathari, *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54; Pipar, *Ibid.*, pp. 137-

139; Tesai, *EI*, vol. XXXIV, pp. 46-59; Varman, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 366-367.

[127] Abaneri, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 229-237; Ahar, *EI*, vol. XIV, pp. 52-62; Asni, *IA*, vol. XVI, pp. 173-175;

Auwa, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 202-215; Badoh, *Ibid.*, pp. 39-44; Bagru, *Review*, 1980-81,p. 95; Bara, *EITA*, vol.

2, part 2, p. 79; Barwasnagar, *Ibid.*, 56-60; Basai, *Review*, 1992-93, p. 130; Batesara—NE Group, *EITA*, vol. 2,

part 1, pp. 155-156; Northern Group, *Ibid.*, p. 156; Bhawanipura, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 242-245; Bhilsa, *EI*,

vol. XXX, pp. 210-215; Bhundana, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 248-251; Buchkala, *Ibid.*, pp. 147-149; Chandpur,

Ibid., p. 39; Chandrabhaga, *Ibid.*, p. 314; Chittaurgarh, *Ibid.*, pp. 302-304; Daulatpura, *EI*, vol. V, pp. 208-213;

Deogarh—Jaina Temple # 15, Trivedi, 1990, pp. 105-107; Jaina Temple # 16, *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108; Jaina Temple #

19, *Ibid.*, p. 108; Śāntinātha # 12, *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35 and Trivedi, 1990, pp. 100-105; Dhamnar—Buddhist Caves,

Review, 1980-81, p. 92; Dharmanātha, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 311-314; Fatehpur (Distt), Krishna, Brajesh, *The*

Art under the Gurjara Pratihāras, New Delhi, Harman Publishing House, 1989, p. 106; Ghanerao, Deva,

Krishna, 1997, pp. 34-35; Goru, *Review*, 1987-88, p. 142; Goth Manglod, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 252-254;

Gwalior, *EI*, vol. I, pp. 154-59; Gyaraspur, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 48-51; Harkaumau, *Review*, 1991-1992, p.

110; Harṣa—Viṣṇu, *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259; Harṣanatha, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 259-263; Jagat, Deva, Krishna,

1997, pp. 33-34; Jhinjhauta, *Prāgdhārā*, no. 1, pp. 1-2; Kadwaha, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 158-160; Kalu, *Ibid.*,

pp. 266-268; Kaman, *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 329-336; Kanauj, *EI*, vol. I, pp. 184-190; Kara, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p.

80; Kekind, Deva, Krishna, 1997, p. 35; Keldhar, Trivedi, 1990, pp. 111-112; Khandela, *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 254-

258; Khed, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 254-258; Khidarpura, *Ibid.*, pp. 240-242; Kusuma, *Ibid.*, p. 372; Lotkhedi,

a particular shrine had Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Śakti etc. as the main presiding deity. We may work by making lists of sites and sectarian association of temples located there. A square parenthesis containing name of a sect against certain entries would indicate a change in association from the original to the sect in the parenthesis. We may begin by looking at Western Parts, with a caution that the data that we are working with is too meagre for any conclusive word. A pattern if emerges would only be indicative.

Table 7: Sectarian Distribution of Temples in Western India

8ᵗʰ Century	*9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Centuries*
Amvan: Śiva-Viṣṇu-Sūrya (Joint)	Abaneri: Viṣṇu [Śakti]
Bithu: Śiva	Auva: Śiva
Kaman: Śiva	Bhawanipura: Viṣṇu [Śakti]
Chittaurgarh:?	Bhundana: Śiva
Lamba: Śiva	Buchkala: Śiva: Viṣṇu [Pārvatī]
Jhunjhunu: Jaina	Chandrabhaga: Śiva
Osian	Osian

Review, 1989, p. 105; Mahaban, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 81; Mahua, *Ibid.*, p. 36 and Trivedi, 1990, pp. 119-121; Mandalgarh, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 304-307; Markhera, *Ibid.*, pp. 45-48; Morni, *Review*, 1994-1995; Nachna-Kuthara, Trivedi, 1990, pp. 125-129; Nasal, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 238-240; Nohna-Narasingh, *Svasti Śri*, Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra Felicitation Volume, 1984, pp. 140-145; Osian—Phamsana Shrines, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 150; Pipladevi, *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268; Shiva # 2, *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147; Viṣṇu # 2, *Ibid.*, pp. 263-266; Padhaoli, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 156-158; Parbhau, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 81; Pathari, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 158 and *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 51-53; Pehowa, *EI*, vol. I, pp. 184-190 and *Ibid.*, pp. 242-250; Pratabgarh, *EI*, vol. XIV, pp. 176-178; Pushkar, *EI*, vol. XXXV, pp. 239-246; Rajor, *EI*, vol. III, pp. 263-267 and *EI*, vol. XXXIX, pp. 189-198; Sesai, Trivedi, 1990, pp. 161-168; Sikar, Deva, Krishna, 1997, p. 35; Siron-Khurd, *EI*, vol. I, vol. 162-179; Sirsa, *EI*, vol. XXII, pp. 294-296; Soila, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 149-150; Terahi, *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39; Thanwala, *EI*, vol. XXXV, pp. 239-246; Thithaura, Krishna, Brajesh, 1989, 106-107; Tiwri, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 150; Umri, *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45; *EI*, vol. V, pp. 1-10; Unwas, Deva, Krishna, 1997, p. 34; Varman, *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 367-372.

8ᵗʰ *Century*	9ᵗʰ *and 10ᵗʰ Centuries*
Sacīyāmātā: Śakti	Śiva Temple # 2: Śiva
Satyanārāyana: Viṣṇu	Phāṁsana: Śiva, Śiva
Sūrya: Sūrya	Viṣṇu Temple # 2: Viṣṇu
Viṣṇu Temple # 1: Viṣṇu	Chittaurgarh: Śakti
Harihara Temple # 1: Viṣṇu	Harṣa: Viṣṇu, Śiva
Harihara: Harihara	Kalu: Śakti
Mahāvīra: Jaina	Kaman: Śiva
Śiva Temple # 1: Śiva	Khandela: Śiva (and Pārvatī)
Harihara Temple # 3: Viṣṇu	Khed: Viṣṇu
Sūrya-Viṣṇu: Viṣṇu	Khidarpura: Śiva
Sūrya Temple # 2: Sūrya	Kusuma: Viṣṇu
Pipar: Viṣṇu [Śakti]	Mandalgarh: Śiva
Tesai: Viṣṇu [Śiva]	Manglod: Śakti
Varman: Jaina	Nosal: Śakti
	Soila: Śiva
	Tiwri: Śakti
	Varman: Sūrya
	Una: Sūrya
	Bagru: Śiva
	Ghanerao: Jaina
	Goru: Jaina
	Jagat: Śakti
	Kekind: Śiva
	Pratabgarh: Sūrya, Śakti and Viṣṇu
	Pushkar: Viṣṇu
	Thanwala: Śiva [Sūrya]
	Sikar: Śiva
	Unwas: Śakti
	Rajorgarh: Śiva
	Garh: Jaina

Total References   60

8ᵗʰ Century   19

9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Centuries 41

	8ᵗʰ Century	9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Centuries
Viṣṇu	7 (36.84%)	9 (21.95%)
Śiva	4 (21.05%)	17 (41.46%)

MAP 4

Sites yielding Sculptural Remains and Architectural Members Situated in The Spatial-Temporal Context of The Pratihāra Rule.

JODPUR JAIPUR

LUCKHOW
KANPUR

ALLAHA-BAD

UDAIPUR

BANARAS

1 CM = 150 kms.
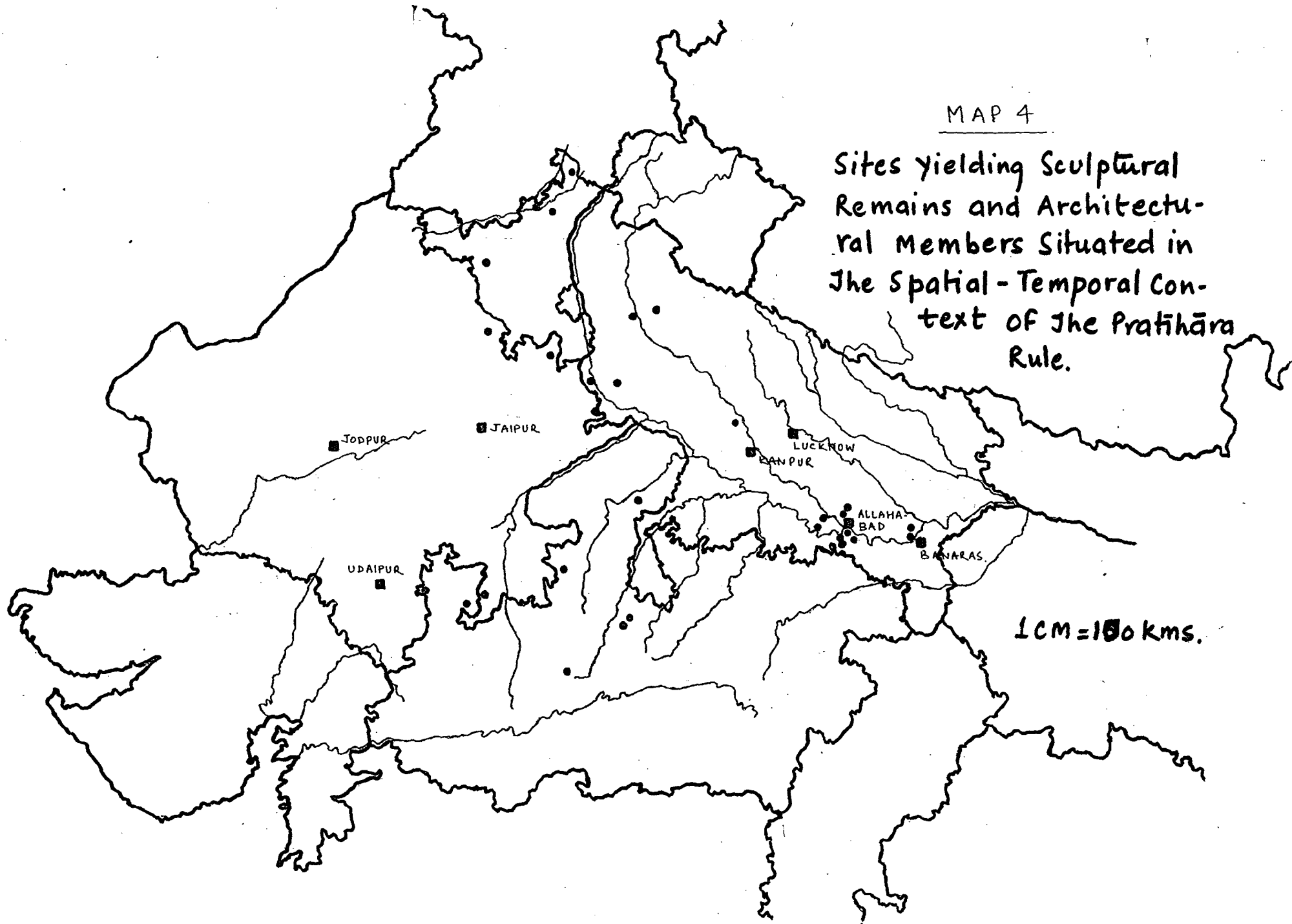
Śakti	1 (5.26%)	8 (19.51%)
Sūrya	2 (10.52%)	4 (9.75%)
Jaina	3 (15.78%)	3 (7.31%)
Harihara	1 (5.26%)	0 (0.00%)
Sūrya-Viṣṇu-Śiva (Jt)	1 (5.26%)	0 (0.00%)
	<u>19</u>	<u>41</u>

If one goes by the textual references to temples, our data would form but a miniscule part of the actual number, but from the available data, analysis indicates that Vaiṣṇavism, which dominated here, especially in the Jodhpur-Nagaur region in the eighth century, faced a serious contention from Śaivism and the cult of Śakti in the subsequent centuries perhaps because of the growing influence of the Tāntricism. Significant though is the rise in the number of the Śakti shrines i.e. temples associated with erstwhile local goddesses now worshipped in the form of Śakti. To these may be added many references where a shrine now associated with the Śākta tradition, according to the scholars of religious architecture, evince original association with Vaiṣṇavism as indicated by architectural and sculptural details. This process, in our view, explains to some extent the dynamism within the process of acculturation on one hand and complexities in the political needs of local ruling lineages on the other. The expansion of the state society resulted in a dialogue between the local and the Brahmanical traditions with the latter having a dominant part. The Pratabgarh inscription clearly shows, as to how a local tribal goddess, Vaṭayakṣiṇīdevī, possibly associated with some local tribe inhabiting in the forest was incorporated in the form of

Durgā as a subsidiary deity in the temple dedicated to Indrarājāditya, a Sun god. The emergence of local ruling lineages would have created need for evolving methods and motifs to derive legitimacy, validation of the rule and to gain an identity, possibly a unique one. These requirements seem to have brought them towards patronizing local goddesses, now safely ensconced within the façade of Brahmanism. Such possibilities need to be analyzed with a larger data base.

We may now move to our next territorial unit.

Table 8: Sectarian Distribution of Temples in Central India

8ᵗʰ Century	*9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Centuries*
Amrol: Śiva	Basai: Śiva, Śiva
Babai: Śiva	Batesara
Batesara	North Group: Śiva, Śiva, Śiva
Bhūteśvara Mahādeva: Śiva	N-E Group: Śiva, Śiva, Śiva, Viṣṇu
N-E Group: Śiva, Śiva, Śiva	Dhamnar
The Temple S-E of Bhūteśvara: Viṣṇu	Buddhist Caves (8 in number)
Dang: Śiva	Dharmanātha Temple: Viṣṇu
Gwalior: Telī kā Mandir – Śakti	Gwalior: Caturbhuja – Viṣṇu
Indor: Śiva	Gyaraspur: Jaina
Pathari: Śiva [Viṣṇu]	Kadwaha: Śiva
Kuchdon: Kuraiyābīra – Śiva	Keldhar: Śiva
	Lotkhedi: Viṣṇu
	Mahua: Śakti
	Markhera: Sūrya
	Nachna Kuthara: Śiva
	Pathari: Śiva (Seven Shrines)
	: Katukeśvara – Śiva
	Terahi: Śiva
	Umri: Sūrya
	Badoh: Gādarmal Temple – Śakti
	Bhilsa: Sūrya
	Barwasnagar: Śakti

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8ᵗʰ Century	*9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Centuries*

	Chandpur: Viṣṇu (Two Shrines)
	 Deogarh
	    Temple # 12: Jaina
	    Temple # 15: Jaina
	    Temple # 16: Jaina
	    Temple # 19: Jaina
	 Sesai: Sūrya
	 Siron Khurd: Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu,
	 Viṣṇu, Śiva, Sūrya

Total References   58

8ᵗʰ Century   12

9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Centuries 46

	8ᵗʰ Century	**9ᵗʰ-10ᵗʰ Centuries**
Śiva	10	21
Viṣṇu	01	11
Buddhism	00	01
Jaina	00	05
Śakti	01	03
Sūrya	00	05
	12	**46**

A percentage wise analysis here would perhaps distort the picture. For the eleven references of the Vaiṣṇava shrines seven come from two sites—Siron Khurd (5) and Chandpur (2). In the case of Siron Khurd, some of these five might have been only subsidiary deities. Quite clearly, in the whole region, Śaivism was the most important sect with some pockets of Sun worship. The influence of Śaivism continued in the subsequent centuries also. At the same time, it seems Siron Khurd and Chandpur

emerged as important centres for Vaiṣṇava worship and Deogarh as a formidable Jaina centre. We also find a reference at Pathari of conversion, perhaps forcible, of a Śaiva shrine to Vaiṣṇava. The temple in question enshrines a Śivaliṅga but seems to have been converted into a Viṣṇu temple by the Rāṣṭrakūṭa chief Parabala who erected and inscribed a monolithic Garuḍadhvaja facing it. The long inscription is dated 860 AD and refers to the foundation of a tall Viṣṇu temple as well as the imposing Garuḍadhvaja. The temple's original foundation seems not later than mid-eighth century or perhaps a little later in the century.[128]

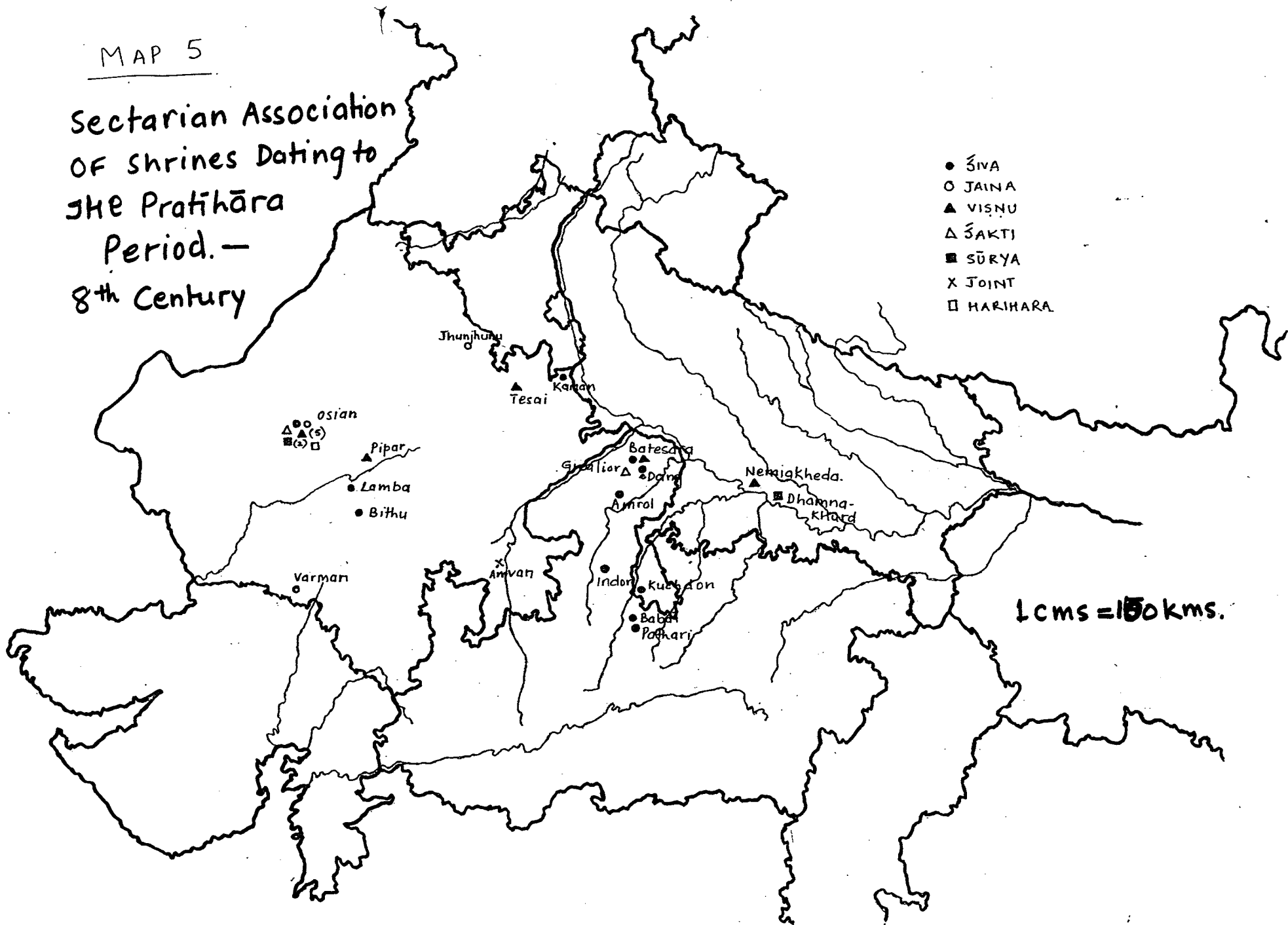### Table 9: Sectarian Distribution of Temples in the Core Region

8ᵗʰ Century	*9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Century*

Dhamna Khurd: Sūrya
Nemiakheda: Viṣṇu
	Bara: Viṣṇu, Sūrya
	Harkaumau: Sūrya
	Jhinjhauta: Viṣṇu
	Nohna-Narasingh: Viṣṇu
	Kara: Śiva
	Parbhau: Viṣṇu
	Ahar: Caste Deities, Viṣṇu, Śakti (2)
	Kanauj: Viṣṇu
	     Gotīrtha: Viṣṇu
	     Bhojpur: Viṣṇu
	Thithaura: Viṣṇu
	Near Fatehpur: Śiva
	Sirsa: Śiva
	Pehowa: Garībanātha: Viṣṇu
	     Yajñavarāha: Viṣṇu
	     Triple Shrine: Viṣṇu
	Morni Village: Śiva

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[128] *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 53-54.

MAP 5

Sectarian Association
of Shrines Dating to
the Pratihāra
Period. —
8th Century

- ŚIVA
O JAINA
▲ VIṢṆU
△ ŚAKTI
▣ SŪRYA
X JOINT
☐ HARIHARA

Jhunjhunu

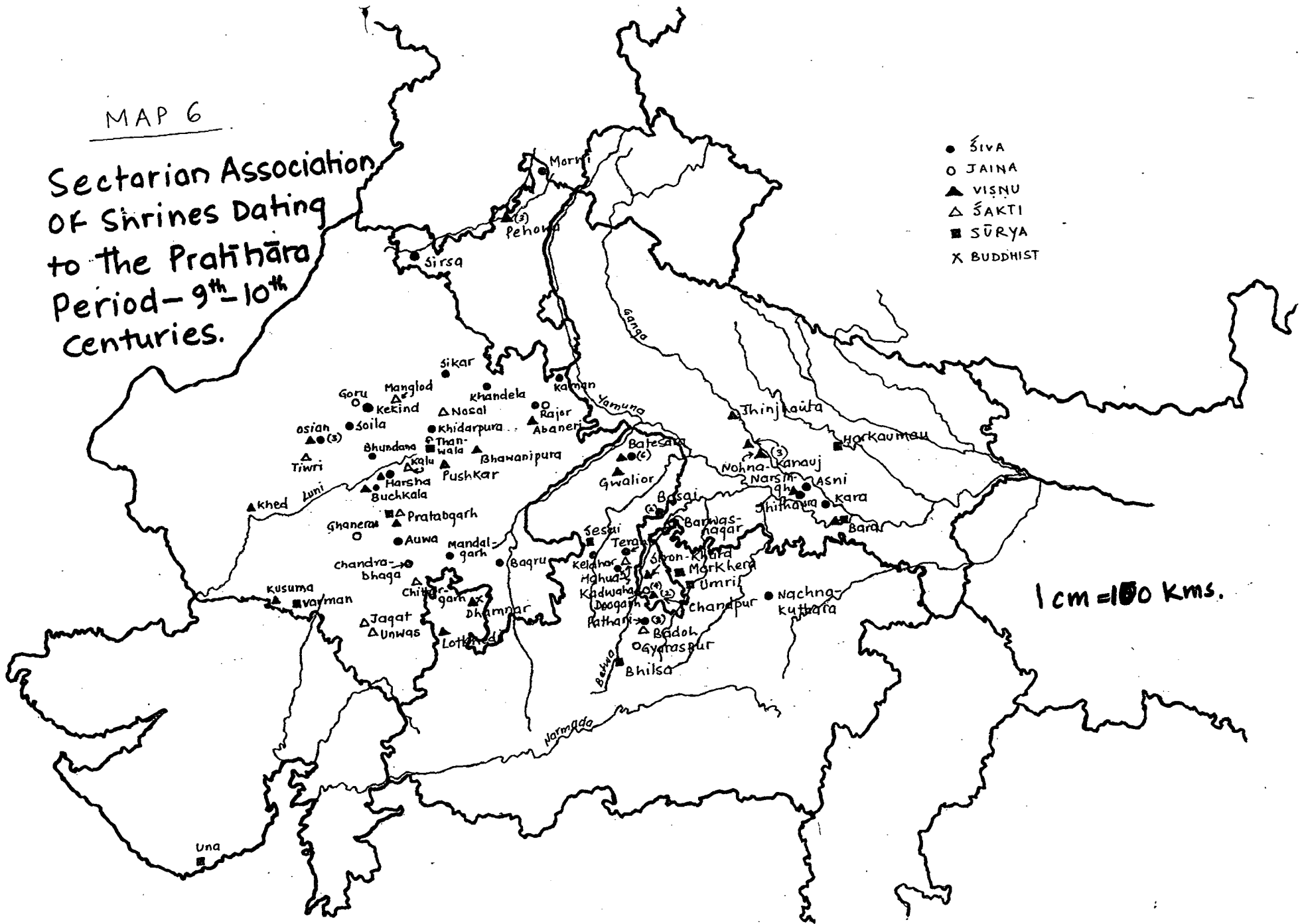▲ Tesai   • Kaman

• O Osian
△ ▲ (s)
▣ (x) ☐   ▲ Pipar
• Lamba
• Bithu

X Amvan

Varman
O

Batesara
Gwalior △ • ▲
         • Datia
• Amrol

• Indor • Kuchdon

• Babah
• Pathari

▲ Nemiakheda.
   ▣ Dhamna-
      Khard

1 cms = 150 kms.

The available data, by it's vary nature indicates the predominance of Vaiṣṇavism in the whole of the Ganga Valley at least from the ninth century onward. Some of the sites in this region became sacred centres under the Purāṇic influence. Pehowa, located on the river Sarasvatī was, for certain, an important religious centre. Kanauj was also abounding in temples most of which seem to have been lost to us now.

So, the region of Ganga Valley, the Indo-Gangetic Divide on one hand and central India on the other, show clear polarization of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism respectively, though in the eighth-ninth centuries some inroads were being made by other sects. The real churning process seems to have been taking place in Rajasthan as we discussed in the relevant section. It may again be underlined that the amount of data is too meagre to provide us with any kind of conclusive answers. These may at most be taken as only indicative patterns. At the same time, these patterns are a clear testimony to the emerging religious situation from the eighth through the tenth centuries. Our data indicates that while certain regions were showing a slight preference to a specific cult, almost all the major contemporary sectarian affiliations, except for Buddhism, had registered presence in every part of Pratīhāra dominions. North India saw a major spurt in temple building activities from around the eighth century AD. The process was coeval with, and was given a major impetus by, the emergence of local level political formations. Whatever might have been the personal choice of the Pratīhāras, as they started dominating the polity of north India, came to terms with a truly plural, and

MAP 6

Sectarian Association
of Shrines Dating
to the Pratihāra
Period— 9th–10th
Centuries.

● ŚIVA
○ JAINA
▲ VIṢṆU
△ ŚAKTI
■ SŪRYA
✕ BUDDHIST

Morni
△(3)
Pehowa
Sirsa

Ganga
Yamuna

Sikar
Goru Manglod khandela Kaman
Kekind Jhinjhauta
osian Soila Nasal Rajor Harkauman
▲●(3) Khidarpura Abaneri
Tiwri Than- Bhawanipura
wala Batesara Nohna-Kanauj
Bhundana Pushkar Gwalior (6) Narsin- Asni
Kalu gha Jhithaua Kara
Harsha Basai Bara
khed Buchkala (1) Barwas-
Luni Ghanera Pratabgarh Sesai nagar Markhera
Auwa Terai Siron-Khara Umri
Mandal- Keldhar △ Nachna-
chandra- garh Baqru Aghua kuthara
bhaga Kadwaha (4) Chandpur
Chitor- Deogarh (2)
garh ✕ Pathari (3)
Kusuma Dhamnar
varman Jagat Badoh
Unwas Lotheswar Gyaraspur
Betwa Bhilsa

Narmada

Una

1 cm = 150 Kms.

perhaps even volatile (if one goes by later texts like the *Skanda* and *Prabhāvakacarita*) religious situation. This was also the period when gradual movement towards emergence of pilgrimage centres was taking place through heirarchization of religious centres. Some of the places like Osian, Deogarh, Batesara and Kanauj evince possibilities of being large religious centres which would have seen consistent influx of devotees. While traces of genesis of Pushkar as an important religious centre are found in a legend associated with the Pratīhāras, Varanasi is conspicuous by its absence in the sources of the Pratīhāra times. Under the Gāhaḍavālas it emerged as a formidable pilgrimage centre. In any case, the Pratīhāras, unlike many other contemporary powers, looked for legitimacy, not through exclusive patronage to a specific sect, but through a liberal outlook towards all sectarian affiliations with a special preference for Brahmanical tradition, which was quite natural for a power based in the Ganga valley.

The Arabs and Ideology: Formulation of the Varāha Motif

One of the most important political developments from the early eighth century onward was the entry or perhaps intrusion of a new powerful force in the west-north west parts of India. With Sindh coming under the control of the Arabs, their endeavour towards expansion further east gained momentum. The element of relations between contemporary Indian powers with Arabs has remained marginal perhaps owing to two reasons; first, the overbearing influence of somewhat misplaced conceptualization of the tripartite struggle in the historiography of the period and second, dearth of sources on

Indo-Arab relations for the period. There can be no doubt though that the coming of the Arabs in the political scenario had significant political implications.

In this context the accounts of early Muslim writers are rather significant. Merchant Sulaimān's account provides a glimpse of the relations between the Arabs and the contemporary powers in India. He attributes, on the testimony of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Balharā, the long life of the kings to their friendship with the Arabs.[129] He writes further, "Among the kings there is no one who loves the Arabs so intensely; this is the case with the inhabitants of his kingdom".[130] As against this he writes about the king of Al-Jurz that 'he has a large army, and none [of the kings] of India has a cavalry comparable to his. He is an enemy of Arabs, but acknowledges that the king of Arabs is the greatest king. And among the Indian [kings] none is a greater enemy of Islam than he is. His [kingdom] lies on a tongue of the land'.[131] While Sulaimān writes about Dharma and his relations with both king of Al-Jurz and Balharā there is nothing

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[129] *ACAIC*, pp. 42-43.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 43. Many other Muslim writers throw light on friendly relations between the two. Ibn Haukal says, "From Kambāya to Saimūr is the land of Balharā and in it there are several Indian kings. It is a land of infidels but there are Musalmāns in its cities, and none but Musalmāns rule over them on the part of Balharā. There are many mosques in these places, where Muhammadens assemble to prayer." Al Ishtakhri, whom Haukal seems to have followed, makes almost the same statement. For a Rāṣṭrakūṭa source, see, Chakravarti, Ranabir, 'Monarchs, Merchants and a Maṭha in Northern Konkan (c. AD 900-1053)', in Chakravarti, 2001 (a), pp. 257-281.

[131] *ACAIC*, p. 43.

regarding his relations with the Arabs perhaps owing to the distance between the two kingdoms.

The statement furnished by Sulaimān regarding the inimical relations between the Pratīhāras and the Arabs is understandable taking into account the contiguity of the two kingdoms. And since the Pratīhāra state had already reached up to the Kathiawar peninsula, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas were vulnerable only through sea. We do not have clear idea of the western frontiers of the Pratīhāras but the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* does indicate the inclusion of Punjab and Multan regions into the Pratīhāra state during Bhoja's reign through indirect control.[132] Significantly Al-Ma'sūdī writing in the first quarter of the tenth century says that king of Kanauj was also one of the kings of Sindh.[133] There are also number of inscriptional evidences to show repeated conflicts between the Pratīhāras and the Arabs. Emphasis on a powerful cavalry, as indicated by Sulaimān and corroborated by contemporary epigraphical references to horse trade within the dominions of the Pratīhāras,[134] in clear contrast to the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pālas,[135] was driven more by

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[132] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, V, 149-151.

[133] *HIED*, vol. I, p. 22.

[134] The Garībanātha temple inscription of the time of Bhoja, dated 882 AD, found at Pehowa in Haryana and the Bayana Record, dated 956 may be cited as examples.

[135] With regard to Balharā, Sulaimān makes a general statement that 'he has many horses and elephants and immense wealth'. In the same context Ma'sūdī says, "His (Balharā) troops and elephants are innumerable but his troops are mostly infantry because the seat of his government is among the mountain." While we have followed the English translation, absence of horses here is significant. At another place with reference

this significant and perennial threat from the western and north-western frontiers. Also,

even when most of the scholars have believed the Pratīhāra-Arab conflicts occurring as a

result of the Arab raids without any qualms, the Pratīhāra presence in Sindh, if one goes

by the testimony of Sulaimān, can not preclude the possibility of the Pratīhāra raids into

the Arab territories in Sindh,[136] which were subsequently eulogized in the Pratīhāra

inscriptions.

With regard to the military organization of the Pratīhāras, Ma'sūdī says that the king

of Kanauj, whom he calls Ba'ūra, had four armies garrisoned in the north, south, east

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to Balharā's dominions Ma'sūdī writes, "The Balharā possesses many war elephants. The country is also called Kamkar. On one side it is exposed to the attacks of the king of Juzr; a king who is rich in horses and camels, and has a large army." (*HIED*, p. 25). References regarding the Pālas are more categorical. For king Dharma (Dharmapāla) Sulaimān says, "It is said that when he goes out for a combat he carries about fifty thousand elephants, and he does not go [to war] except in the winter season, for elephants can not endure thirst." (*ACAIC*, p. 44). The statement is almost verbatim reproduced by Ma'sūdī (*HIED*, p. 25) while Ibn Khurdādbih says that Rahmī had fifty thousand elephants in his possession (*ACAIC*, p. 6)

[136] The credit given to Nāgabhaṭa-II for capturing the hill fort of Turuṣka may be a testimony to the point made here. Besides this, with reference to Multan, Ma'sūdī says, "When the unbelievers march against, and the faithful do not feel themselves strong enough to oppose them, they threaten to break their idol, and their enemies immediately withdraw." Al Ishtakhri, who is believed to have written in around the middle of the tenth century says this about Multan and its residents, "When the Indians make war upon them and endeavour to seize the idol, the inhabitants bring it out, pretending that they will break it and burn it. Upon this the Indians retire, otherwise they would destroy Multan." (*HIED*, p. 28). Perhaps taking cue from Ishtakhri, Ibn Haukal who 'seems to have finished his work in 976 AD' (*HIED*, p. 33), makes an almost same statement. (*HIED*, p. 36). These statements are only indicative but do suggest that raids were carried out against Multan from the east.

and west for, in each of these directions he encounters a king warring against him.[137] He further writes that with the army of the north, he fights against the ruler of Multan and other Muslims who align themselves with him on the frontier and with the army of south he fights against the kings who encounter him in every direction.[138] The statement is a clear indication that the threat from the north-western sectors was as potent, if not more, as that from the south. Reasons for the repeated conflicts of the Pratīhāras with these two kingdoms also seem to be same; political ambition and expediencies of both the powers in conflict. The Pratīhāra-Rāṣṭrakūṭa struggle seems to have been driven towards extending control over Malwa and coastal Gujarat areas which would have been important for both the powers to control ports and internal lines of communication leading to these ports. We do not have any evidence to comment on the possible driving force towards the Pratīhāra-Arab conflicts but ports and communication lines in Sindh, western Rajasthan and Kathiawar could have been one of the factors.

Different challenges would have needed different ways of handling them. While Arab threats and repeated conflicts had political and economic underpinnings, it was seen as different from the Rāṣṭrakūṭa and the Pāla threat. It seems to have been projected, not just by the posterity but even by the Pratīhāras themselves, as a potential

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[137] Ahmad, S. M., 1960, pp. 108-109.

[138] *Ibid.*, p. 109. According to Elliot and Dowson, two of these four armies were permanently posted to fight against 'the prince of Multan and his Musalmān subjects on the frontier' and Balharā, the king of Mankir respectively, *HIED*, p. 23.

threat by an alien belief system and culture. It would be hugely erroneous to explain the

Pratīhāra-Arab conflict in terms of 'successful defence of the western frontier of India for

more than two centuries',[139] as if the boundaries of India and Pakistan were defined and

delineated on the basis of the territories under the Pratīhāras!

The basis of our argument remains that the challenge from the west-north west

frontier was a military and political question just as the Pāla and Rāṣṭrakūṭa challenges

were from the eastern and southern frontiers respectively, with a significant difference

though. The adversary on the west-north west front, unlike the other two

aforementioned enemies, adhered to an alien belief system and culture and was striving

hard for the political and ideological expansion of that religion. Al-Birūnī, writing in

1030 AD, makes significant statements about the feeling of disdain among Hindus

towards Muslims. While describing the barriers that separate Hindus from Muslims

making it difficult for a Muslim to study any Indian subject, he enlists five major

reasons—difference of language; religious prejudices on both sides; radical differences

of their manners and customs; repugnance of Hindus against Muslims as a result of

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[139] *ACHI*, p. 648. In a very different context, though for roughly the period under consideration, K. N. Chaudhuri makes a very pertinent statement, 'Asia as a continent was an abstract concept and during the period with which we are concerned, people were unsure where Europe ended and Asia began. They were, of course, familiar with difference between Muslims and Franks, between the people of Misr (Egypt) and those of Rum (Byzantium)' (Chaudhuri, 1985).

Muslim invasions; and the self-conceit of Hindus and their deprecation for anything foreign.[140]

Two points need to be noted here: first, that Al-Birūnī wrote in around the middle of the eleventh century after the invasions of Mehmūd, so his account may not uniformly be applied to the three preceding centuries. But the recrudescence of this hatred seems to have begun with Sindh and Multan campaigns of Muhammad Bin Qāsim.[141] Second, that religion seems to have provided the primary basis for the consideration of native-foreigner dichotomy and not geographical areas under rule.

The Pratīhāras of Kanauj, as also their subordinates, made numerous references to the Arabs in their inscriptions. Gallaka's inscription of the time of Vatsarāja dated 795 AD extols Nāgabhata-I for retrieving the earth from calamity by vanquishing his foes like Viṣṇu-Puruśottama in his Varāha incarnation.[142] In the Gwalior inscription the same Nāgabhata is stated to have appeared as the image of the old sage Nārāyaṇa who crushed the large armies of the powerful *Mleccha* king.[143] There is a strong possibility that the earlier reference, of Varāha, was also made to his success against the Arabs; his only documented achievement apart from victory over the invincible Gurjaras. Vatsarāja

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[140] Ahmad, Q., 1988, pp. 7-12.

[141] Biruni extends Muhammad Bin Qasim's Sindh expedition to as far as Kanauj, which, he says, planted a deeply rooted hatred in the hearts of people. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[142] *EI*, vol. XLI, p. 55, l. 4.

[143] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 107, l. 3.

is stated to have attained the status of a *sārvabhauma nṛpati* by virtue over his victories over the Gauḍa king, the emperor of Dakṣiṇāpatha, and the *Mleccha* and the Kīra king respectively of the western and northern quarters.[144] His subordinate, and Gallaka's father, Śrīvarmaka is credited with victory over a Tājika ruler.[145] Nāgabhaṭa-II, in the Gwalior inscription is said to have seized the hill forts of the kings of Anarta, Mālava, Kirāta, Turuṣka, Vatsa and Matsya.[146] It is significant to note here that the Turuṣkas and the *Mlecchas* were not seen from a different vantage point vis-à-vis other 'Indian' adversaries.

In this context we intend to argue that the formidable Arab challenge from the western and north-western quarters perhaps drove the Pratīhāras to adopt and popularize certain religious motifs for political validation and legitimation of their rule as saviours of the Brahmanical belief system and worldview against the imminent cultural threat. The problem was essentially political, as pointed out earlier, but was sought to be validated under the garb of a cultural and religious threat. This is significant in the light of the fact that there is some evidence to show that the Pratīhāras especially the earlier rulers extended patronage simultaneously to Brahmanism and other sectarian affiliations particularly Jainism.

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[144] *EI*, vol. XLI, p. 56, ll. 8-9.

[145] *Ibid.*, l. 10.

[146] *EI*, vol. XVIII, p. 108, l. 8.

An important symbol used towards this end was the Varāha. Varāha or *Ādivarāha* as an incarnation of Viṣṇu was symptomatic of Viṣṇu's slaughter of demon Hiraṇyākṣa[147] but a more popular imagery of the Boar incarnation was 'the rescue and re-establishment of earth'. Early Mahāpurāṇas most of which were contemporaneous with the Gupta period contain detailed description of this episode which was further popularized by giving it a concrete shape at such sites like Eran and Udayagiri.[148] The Early Cālukyas of Badami had Varāha as their insignia on their copper plates and the motif also appeared on their gold coins.[149] The Varāha association with the Cālukyas seems to have gained a considerable popularity and was continued by the Later and the Eastern Cālukyas. By the eighth century the motif seems to have become popular in western India especially Gujarat perhaps under the influence of the Early Cālukyas. It has to be conceded though that evidence to show this is rather inadequate. In the ninth–tenth century Gujarat we come across such proper names as Dharaṇīvarāha[150] and Varāha or Jayavarāha.[151]

Early eighth century also witnessed the beginnings of Arab raids in western India. There is some, only tangential but significant, evidence to show that with Arab

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[147] Bhattacharji, 1970, p. 288.

[148] *Ibid.*

[149] *ACHI,* pp. 1409-1410.

[150] *IA,* vol. XII, pp. 190-195.

[151] *ACHI,* p. 685.

incursions, their Indian adversaries began to invoke the Varāha or the Nārāyaṇa motif to highlight the idea of resurrection and re-establishment of Pṛthvī to its original position after saving it from calamity. We have already seen the association of Nāgabhaṭa with the Varāha and the Nārāyaṇa motif in relation with the conflict with the Arabs. A Saindhava inscription relates that Agguka-I (who ruled perhaps in the last quarter of the ninth century) 'showed the greatness of Varāha when he easily rescued his country which was being drowned in an ocean of naval force sent by powerful enemies'.[152] The reference has been identified with the Arab invasion of the southern Kathiawar.[153] It seems the repeated conflicts between the Pratīhāras and the Arabs led to the popularization of the Varāha motif, the most popular testimony to which is the adoption of the title *Ādivarāha* by Mihira Bhoja. The first of the two inscriptions of Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple at Gwalior addresses Bhoja as *Śrimadādivarāha*.[154] Another important evidence comes from the *ādivarāha* type billon coins which have been attributed to Bhoja-I.[155] The *ādivarāha dramma* was based, though only to a very limited extent, on the earlier *vigrahapāla dramma*. The *ādivarāha* series has on the obverse, a depiction of the boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, the *Ādivarāha*, while the reverse contains a stylized or corrupt version of fire altar and two attendants along with the legend,

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[152] *Ibid.*, p. 682; See also *EI*, vol. XXVI, pp. 185-226.

[153] *ACHI*, p. 682.

[154] *EI*, vol. I, p. 156, l. 6.

[155] *SI*, vol. 2, p. 247.

Śrimadādivarāha.[156] It is important to note here that rulers subsequent to Bhoja continued issuing this coin perhaps with periodic debasement. Deyell says, "In AD 1318, the Delhi mint assayed the *ādivarāha* coins then received for minting in an absolute silver content of 1.16 g per coin."[157] The *ādivarāha* coin type, with a much ruder and smaller shape, was later issued by Vināyakapāla with the legend *Vināyakapāladeva*. But this series does not seem to be a replacement of the *ādivarāha* type coins which were current even in the Khalji times. The *vināyaka* series, in fact, seems to be one of considerable debased denomination. Another important reference to the popularity of the Varāha motif comes from the account of Al-Ma'sūdī. He writes, "One of the kings of India who has no (access to the) sea and whose kingdom is adjacent to that of al-Balharay is Ba'ūra, the ruler of the city of Qinnauj. This is a title possessed by every king who becomes the ruler of this kingdom."[158] He further emphasizes that Ba'ūra, the king of Kanauj, was an enemy of Balharā, the king of India. There is a reference in the account to a city called Ba'ūra, which is said to have been named after the princes of Kanauj, then in the territories of Islam and was one of the dependencies of Multan.[159] At another place Ma'sūdī mentions the dominions of the king of Juzr as bordering the kingdom of Rahma

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[156] *ACHI,* pp. 1390; Deyell, 1990, pp. 28-29.

[157] *Ibid.,* p. 30.

[158] Ahmad, S. M., 1960, p. 108-109.

[159] *HIED,* p. 22.

(the Pāla ruler of Bengal).[160] Evidently Ba'ūra was the title used by the kings of Kanauj, otherwise known as kings of Al-Juzr (Gurjara). While Ba'ūra (or Bau'rah) has been explained variously as Pratīhāra (or its Prakrit rendering Paḍihāra)[161] or as a reference to Bhoja,[162] in our view the term was Ma'sūdī's reading for Varāha. Phonetically the latter seems to be much nearer to Bau'rah than any other suggested readings. It is important to note here that:

• The term has been explicitly mentioned by Ma'sūdī as a title rather than a proper name.[163]

• Ma'sūdī wrote, in all probability, around the end of the first quarter of the tenth century during the reign of Mahīpāla-I which would separate him from Bhoja-I by at least thirty to forty years. For Bhoja-I we have clear evidence for the use of the title *Ādivarāha*. While we do not have any evidence for any subsequent ruler taking up the Varāha title there is some possibility, taking into account the continued issuance of the *Ādivarāha dramma* by Bhoja's successors, in addition to Ma'sūdī's testimony,

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[160] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[161] Majumdar, R. C., 'The Gurjara-Pratihāras', *JDL*, vol. X, 1923, pp. 64-66.

[162] Puri, 1975, p. 66; our identification is, in a sense, not the first one. K. M. Munshi, based on a different rendering, read the term in question as 'Bhuja' and identified it with Bhoja. However, he believed that if the form in MSS was Ba'ūra then, in all probability, it stood for *Ādivarāha* or more appropriately *Baraha*. See, Munshi, n.d., p. 116.

[163] Both the translations that we have used, that by S. Maqbul Ahmad and the other one by Elliot and Dowson, have rendered the word 'title.'

that Bhoja's successors continued to bear the title of Varāha. Further, in the light of the fact that Ma'sūdī is known to have travelled in areas which were either contiguous to or were in the periphery of Pratīhāra dominions, his use of the Varāha title for the Pratīhāra kings (perhaps as a parallel to Balharā i.e. Vallabharāja of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings) speaks a great deal about the popularity of this motif at least in the western parts of the Pratīhāra dominions. The motif, which evinced the idea of the saviour of the Brahmanical worldview, was sought to be popularized by the use of royal titles and coins to cater to the ideological needs of the Pratīhāras.

The close association of the Pratīhāras with Varāha is also brought out in the legend cited by Aditya Malik, (and which is possibly of a later date) which attributes the establishment of the *tīrtha* Puṣkara to one of the two Nāgabhaṭas of the Pratīhāra family.[164] It is in this context that their association with Varāha has been invoked. Perhaps the Varāha motif had become so popular under the Pratīhāras that it surpassed even the Viṣṇu form. Another important benchmark to assess the popularity of the

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[164] According to the legend, 'in the *kaliyuga* the original *tīrtha* had long been forgotten was overgrown by a dense forest. During a long and tiresome hunt the king was led by the boar he (Nāgabhaṭa I or II (?)) was chasing into this forest and then to a small pool of water. As the exhausted king, who suffered from leprosy, washed himself and drank water from the pool, he was amazed to find himself cured. He realized that the boar he was chasing was Varāha himself and out of gratitude he ordered the forest to be cleared, a lake to be dug, and *dharmaśālās* as well as *ghāṭs* to be constructed (196-197).' Aditya Malik, 'The Puṣkara Māhātmya: A short report', in Bakker, 1990, pp. 192-207. The problem with this reference though is that the author has not referred to the source of his information.

Varāha would be to locate its architectural depiction in various temples which, as we shall see, cut across sectarian affiliations. From U. P. the specimens are usually stray and difficult to date but there is some documentary evidence for the period for Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

In Rajasthan the Varāha image has been depicted in the south *bhadra* niche of the Satyanārāyaṇa temple (dedicated to Śiva and dated tentatively to the mid-eighth century) at Osian (district Jodhpur); in one of the niches in the Pipladmātā temple (dedicated originally to Viṣṇu and dating to the second quarter of the eighth century) at Pipar (district Jodhpur); in the south left *karṇa* niche of the Sūrya temple no. 2 (probably a mid-eighth century shrine dedicated to Sūrya) at Osian; in one of the *jagatī* niches of the Harihara temple no. 2 (dedicated to Harihara and dating tentatively to the third quarter of the eighth century) at Osian; in the south *bhadra* niche of the Ranchodji temple (perhaps a Vaiṣṇava shrine dating to the mid-ninth century) at Khed; in the north *bhadra* niche of the Viṣṇu temple no. 2 (dedicated to Viṣṇu and dating to the third quarter of the ninth century) at Osian; in the south *bhadra* niche of the Viṣṇu temple (original sectarian association of this late ninth century temple is not known) at Pipar; in the south *bhadra* niche of the Triple shrine (eighth-ninth century shrine dedicated to Viṣṇu, Śiva and Sūrya) at Amwan; and in the south right *karṇa* of one of the *jagatī* niches of the Harihara temple no. 1 (originally dedicated to Viṣṇu and dated to late second quarter of the eighth century) at Osian.

In Madhya Pradesh the rare specimen of all the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu carved in a continuous panel are found in one of the shrines at Batesara over the doorway. The north and the south *bhadra* niches of the Chaturbhuja temple (dedicated to Viṣṇu and dated in 875 AD) at Gwalior depict respectively the Trivikrama and the Varāha incarnations of Viṣṇu. Both these forms are also mentioned in one of the inscriptions engraved in the temple. Some of the other niches also contain other incarnations, viz. Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, Vāmana, Narasiṁha, Rāma, Kalki and Buddha. A number of Sun temples in Madhya Pradesh have also yielded Varāha images. The Sun temple (dedicated to Sūrya and dated to c. 825-850 AD) at Umri (district Tikamgarh) contains Varāha image in the south *bhadra* niche of the *adhiṣṭhāna* portion. Besides this two more incarnations—Kṛṣṇa killing Ariṣṭāsura and Narasiṁha—have also been found. The Sun temple (dedicated to Sūrya and dated to c. 850-875 AD) at Markhera (district Tikamgarh) has yielded as many as seven incarnations of Viṣṇu including Varāha. The Sun temple (dedicated to Sūrya and dated in the tenth century) at Sesai (district Shivpuri) has yielded all the ten incarnations on the *rupe-śākhā* of the northern and southern doorways. These references are clearly symptomatic of the popularity of the incarnations of Viṣṇu in general and the Varāha form in particular.

Forms of Patronage

An analysis of the nature of patronage would require clear inscriptional evidence and hence we would have to analyze the inscriptional evidence to examine both the agencies

involved in patronizing activities and the nature of patronage. There were many ways in which patronage could be extended. These include:

- Building new temples or renovating existing ones.

- Grants of immovable assets or cash in perpetuity.

- Supply of commodities of daily use.

- A part of the taxes in cash or kind to be diverted to temples.

Similarly there were many agencies which could extend patronage:

- Pratīhāra Overlord

- Subordinate Rulers

- Individual merchants or Merchant Community or Guilds

- Religious Organizations or *maṭhas*

There is a definite dearth of references of direct patronage to temples, in any form by the Pratīhāra Overlord. This is rather intriguing when one looks at many references of the king giving revenue free land or village(s) to brāhmaṇas or *maṭhas*. These include:

1. Grant of a village by Nāgabhaṭa-II to *śrī bhaṭṭa brahmacārī* Durgilla belonging to the Kauthumat Chāndoga branch of the Sāmaveda and the Bhārgava *gotra*.[165]

2. Grant of an *agrahāra* to the meritorious brāhmaṇa children of *bhaṭṭa* Indragurū, who belonged to the Dālibhya *gotra* and was a student of the Bahvric *śākhā* of the Rig-Veda, by Nāgabhaṭadeva.[166]

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[165] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 9, pp. 145-150.

3. Donation of an *agrahāra*, by Nāgabhaṭa-II, to a number of brāhmaṇas born of the family of *bhaṭṭa* Prabhākararāta of the Bhāradvāja *gotra* and the Mādhyandina-Vājasaneya *śākhā*.[167]

4. Reconfirmation of a grant of *agrahāra* by Bhoja to brāhmaṇas born of the family of Kācarasvāmin, who belonged to the Bhārdvāja *gotra* and was a student of the Vājasaneya *śākhā*.[168]

5. Grant of a village by Mihira Bhoja to *bhaṭṭa* Khokhra belonging to the Śarkarakṣi *gotra* and Śāṅkhāyana recension of the Vedas.[169]

6. Grant of a village as an *agrahāra* first by Vatsarāja and later reconfirmed by Mihira Bhoja to the descendents of *bhaṭṭa* Vāsudeva and *bhaṭṭa* Viṣṇu, after being apprised of its discontinuation by *bhaṭṭa* Harṣuka, Vāsudeva's grandson.[170]

7. Grant of a village, along with its suburbs, by Mihira Bhoja to *bhaṭṭa brahmacārī* Chaṭhila belonging to Lakṣyagaṇya gotra, Śāṅkhāyana *śākhā* of the Ṛg-Veda and bahvṛca *caraṇa*.[171]

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[166] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 8, pp. 199-201.

[167] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 4, pp. 104-110.

[168] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 15-19.

[169] Mishra, 1990, pp. 47-50.

[170] *EI*, vol. V, pp. 208-213.

[171] *Prāgdhārā*, vol. 13, pp. 169-179.

8. Grant of a village by Mahendrapāladeva to *bhaṭṭa* Padmāsara of the Sāvarṇa *gotra* and a student of the Kauthuma-Chāndogya *śākhā*.[172]

9. Grant of a village to *bhaṭṭa* Bhullāka, of the Darbhi *gotra* and a student of the Atharva-Veda, by Vināyakapāladeva.[173]

10. Grant of a village as an *agrahāra* to six thousand brāhmaṇas, of various *gotras* and *pravaras*, by Trilocanapāla.[174]

11. Grant of a village by Yaśaḥpāla to Māthura Vikaṭa of Pabhosā.[175]

As against this the instances of direct patronage to temples by the Pratīhāra Overlord are rather meagre.

The reference in the Gwalior *praśasti* to building of a Viṣṇu temple by Bhoja in his seraglio (*antaḥpura*) seems to an act of personal merit.[176] There is an inscription in the Mahāvīra temple at Osian dated AD 956 which refers to victorious accomplishments of Vatsarāja Pratīhāra.[177] The inscription was engraved by a family which had added certain embellishments to the temple almost two hundred years after Vatsarāja. It would

[172] *IA*, vol. XV, pp. 105-113.

[173] *IA*, vol. XV, pp. 138-141.

[174] *EI*, vol. XVIII, pp. 33-35.

[175] *ASI-An. Rep.*, 1923-24, pp. 122-124.

[176] *EI*, vol. XVIII, pp. 100-114.

[177] *EITA*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 153.

be difficult to infer on the basis of this inscription anything about possible linkages between the temple and Vatsarāja. The first grant of the Pratabgarh inscription refers to 'a grant of a village in favour of Vaṭayakṣiṇīdevī, issued by Mahendrapāla-II of Mahodaya in AD 946.[178] A more interesting reference though comes from the Asni inscription of Mahīpāla, dated AD 921, which states that 'whenever there should be a special occasion, five hundred *drammas* should be given out of the hereditary tax belonging to the King's household' to the temple of Yogasvāmin (Śiva).[179] It shows a rather close association of Mahīpāla with this temple, which was possibly built by him. The eighth record of the Kaman inscription dated year 299 = 905 AD records that 'some *drammas* were formerly made over by Bhojadeva to Pramāṇarāśi which the latter gave to Caṇḍuka. After former's death, the latter gave the amount to the *goṣṭhikā* (perhaps of the Kāmyakeśvara temple) and they purchased two *āvārikas* (shops) with the amount.[180] It seems the reference highlights the patronage extended to Pramāṇarāśi rather than the temple.

Most of the references of patronage to temples in the Gurjara-Pratīhāra inscriptions are those of the rulers who acknowledged the Pratīhāra overlordship. They clearly refer

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[178] *EI*, vol. XIV, pp. 176-188.

[179] *IA*, vol. XVI, pp. 173-175, *yāvat pālanīya yadi kṣaṇam bhavati tadā tadā maula kara rājakulasya drammaḥ śatāni pañca dra 500 dātavyam.*

[180] *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 329-336.

to the sovereign but take the credit for the patronage extended. Following is the list of such references:

1. The undated *praśasti* of the time of Mahendrapāla-II, discovered at Pehowa, records the building of three adjacent shrines of Viṣṇu by three brothers Gogga, Purṇarāja and Devarāja who belonged to the line of the Tomaras. Their grandfather Jaula is stated to have 'gained property by looking after the affairs of his sovereign.' Three villages were also given as perpetual endowments to the said temples.[181]

2. An inscription found in the village Jhinjhauta in the Farrukhabad district of the time of Bhoja records the construction of a Viṣṇu temple and construction of an idol by Bālāditya. The latter seems to be an important and influential personage who had cordial relations with Bhoja and finds mention also in the Barah inscription and the Gwalior *praśasti* of Bhoja.[182]

3. A recently discovered inscription from the village Nohna-Narasingh near Kanpur records the construction perhaps of a Vaiṣṇava shrine probably by the wife of one Śubhāditya who is referred in the inscription as expert in imparting instructions to kings. The inscription also mentions Mihira Bhoja as the reigning king and Bālāditya.[183]

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[181] *EI*, vol. I, pp. 242-250.

[182] *Prāgdhārā*, no. 1, pp. 1-2.

[183] *Svasti Śrī*, B. Ch. Chhabra Felicitation Volume, 1984, pp. 81-85.

4. The second record of the Pratabgarh inscription records a grant of village under the enjoyment of *śrī* Vidagdha, in favour of Indrādityadeva (the Sun god) by Mādhava, the provincial governor of Ujjain (under Mahendrapāla-II), at the request of Cāhamāna Indrarāja, the builder of the temple and a local subordinate chief.[184]

5. The inscription of Pratīhāra Vatsarāja of AD 795 records the construction of a temple for the goddess Caṇḍikā along with the surrounding gardens by Gallaka, a subordinate chief or official under Vatsarāja.[185]

6. One of the two inscriptions found from the Caturbhuja temple in Gwalior refers to the construction of a temple dedicated to Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin (Viṣṇu) by Alla, who was appointed as the *'Gopādripāla'* (protector of Gopādri) by *Ādivarāha* (Bhoja). The second inscription refers to another temple of the Navadurgās constructed by him. The Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple was richly endowed with land and other resources by the *vāra*, the local civic authority.[186]

7. The plates found from Una (AD 893 and 898) issued first by Balavarman and later by his son Avanivarman-II Yoga record the grant of two villages to the temple of Taruṇāditya, the Sun god. A royal sanction by Mahendrapāla-I is clearly indicated by

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[184] *EI,* vol. XXIV, pp. 329-336.

[185] *EI,* vol. XLI, pp. 49-57.

[186] *EI,* vol. I, pp. 154-159.

the presence and signature of an official who, in all probability, was the Kanauj's representative to the local court.[187]

8. The Bayana inscription of the time of Mahīpāla-II (dated 955) refers to gifts of two villages, along with certain other endowments, by Citralekhā, a queen belonging to the family of Mayurika and wife of a chief named Mangalarāja.[188]

9. The Rajor inscription of Mathanadeva of the time of Pratīhāra Vijayapāladeva (AD 959-60) records the grant of a village to the temple of Lacchukeśvara (Śiva) which the former had built. Some other taxes and tithes were also diverted towards the sub-shrine of Gaṇeśa in the said Śiva temple. Mathanadeva has been referred to as *mahārājādhirāja parameśvara* of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra lineage and his father Sāvaṭa as *mahārājādhirāja* which shows that the family saw a consistent enhancement in political status.[189]

These references clearly indicate that there was a very different pattern of patronage extended by the overlord and his subordinate rulers. While there are many references of overlord giving grants of land or villages to brāhmaṇas, very few inscriptional references of any form of direct patronage to temples are forthcoming.[190] The scene is

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[187] *EI*, vol. IX, pp. 4-10.

[188] *EI*, vol. XXII, pp. 120-126.

[189] *EI*, vol. III, pp. 263-67.

[190] On the questions of patronage and legitimacy two rather concretely demarcated phases have been identified. Between c. 4th to the 8th centuries, brāhmaṇas are believed to have provided tools to legitimize the rule of their patrons in many ways which are quite well known. Proliferation of brāhmaṇas also resulted in,

almost completely reversed in the case of the subordinates. It needs to be emphasizes here that land, throughout the history of India, has been an important, rather the most important resource, coveted at all times. Control over land was a mark of sovereignty, so giving away land in gift would have been a prerogative of the overlord. Even in the case of the Pratīhāras, except for the Pehowa *praśasti*, which refers to the grant of three villages by the three Tomara brothers to the temples constructed by them and the Rajor inscription of Mathanadeva, no other inscription refers to any donation of land or village which is not under any kind of private control. There are references to donations of land or villages which were either under the enjoyment of some political authority (as in the case of *śrī* Vidagdha of the Pratabgarh inscription) or owned by the whole town (as in

largely through their own efforts, internal transformation of tribal communities through peasantization and adoption of Sanskritic culture. From around the beginning of the ninth century, with the emergence of supra-local and regional polities a shift in this neat pattern is discernible. It has been pointed out that notwithstanding the increased production in the period, the restricted resource base resulted in tensions of sorts, enhanced exactions evident in the Candella, Gāhaḍavāla, Coḷa and Hoyasala records; unrest among peasantry against 'overlapping claims of non-peasant surplus appropriators including the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries; and increasing concern of the state about revenue free grants which were seen as 'a major source of fiscal constraint' in an economic environment driven by maximum mobilization in limited resource base. This led to what has been termed as brāhmaṇa-peasant, *sāmanta*-brāhmaṇa and *sāmanta*-peasant conflicts. The situation led to the shift in the patronage strategy from brāhmaṇas to temples, through which the royalty 'augmented and supplemented the threatened power and position'. (Sahu, 1985, pp. 180-189). Merits of the argument notwithstanding our engagement with the Pratīhāra sources tends to indicate a dichotomy of a different king, which was not temporally exclusive as explained in the narrative. It might have been a transitional phase, though we do not come across any conflict like situation, or was perhaps simply a regional variant.

the case of the *vāra* of the Gwalior Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple inscription). Interestingly the references to donations of land or villages by such towns through their civic bodies do not mention disbursement of any resources. The very title of Mathanadeva indicates that he was considerably powerful and perhaps autonomous. Moreover, by AD 960 the Pratīhāra power was beginning to wane in western India.

The question at another level also highlights that giving away revenue free grants to temples or to brāhmaṇas, of land or villages along with taxes and revenues/resources was still a prerogative of the overlord. Even in such outlying areas as Gujarat ratification by a royal representative was necessary as is indicated by the Una Plates. But how does one explain a clear penchant of the local subordinate rulers and officials more so in far flung areas, towards building of temples. Two points may be seen:

- Building of Brahmanical temples by newly emerging lineages in such outlying areas as Rajasthan and the Betwa Valley would have provided them with a more appropriate way of articulating with local/tribal traditions for legitimacy and also for a local unique identity.

- Acknowledgement of the overlordship of the sovereign at such occasions would have provided the overlord an overarching acceptance and legitimacy and at the same time an enhanced space for the subordinate in a larger political spectrum.

Quite similar to these would have been the reasons for the construction of non-Brahmanical shrines. At the same time, it seems giving land or villages in perpetuity to

brāhmaṇas of important lineages or to powerful *maṭhas* was still an important way to seek legitimacy and validation of power, which was, at least in the case of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras was almost exclusively exercised by the Pratīhāra overlord.

Besides the political strata, another important agency which was actively involved in patronizing temples was the class of merchants and artisans either as individuals, as informal mercantile or artisanal groups or as guilds. Sīyaḍoṇī, Ahar, Kaman, Garh, Bhilsa and many other inscriptions are abounding in references to these groups patronizing religious affiliations of their choice either by constructing temples, installing new images, donating money or commodities in perpetuity or donating houses or shops to temples.

Similar was the case with certain sects like the Pāśupatas of the Sirsa inscription or the *maṭha* of Hari-Ṛṣiśvara of the Pratabgarh inscription, who in some cases acted as agencies of patronage and in others as the beneficiaries.

Much of the archaeological data that we have analyzed does not give any tangible inscriptional reference to comprehend patronage both in terms of agency or form. Under these circumstances it is rather difficult to be categorical about inferences. At the same time, we need to understand that temples such as the Kuraiya Bir at Kuchdon, Śāntinātha temple at Deogarh, Gādarmal temple at Badoh, Sūrya temple at Umri, Mālādevī temple at Gyaraspur, Jarai-Kī-Maṭha temple at Barwasnagar, Saciyāmātā, Harihara # 1, Mahāvīra and Harihara temples at Osian, Ranchodji temple at Khed and

Dharmanātha temple complex at Dhamnar, along with the temples at Varman and Abaneri etc., would have derived significant patronage on a consistent basis from a rich source, either political or mercantile-artisanal which is evinced by their sheer size, presence of subsidiary shrines (many of these temples are *pañcāyātana*; Dharmanātha temple complex has seven sub-shrines), ornamentation and embellishment and renovations on a consistent basis.

Thus it becomes intelligible that temples derived considerable, if not unprecedented, patronage through various quarters which helped them emerge as economically, and perhaps politically vibrant institutions. The Ahar inscription provides a glimpse of it. Here the temple of Kanakaśrīdevī through its Sauvvarṇika Mahājanas was continuously investing money in buying shops in various parts of the *pūrvva haṭṭa pradeśa*. This sort of deliberation was, in a sense, an urban variant, on a smaller scale, of the activities of the Thanjavur temple during the Cola period. Quite possibly, these temples after buying shops in the market gave them on lease to individuals thereby helping in the dissemination and redistribution of wealth in the society.

6

Conclusions

Genesis of the Pratīhāras of Kanauj was a part of the larger process of origin of Rajputs

from around the beginnings of the seventh century AD. The Pratīhāras belonged to the

tribal Gurjara stock and while it is not known as to how the appellation Pratīhāra came

to be associated with them, it later came to denote clan or family status. There is some,

though rather inadequate, evidence that the central and eastern, and perhaps also south-

central, parts of modern Rajasthan came to be known by the name Gurjaratrā, perhaps

because of the predominant Gurjara population. While most of the early references to

Pratīhāra clan/family come from the Jodhpur area, the Pratīhāras of Kanauj seem to

have established their early control over areas around modern Jalor and Bhinmal, which

was probably extended to mainland coastal areas of Gujarat and Malwa. Under

Vatsarāja the Pratīhāras seem to have gained control over much of western India and

even when he was actively involved in extending the Pratīhāra dominions towards the

Ganga valley, it was only under Nāgabhaṭa-II that they shifted their base to Kanauj

probably sometime between 815 and 827 AD.

The period from the early ninth to the early tenth centuries, spanning the reigns of

Nāgabhaṭa-II, Mihira Bhoja and Mahendrapāla-I (approx. 836-907/12), was one of

expansion of the state. First cracks into the Pratīhāra state structure began from the time

of Mahīpāla whose reign saw challenges from both within the kingdom, probably from

Bhoja-II, a rival claimant to the throne and from outside, in the form of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Indra-

III's formidable invasion. The disintegration of the Pratīhāra state was a gradual process

and invasions of Mehmūd only proved to be the last nail in the coffin. From around the

middle of the tenth century, erstwhile subordinates and collateral Pratīhāra ruling

houses started throwing away the yoke of the Pratīhāra overlordship.

Post-Gupta centuries saw a relative slump in foreign trade, which seems to have

commenced from around the sixth century AD. Concomitantly, the process of

emergence of local polities, free from the ripple effect of the Ganga valley, gained

momentum. These local polities sustained themselves on limited, local, and largely

agrarian resource base. The resource base of the Pratīhāra state, with its supra-regional

expanse, though, comprised of both agrarian and non-agrarian elements.

In the agrarian context, land was the most coveted resource. It seems in the period

under consideration, arable land was individually owned but the state had the right to

transfer village resources, owned by it, and other taxes to the beneficiary. It is perhaps

because of this that the grants (or regrants) of the Pratīhāra sovereign were always of

villages (or *agrahāras*) as against the grants of fields or land, which were almost always

associated with individuals. Instead of a detailed list of resources and taxes diverted to

the grantee, the inscriptions issued by the Pratīhāras contained the term *sarvvāya sameta*.

The use of such a term was perhaps a result of a standardized way of composition of the

grants and also because it could subsume all regional variations, something that is clearly borne out by a perusal of subordinate grants.

As regards taxes in the agrarian context, *bhāga*, *bhoga*, *kara* and *hiraṇya*, commonly, though not always, occurring as a block seem to have comprised of the basic taxes, both in cash and kind, associated with agriculture. Besides this, *khalabhikṣā* and *prasthaka*, mentioned in the Rajor inscription, were also associated with agricultural produce. Many other terms used either for village resources or taxes are not very clear. While due to the want of adequate data, it is quite difficult to assess the incidence of taxation, references to additional cesses and to terms like *ucitānucita* and *nibaddhānibaddha* seem to indicate a rather coercive nature of taxation.

For the non-agrarian context, there is enough inscriptional data to show the existence of a number of towns, some considerably large, most of which comprised of one or more market areas. There are references to both settled and *yātrā* kind of markets. It seems some centres like Pṛthūdaka and Gopagirī had emerged as nodal centres which attracted merchants from adjoining places for trading their goods. Without getting into the question of quantification or relative strength of precious and non-precious commodities, which is somewhat difficult to ascertain primarily because of some degree of imbalance due to preponderance of copper plates, one can very well argue for both trade in precious commodities and long distance exchange on the basis of references to goldsmiths, who also traded in these articles, in the Ahar inscription, to horse dealers in

the Pehowa inscription of the Garībanātha temple, and to worker of conch shells in the Kaman inscription. On the other hand, Rajor, Sīyaḍoṇi and Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple (Gwalior) inscriptions bring out the importance of non-precious commodities in trade.

In relation with the social organization of trading and craft groups, our analysis suggests that there were many market areas where guilds were not functional. In fact, the whole idea of guilds transforming into castes is somehow not borne out by the contemporary inscriptional evidence. Caste formation was certainly a complex process and can not be explained through such linear and simplified analyses. There is a perceptible dearth of tax terms associated with trade and craft in the Pratīhāra inscriptions but surely institutions like *maṇḍapikā* and *haṭṭa-dāna* (which comes from a limited geographical context) are a clear testimony to the fact that goods moving from one place to another were taxed, and likewise merchants trading in the market areas also had to pay some tithe. Contemporary inscriptional and numismatic evidence clearly shows that even with consistent debasement of the silver content in the billon coins, the economy under the Pratīhāras was fairly monetized (again terms like complete, partial or under monetization are only relative ostensibly to the Kuṣāṇa-Gupta periods). It seems besides the imperial coinage, some government agencies, like the *pañcakula* of Sīyaḍoṇi, and perhaps even private minters were also authorized to mint, on a limited scale, certain coins which were popular in their local contexts. To analyze the consistent debasement in a proper perspective it is important to know the purchasing power of the

coins and changes in the demand and supply of commodities and the precious metal used in the coins over a long span of time. Unfortunately this sort of information is not forthcoming. Possibly the debasement was part of a deliberate policy to regulate the currency at a time when silver was scarce in the whole of Asia. At any rate, neither debasement nor localization of coins, in any way, means decline in trade, either foreign or domestic which continues for half a millennium, or under monetization.

Structurally, the Pratīhāra state was not a centralized monarchy, neither was it a fragmented polity. There were surely some attempts made by the powerful rulers like Nāgabhaṭa and Bhoja towards centralization. Nāgabhaṭa's endeavour to look afresh at religious grants given by previous ruling houses, Bhoja's attempt to standardize the length measurement system (admittedly, though, for this there is only a semblance of indication) and a complete absence of grants by subordinates during his reign give some credence to the point mooted here.

Even when the Pratīhāras claimed a sovereign status sometimes by projecting themselves as victorious in all the four directions, or by portraying their exalted status vis-à-vis their subordinates, they never explicitly used the term *cakravartī* in their inscriptions. Reasons for this are difficult to ascertain but given the fact that exactly same could be said about the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, it seems that all these ruling houses, even if implicitly, acknowledged the sovereign independent status of each other.

There are not many references to *sāmantas* in the inscriptions associated with the Pratīhāras. Most of these come from the outlying parts towards the south-western direction. Many of these *mahāsāmantas*, especially those associated with the Saurashtra region, were local rulers who had accepted the overlordship of the Pratīhāras. These local rulers seem to have had a reasonable amount of internal autonomy, but surely they were kept in check at least to the time of Mahendrapāla-I when it came to expression of sovereign status. Some of the other more contiguous areas like Sīyaḍoṇi and Luacchagiri (modern Lalitpur) were bestowed upon royal officials, who were give a *sāmanta* status and who probably ruled these territories as enjoyments. There was also possibly an attempt by the Pratīhāras, especially Bhoja-I, Mahendrapāla-I and perhaps Mahīpāla also, whereby territories contiguous to the directly administered areas on the western flank were given to the collateral lines of the Pratīhāras or to trusted officials. Emergence of the Pratīhāras of Sīyaḍoṇi and Rajor and of the Tomaras in areas around modern Pehowa was perhaps a part of this process. This would have not only minimized chances of attack or fragmentation in the western parts but would have also created a buffer zone against threats from further west. Sources for this sort of inference, it has to be conceded, are rather meagre.

Both, the terms for territorial divisions and also for administrative officials are hard to come by primarily owing to the nature of composition of the Pratīhāra land grants. Two points are quite clear though—one, that there were not many changes brought

about in the administrative structure from Harṣa's time and second, that regional variation in both, the structure as well as terms for references, were kept intact. This is also corroborated by subordinate grants.

There is some important information forthcoming regarding town administration under the Pratīhāras. Urban centres like Pṛthūdaka, Tattānandapura and Gopagirī were under direct administration since the associated inscriptions do not refer to any local ruler or enjoying authority. As against this, Sīyaḍoṇi was given to a high royal functionary and Ujjayini was being ruled over by a local subordinate ruler. We come across terms like *uttara sabhā* (at Ahar) and *vāra* (at Gwalior and Siron-Khurd), which actually denoted committees looking after the affairs of these towns. They seem to have comprised of both, local influential people and royal officials and were, in all probability, periodically reconstituted.

With reference to military organization, two points are important—one, that there was an increasing reliance of the Pratīhāras, perhaps because of the Arab threat, on horses, as compared to the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, and there is some evidence to show that horses brought from west and north-west were traded in periodic fairs in north India. Two, that the Pratīhāra army comprised of an amalgam of both royal forces and those of the subordinates but at the same time there were standing army contingents, both, permanently stationed forces guarding the frontiers and reserves. This kind of situation would have surely necessitated a monetized economy.

The Pratīhāras of Kanauj had their early growth in areas around modern Bhinmal and Jalor. In this phase locally popular motifs were used towards legitimizing the power structure. This is quite clearly evidenced by the association of the early Pratīhāra rulers, at least up to Nāgabhaṭa-II, with Jainism or with the cult of Śakti in the form of Kṣemaṅkarī. But as the locus of the state shifted to Ganga valley, the Brahmanical heartland, new challenges came to the fore. The biggest challenge was to negotiate their tribal antecedents repeatedly highlighted in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscriptions. A number of strategies were devised towards this. One was to link the family with the solar lineage through the Pratīhāra motif associated with Lakṣamaṇa. Besides, there was also probably a change carried out in the royal insignia from kettledrum and snake to the figure of a door-keeper. Gradually, the family started claiming a more categorical connection with the *Raghuvaṁśa*.

It was perhaps a need for political validation in a religiously plural society that drove the Pratīhāras, from the time of Nāgabhaṭa-II, to project themselves as a family where each ruler devoted himself to a specific Brahmanical deity. This would have not only offset their tribal background and early association with Jainism, but would have also helped in establishing their credentials as followers and adherents of Brahmanical tradition.

The Pratīhāras also faced a serious military challenge from the western and north-western sides in the form of repeated conflicts with the Arabs, who had, by this time,

Sindh and Multan under their control. While the Arabs posed a challenge which was essentially political similar to that from the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Pratīhāras probably viewed this as a threat from an alien belief system and projected themselves as ones who had taken up the mettle to save the Brahmanical tradition from this new belief system. This was significant also in strategic terms as their staunch enemy, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, had rather cordial terms with the Arabs. It was towards this aim that the Varāha motif seems to have been formulated. Bhoja, for sure, but perhaps other subsequent rulers also took up the title of *Ādivarāha* which was symptomatic of their endeavour towards saving the earth from calamity of an alien culture.

A major constituent of the legitimation strategy was the nature of patronage extended both to the brāhmaṇas and to temples. Whatever may have been the rationale behind making grants of land but at the basic level they were acts of extending patronage and need to be seen in the same manner. Our study reveals that there was a perceptible divergence between the nature of patronage extended by the sovereign and subordinates or officials. While the former were inclined more towards patronizing brāhmaṇas, by giving grants of villages as *agrahāra*, the latter were more closely associated with temple building activities and granting land to them. This goes to show that granting of land to brāhmaṇas was a more deeply entrenched format to gain legitimacy within the Brahmanical tradition and had a supra-regional reach. Building temples or renovating them was more relevant in outlying local contexts where certain

sects/cults were more popular than others. For local subordinate rulers, political validation in their own local contexts was more relevant as against the sovereign whose ideological strategies were directed more towards the Ganga valley.

Like most other big states, the state under the Pratīhāras also saw the three stages of early growth, consolidation and decline. The first stage was marked by the expansion in western India, mainly through conquests but also by integration as is indicated by the Hansot plate of Bhartrvrddha. This was followed by a shift to Kanauj which also resulted in the shift of core areas to modern Uttar Pradesh. At the same time the areas of early growth became outlying. The second phase saw the dual process of consolidation of core areas which seen have been brought under direct administration, and integration of outlying areas, many of which were once directly controlled by the Pratīhāras but with the shift to Kanauj saw the emergence of local polities, in west, north-west and south-west directions. From the nature of evidence, it is difficult to ascertain as to how this integration was brought about but surely, this kind of political structure was marked by a symbiotic relationship between the sovereign and subordinates where the desired balance was achieved with the fulcrum coinciding with the centre of gravity. In the third phase as the Pratīhāra power declined, the fulcrum started moving in favour of subordinates, resulting in an irreversible imbalance. The core territory also kept shrinking consistently because of the invasions of Mehmūd and ultimately came to be confined to areas around Allahabad and Kosam. The Pratīhāras had reached a full circle

from where they had once begun with great promise. They were once again a local

polity.

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