



ไทยศึกษา

Institute of Thai Studies, Chulalongkorn University

# BUDDHIST NARRATIVE IN ASIA AND BEYOND

VOLUME ONE

Edited by Peter Skilling and Justin McDaniel



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Institute of Thai Studies  
Chulalongkorn University

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# BUDDHIST NARRATIVE IN ASIA AND BEYOND

In Honour of  
HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn  
on Her Fifty-Fifth Birth Anniversary

Edited by  
Peter Skilling and Justin McDaniel

Volume One

Institute of Thai Studies  
Chulalongkorn University



**ธนาคารกสิกรไทย**  
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# Māndhātara, the Universal Monarch, and the Meaning of Representations of the Cakravartin in the Amaravati School, and of the Kings on the Kanaganahalli Stūpa\*

Monika Zin

## Abstract

The paper will examine various representations of *cakravartins* from the Amaravati region on the basis of literary traditions and through analysis of representations of historical kings on the *stūpa* slabs at Kanaganahalli. Particular focus will be laid on the relation of the *cakravartins*' representations to the life-story of the Buddha (the story of Māndhātara is depicted next to the representation of the Bodhisatva in the Tuṣita heaven) and on their relation to early Buddhist understanding of kingship.

For several years I have worked towards the completion of the publication *The Narrative Art of the Amaravati School*. This monograph shall include all known reliefs (first century BCE – fourth century CE), even those preserved only in old drawings.

Our knowledge regarding Buddhist art in South India has been increasing steadily. In the last few decades whole new sites have come to light, including Phanigiri in Andhra Pradesh and Kanaganahalli in Karnataka. But even prior to the discovery of yet more new sites, just sieving through the available data alone has produced striking results.

Statistics show that in the Amaravati School the most frequently represented narrative is

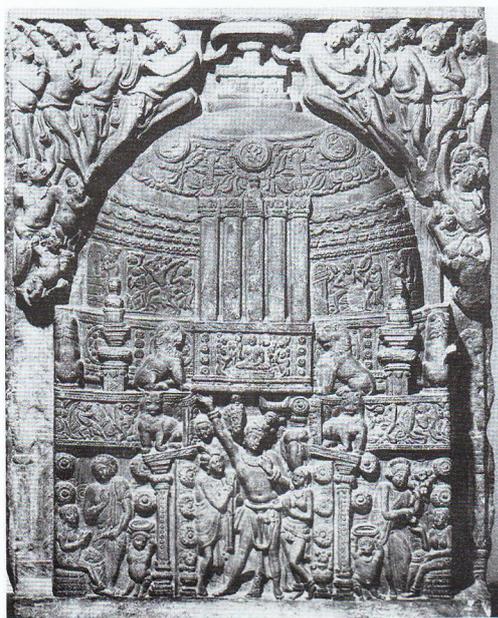


Figure 1

the story of King Māndhātara, which appears 47 times. In addition to these, there are 15 representations of the *cakravartin* ruler surrounded by his Seven Jewels (Figure 1), which most probably also represent Māndhātara since such scenes belong in several instances to sequences that show a relevant narrative. Therefore, there are 62 representations,<sup>1</sup> without taking into account scenes showing kings with entourages, which are usually also labelled *cakravartins* in museums.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of *cakravartin*, the universal monarch with Seven Jewels, is a frequent topic in Buddhist literature;<sup>3</sup> it is discussed, for instance, in the *Mahāsudassanasutta*

**Figure 1:** *Stūpa* slab from Nagarjunakonda, New Delhi, National Museum, illus. e.g., in: Elisabeth Rosen Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakonda* (Buddhist Tradition Series, 25, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994), Fig. 146.

\* I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Lore Sander (Berlin), to Prof. Dieter Schlingloff (Leipzig) and to Prof. Adelheid Mette (Munich) for our discussions and their help in reading the inscriptions, as well as to Prof. Paul Yule (Heidelberg) and Mrs. Madhulika Reddy (Bangalore) for valuable suggestions and for correcting my English.

1. By way of comparison, the second most frequently depicted *jātaka* is the narrative of King Sibi-Sarvaṃdada which is represented 26 times, while the most frequently narrated episode from the legend of the Buddha is the defeat of Māra, represented 54 times in the Amaravati School.

2. Cf. e.g., No. 49 and 53 in the British Museum, No. 100 and 102 in: Robert Knox, *Amaravati, Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stūpa* (London: British Museum Press, 1992) illus. 179 and 184.

3. References e.g., in the article by Sanath Nanayakkara, "Cakravartin," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* Vol. 3.4 (Colombo: Government of Ceylon, 1977) 591-596.

**Figure 2:** Chennai Government Museum, No. 135, illus. e.g., Calambur Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum* (Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, N.S. 4; Madras: Government Press, 1942) Pl. 33.1; hereafter, Ludwig Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture* (München, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929) Pl. 115a.

4. Indumati Armelin, *Le roi détenteur de la roue solaire en révolution "cakravartin" selon le brahmanisme et selon le bouddhisme* (Paris: Geuthner, 1975).

5. Cf. for instance, Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Der Jainismus. Eine indische Erlösungsreligion* (Berlin: Alf Häger, 1925) 255-57, 292ff.

6. Like the ancestral head of the family, King Bharata, son of Duṣṣanta and Śakuntalā: (*MBh* I.69.45-47, trans. 170-171): "And the glorious Wheel of the great-spirited Bharata rolled thundering through the worlds, grand, radiant, divine, unvarnished. He defeated the kings of the earth and made them his vassals: he lived the Law of the strict and attained sublime fame. He was the king, a Turner of the Wheel [*cakravartin*], a majestic worldwide monarch. He sacrificed many sacrifices, he was an Indra, lord of the winds ..."; or the future liberator (*MBh* III. 188.89-91, trans. 597): "A Brahmin by name of Kalki Viṣṇuśaśas will arise, prodded by Time, of great prowess, wisdom, and might. He will be born in the village Sambhala, in a pious Brahmin dwelling, and at his mere thought all vehicles, weapons, warriors, arms, and coats of mail will wait on him. He will be a king, a Turner of the Wheel [*cakravartin*], triumphant by the Law, and he will bring this turbulent world to tranquillity"; cf. also e.g., *MBh* I. 67.29, III.88.7 regarding Bharata or *MBh* III.107.1, III.188.91 regarding Bhagiratha.

7. Jan Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966) 92; *Vāyupurāṇa* 57.68; *Matsyapurāṇa* CXLI.67, trans. 39.

8. The first seven differ, however, from the Buddhist, the *Vāyupurāṇa* 1.57.68 (trans. *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology*, Vol. 37: 402-03) states: "The following seven, viz. a discus, a chariot, a jewel, a spouse, a treasure, a horse and an elephant, are regarded as super-gems (*ati-ratna*). They say that the following seven are the inanimate jewels of the sovereigns of the worlds, viz. a discus, a chariot, a jewel, a sword, an excellent bow (the fifth *ratna*), a flag and a treasure. The seven jewels (of an emperor) possessing life are mentioned as follows: queen, family-priest, commander-in-chief, chariot-maker, minister, horse and elephant." Cf. also the *Matsyapurāṇa*, chapter CXLI, trans. 39.

9. Cf. e.g., a banner from Dunhuang, illus. in: Roderick Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia, The Stein-Collection in the British Museum. 1. Paintings from Dunhuang* (Tokyo: Kodansha International & The Trustees of the British Museum, 1982) Vol. 1, Pl. 32; or a Chinese stone stele, illus. in: Audrey Spiro, "Hybrid Vigor. Memory, Mimesis, and the Matching of Meanings in Fifth-Century Buddhist Art," *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200-600*, ed. S. Pearce, et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) Pl. 5.2; depicted is the life story of the Buddha; the Seven Jewels are shown between the episode of Sumati together with the Buddha Dīpaṅkara and the nativity.

(*Dīghanikāya* XVII), *Brahmāyusutta* (*Majjhimanikāya* 91), *Mahāpadānasutta* (*Dīghanikāya* XIV), *Lakkhanasutta* (*Dīghanikāya* XXX), *Cakkavattisihanādasutta* (*Dīghanikāya* XXVI), and *Cakkavattisutta* (*Samyuttanikāya* XLVI.5.2), to name only canonical Pali texts. The term is known not only in Buddhism,<sup>4</sup> although in the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (I.4) Sudyumna is called a *cakravartin*; the *Mahābhārata* uses the title in mythological contexts (as do Buddhist, and later also Jaina,<sup>5</sup> sources), i.e., only to describe mythical persons;<sup>6</sup> while the *Bṛhatkathā*'s tradition talks about the "Cakravartin of all Vidyādharas"; and the *Purāṇas* explain that *cakravartins* are born on earth as partial incarnations (*aṃśa*, inherent portion) of Viṣṇu.<sup>7</sup> In sources that are not mythological, the term has no role to play. The *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* (9.1.18) uses the word only once while talking about technical problems relating to the mountains and the climate, which should be taken into consideration when a *cakravartin* is planning his conquest. Thus, this term denotes a mythological phenomenon and it cannot be ascertained if the word was first used in Buddhist or in Brahmanical sources. But the Seven Jewels (*sapta ratnāni*) – the Jewel of Wheel (*cakra-ratna*), the Jewel of Gem (*maṇi-ratna*), Jewel of Elephant (*gaja-ratna*), Jewel of Horse (*aśva-ratna*), the Jewel of Wife (*strī-ratna*), the Jewel of Citizen (*gṛhapati-ratna*) and the Jewel of General (*nāyaka-ratna*)

– represent Buddhist conceptions. The epics do not name them and the *Purāṇas* repeat the Seven Jewels as 'superior' (*atiratna*) and add fourteen more.<sup>8</sup> Also, the concept of the non-violent conquest of the *cakravartin*, which is possible only because of his moral power, appears to be Buddhist.

The pictorial representation of the *cakravartin* is also a Buddhist creation. The Buddha is a *mahāpuruṣa*, born as a potential *cakravartin*; the Seven Jewels are sometimes represented by his person, especially in relation to his birth, apparently to illustrate his capacity to become a universal ruler.<sup>9</sup> A relief from Amaravati (Figure 2)<sup>10</sup> illustrates the same idea, showing the Bodhisatva in Tuṣita Heaven, i.e., also in the story cycle of his birth, although depicting not just the Seven Jewels (Figure 3), but a narrative (cf. Figure 2 and *infra*, Figures 4-9), namely the story about the *cakravartin* Māndhātara and his conquest of heaven.<sup>11</sup> This is the narrative that is of importance here, since the story of this particular *cakravartin* was chosen for apparently specific reasons.

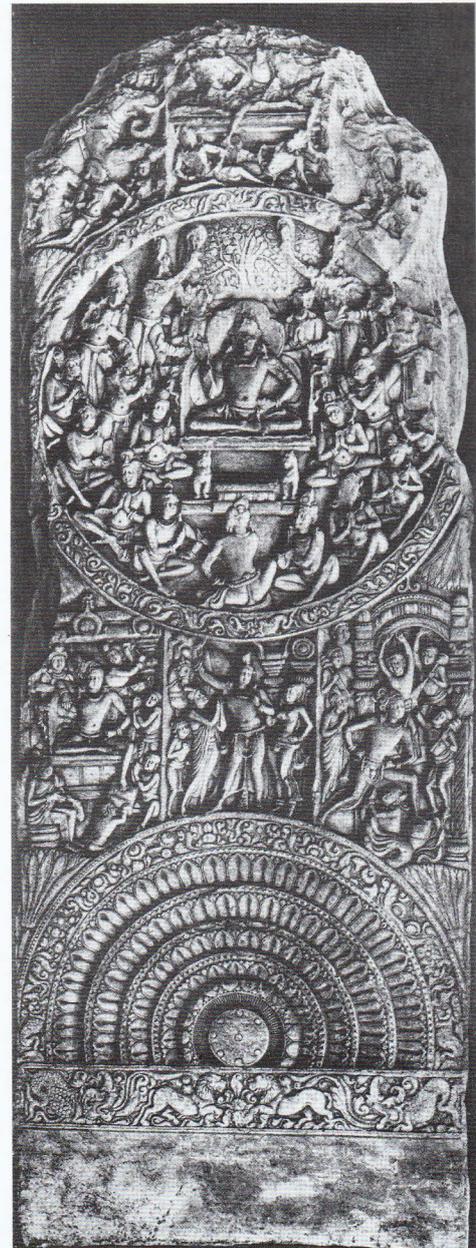


Figure 2



Figure 3

with the Seven Jewels) from the Amaravati School. The reliefs from Amaravati are the oldest known representations of the topic; some of them, such as the famous relief from Jaggayapetta,<sup>16</sup> might be dated to the period before the Common Era.

The story<sup>17</sup> relates that Māndhātara was a miraculously born *cakravartin* with Seven Jewels who could cause rain to fall so that his subjects could prosper; not usual rain, but rain of coins, of grain or of cloth. By virtue of his moral strength alone, Māndhātara conquered the world – without any weapons. He conquered all the countries on earth, then Uttarakuru, Pūrvavideha and Aparagodānīya, after which he set out to conquer the heavens. When he was traversing from one abode of the gods to the next (Nāgas, Sadāmattas, Mālādhara, etc.) groups of gods pledged obeisance to him and immediately marched in front of his troops. Māndhātara reached the splendid city of the Trayastrīṃśa gods atop Sumeru, where Indra, in the meeting-hall, bequeathed to him half of his own seat and half of his heavenly realm. Māndhātara then ruled together with Indra for an unimaginable period of time during which 36 Indras changed. One day, shortly after he won a battle against the Asuras, a sinful thought came to his mind: why should he rule alongside Indra? It was he, after all, who won the war, not Indra – he was better and should, therefore, rule alone. At that very moment Māndhātara fell from heaven, down to his former realm, became sick and died. Shortly before his death, he preached a sermon to his subjects in which *gāthas* from the *Dhammapada* (186-187) appear:

Not though a rain of coins fall from the sky  
 Could anything be found to satisfy.  
 Pain is desire, and sorrow is unrest:  
 He that knows this is wise, and he is blest ...<sup>18</sup>

Representations of this story in the Amaravati School rarely appear as in multi-scene sequences; most depict only one scene with Māndhātara stepping over the Nāga (Figure 4), or the scene with the two kings sharing a common



Figure 4

The frequency of the Māndhātara depictions raises an important question: Why Māndhātara? There are other *cakravartins*, such as Daḥhanemi and Sudarśana, well known in Buddhist literature who are ideal *cakravartins* in possession of the Seven Jewels and perfect moral conduct. Why has the art of the Amaravati School chosen Māndhātara, a morally dubious hero, whose fall from heaven was the result of his boastfulness, his egotistic and sinful thoughts?

The narrative is represented in Bagh,<sup>12</sup> in Kizil,<sup>13</sup> in Tibet,<sup>14</sup> and in reliefs at Borobudur.<sup>15</sup> Against these four depictions there are 47 (or 62 when including the depiction of the *cakravartin*

Figure 3: Detail of Figure 2, photo by the author.

Figure 4: Amaravati, Archaeological Museum Amaravati, No. 30, photo by the author.

10. Ratan Parimoo explains the person on the throne to be Indra, and Māndhātara as the "personage with his back to us" sitting on the floor. Ratan Parimoo, "The Meaning of the Māndhātara Jātaka," *Roopa-Lekha*, 62-63 (Delhi 1993) 38. In addition to the fact that one of the main characteristics of the story, and its pictorial tradition (cf. *infra*), is that Māndhātara and Indra were seated on an equal level, the fact that Indra in the Amaravati School is never represented with a halo contradicts this explanation. Furthermore, the tree is not the *kalpadruma*, but a clearly recognisable *āsvattha*, i.e., the *bodhi* tree of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

11. The two subjects, Māndhātara and the Bodhisatva in Tuṣita heaven, appear repeatedly side by side (cf. slabs with representation of the *stūpa* from Amaravati, Archaeological Museum Amaravati, No. 418, Mackenzie drawing, British Library, folio 33 and folio 68; Chennai Government Museum, No. 221; slab with representation of the *stūpa* from Gummadiḍuru, Archaeological Museum Amaravati, No. 246).

12. Bagh, painting on the veranda in front of caves IV and V, identified by Monika Zin, "The Identification of the Bagh Painting," *East & West*, 51, Rome (2001): 299-322.; illus. e.g., in: John Marshall, ed. *The Bagh Caves in the Gwalior State* (London: The India Society, 1927) Pl. A-1.

13. Kizil, Cave 118, identified by Satomi Hiyama, "The Wall Painting of Kizil Cave 118: The Story of King Māndhātara as a New Identification," *Journal of Art History*, 168 (Kyoto: Berindo, 2010): 358-372; illus. e.g., in: Albert von Le Coq, *Die Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien*, IV, Atlas zu den Wandmalereien = *Ergebnisse der Kgl. Preussischen Turfan-Expeditionen* (Berlin: Reimer, 1924) Pl. 1.

14. Cf. Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1949) Thangka 66, Vol. 3, Pl. 102, description and explanation according to the version in the *Bodhisatvāvadāna-kalpalātā* IV, Vol. 2: 446, 448.

15. Nicolaas Johannes Krom and Theodor van Erp, *Barabudur, Archaeological Description* (The Hague, 1927-31) lb 31-50, illus.: Vol. 2, Pls. 16-25, description, Vol. 1: 261-75.

16. Chennai Government Museum, illus. e.g., in: Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia, Its Mythology and Transformations* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955) Pl. 37.

17. For literary sources and their comparative analysis cf. Zin, The Identification of the Bagh Painting; the story is narrated *inter alia* in: *Māndhātara Jātaka* (No. 258); *Mūlasarvāstīvadāvinaya*, ed. *Gilgit Manuscripts*, II, 1: 92-97; *Divyāvadāna* XVII; *Bodhisatvāvadāna-kalpa-lātā* IV; for references to Chinese sources cf. Étienne Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* (Louvain: Bureau du Musée / Université de Louvain Institut Orientaliste, 1944-80): 931 and Zin, The Identification of the Bagh Painting, 322.

18. *Dhammapada* 186, here translation by William Henry Denham Rouse, of the *Māndhātara Jātaka* (Vol. 2: 218).

**Figure 5:** Amaravati, Hampi, Archaeological Museum, photo by Dr. Caren Drayer (Berlin).



**Figure 5**

**Figure 6:** Nagarjunakonda, Archaeological Museum, No. 20, photo by the author.



**Figure 6**

throne (Figure 5); although, only in some cases can one of the kings be recognised as Indra from the distinctive shape of his crown, a detail that might correspond to the story which states that one could not distinguish Indra from Māndhātara.<sup>19</sup> The secure identification of Māndhātara as a *cakravartin* surrounded by Seven Jewels is possible only in cases where the narrative context is recognisable or when coins raining down are shown;<sup>20</sup> however, it is likely that all depictions were meant to show Māndhātara. Representations of the story were so numerous that people automatically connected the Seven Jewels with his narrative. Māndhātara is shown on his deathbed only in Nagarjunakonda (and later in Bagh<sup>21</sup> and Kizil), i.e., not before the third century (Figure 6).

The Māndhātara narrative is a *jātaka*; its Buddhist context is reiterated by the final verses, but the story, as such, does not really fit into the framework of the *pāramitās* of the future Buddha. The moral at the end also does not correspond with the story, which, as such, is nothing but the motif “pride goes before a fall” known from world literature<sup>22</sup> – tales in which everything is lost because of greed and conceit from *superbia*, sacrilege and divine punishment. Something seems to be added here. The question, however, is whether it is only a Buddhist comment on the ‘bad’ story of human greed or the ‘bad’ story in its entirety. The narrative might have been (from the beginning or in a certain period) a ‘good’ story, about a *cakravartin* as any other, a king who achieved all his objectives and ruled Indra-like in all his glory – as in the *Mahābhārata* version (cf. below) which does not describe Māndhātara’s fall.

Religious instruction that uses narrative to promote monastic life needs Māndhātara’s hubris and fall. Illustration of a bad ending only starts with Nagarjunakonda, which is no indication that such a conclusion was not known earlier,<sup>23</sup> but at least indicates that its role was not considered to be of such importance as to be included in the reliefs.

Representations of Māndhātara in the Amaravati School show him in an aggressive mood (Figure 7), that is, in the act of vanquishing the deities and trampling on the Nāgas. The representations are not consistent with the tenor of Buddhist narrative that stresses non-violence. Looking at them, it is easy to forget that Māndhātara is the Bodhisatva. Interestingly, the discrepancy between the literary sources and the depictions is only discernible in the Amaravati School. Māndhātara’s conquest is illustrated in two more known representations, at Bagh and Borobudur, neither of which shows aggressive action. The Bagh painting is expressive: Māndhātara is driving an elephant without an *aṅkuṣa*, instead he holds a flower.<sup>24</sup> At Borobudur, the Seven Jewels fly serenely in front him.<sup>25</sup>

This striking discrepancy between the *topos* of the *cakravartin* and the Amaravati depictions might have something to do with other non-Buddhist versions of the topic.

19. In Anton Schiefner’s translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*: “Now when the great King Māndhātara and Śakra the king of the gods sat on the same seat, it was impossible to see in either of them whether in length or breadth, in voice or in fullness of aspect, any difference from the other, any distinction or any pre-eminence, except that Śakra the king of the gods never closed his eyes.” Anton Schiefner, *Tibetan Tales* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1906) 16.

20. E.g., Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy interpreted the reliefs as representations of Mahāsudassana or of Andhra kings. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, “A Royal Gestures and some Other Motifs,” *Festbundel Koninklijk Bataviaasch genootschap* (1929): 57-61.

21. The painting in the veranda in front of caves IV and V in Bagh (fifth century) is today partially removed to the “chitra shala” of the site. The best impression is the copy made at the beginning of the twentieth century. The last scene of the Bagh painting shows weeping women; cf. Marshall, Pl. A; cf. Zin, *The Identification of the Bagh Painting*, fig. 2.

22. Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folklore Tale a Classification and Bibliography*. Antti Aarne’s *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1962) motif No. 836 “Pride and Punishment”, 281 or No. 555 “The Fisher and his Wife”, 200).

23. In one drum slab from Amaravati depicting a *stūpa*, today preserved only in a drawing from the beginning of nineteenth century (Mackenzie-drawing from September (1817?), British Library, No. WD1061, folio 81), there is, among the tiny depictions on the dome, a scene which appears later in reliefs in Nagarjunakonda (Nagarjunakonda, Archaeological Museum, Nos. 29, New Delhi, National Museum, No. 50.18) showing people pointing at a peculiar round object in the upper corner covered with stars. The object surely represents the sky from which Māndhātara falls. The Amaravati slab may be dated to the beginning of the third century.

24. Illus. e.g., in: Marshall, Pl. H.

25. Illus. e.g., in: Krom, I b 44, Vol. 2, Pl. 22.44.

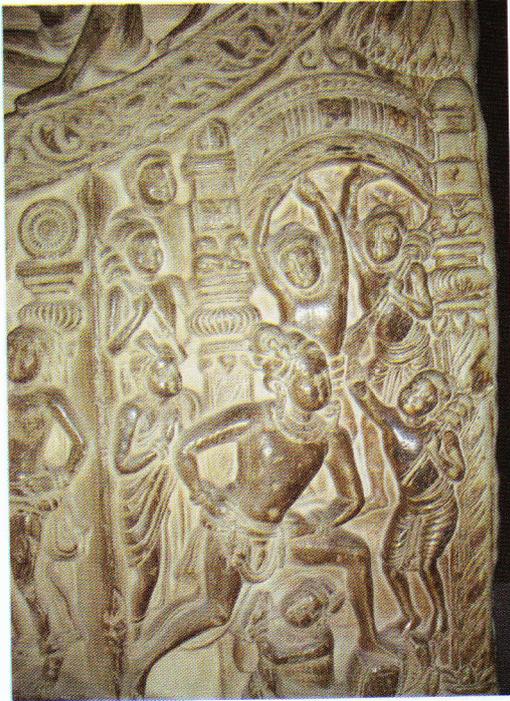


Figure 7

The narrative is apparently pre-Buddhist, Māndhātara's name being known since the *Rgveda* (I.112.13).<sup>26</sup> The Vedic tradition was probably not widely known, but the stories incorporated into the epics could well have been: the Māndhātara narrative in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (VII.59) explains that he fought against Indra, nearly defeated him, and was then killed by the demon Lavaṇa. The *Mahābhārata* refers several times to rivalry between Māndhātara and Indra: in *MBh* XII.343 Māndhātara defeats Indra in the Nāga town of Gomatī. The longest story is in the *MBh* III.126 which recounts that Māndhātara was miraculously born after his father drank water which brought on pregnancy; the *ṛṣis* intended to create a child capable of fighting Indra.<sup>27</sup>

It is, of course, risky to state that Buddhist reliefs might be influenced by the

epics. We should only keep in mind that a different tradition existed: stories about Māndhātara, who had to fight against Indra, and who conquered the universe merely on the "strength of his excellent morals". The epic story is in line with the *purāṇic* understanding of *cakravartin* that calls him a partial incarnation of Viṣṇu;<sup>28</sup> the association with Viṣṇu certainly springing from the *cakra* that he used as his main weapon, and which is the main *ratna* of the *cakravartin*. This, no doubt, incorporated Viṣṇu's prowess in warfare and his liberation of the earth from negative forces.

Nanayakkara, who (perhaps correctly) links the Buddhist concept of *cakravartin* with the Vedic god Varuṇa, guardian of the world order (*ṛta*) and righteousness, writes about Indra: "He attains universal sovereignty, not by right but by might and power, subduing his foes by fierce means (...). It is very difficult to see a similarity between this concept and that of the Buddhist *cakravartin*."<sup>29</sup> This might be true of the texts, but not of what we see in the reliefs from the Amaravati School, which is just the opposite.

The *cakravartin* Māndhātara is very akin to Indra – his appearance, which is similar to that of the king of the gods, has evoked statements that they look identical (cf. fn. 19), even making him his double. In mythology, it is Indra who brings rainfall, and in the *Mahābhārata* (XII.29.22-23)<sup>30</sup> it is again Indra who "rains" gold. Māndhātara is a human counterpart of Indra, the warrior-god. He is much more a *vijigīṣu* than a *cakravartin*, whatever he may be called. A European concept of kingship comes to mind with "the king's two bodies", a medieval concept that harks back to Roman tradition and the dual nature of Jesus Christ: the king has two bodies and two natures and his political (mystical) body never does anything wrong.<sup>31</sup> Something similar seems to be suggested here: however he acts – even violently – he is right because he is *cakravartin*.

Māndhātara, however, is supernatural: a human king with links to the world of the gods. Touching heaven with his hand (in a gesture also known from representations of the Nāgas),<sup>32</sup> he can cause rain. Surrounded by his Seven Jewels, he appears as the embodiment of prosperity

Figure 7: Detail from Figure 2, photo by the author.

26. For sources, their development and analysis cf. Zin, *The Identification of the Bagh Painting*, 307ff.

27. The story brings many motifs known also from the Buddhist sources, Māndhātara and Indra are described as sitting together on one throne. Māndhātara conquers the entire earth in the course of one night, and causes rainfall to occur after the terrible drought that had afflicted the earth for as long as 12 years.

28. Cf. footnote 7.

29. Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera, ed. et al., *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. 3.4 (Colombo: Government of Ceylon Publication, 1977) 593.

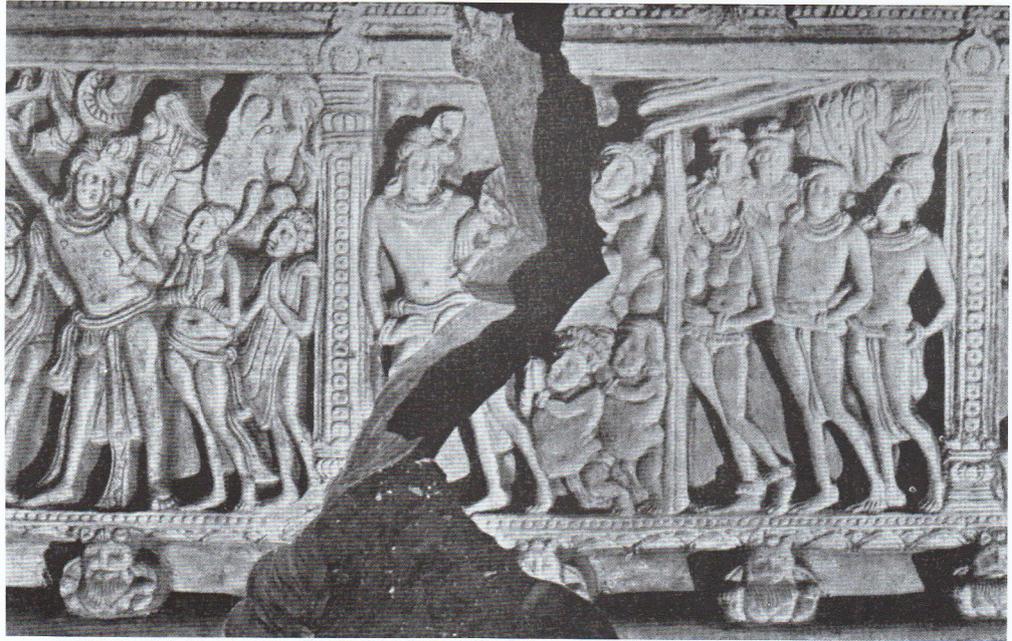
30. Trans. 229: "Sṛṅjaya, we have heard of Suhorta, son of Vitithi, who died, and upon whom Maghavan [i.e. Indra] showered gold throughout the year. When she acquired him, the Rich Earth's name, "Rich" became true. In his reign as lord of the realms the rivers run with gold." Cf. Coomaraswamy 58.

31. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: University Press, 1957).

32. Coomaraswamy explains the gesture as "a specifically royal one" without connecting it with the Nāgas and their ability to bring rain. Coomaraswamy 61.

**Figure 8:** Nagarjunakonda, Archaeological Museum, after Albert Henry Longhurst, *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, Madras Presidency* (Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 54, Delhi 1938) Pl. 33a.

**Figure 9:** Nagarjunakonda, Archaeological Museum, No. 32, after Longhurst Pl. 41a.



**Figure 8**

and royal protection. This provides the answer to the question raised at the outset – why Māndhātara? – because he is the personification of auspicious kingship.

The auspicious character of the *cakravartin* is underlined by the appearance of the *nidhis* in his retinue. The “treasure” (*nidhi*) is listed among the *atiratnas* in the *Purānās*.<sup>33</sup> The *nidhis* or treasures belong to Kubera, the god of wealth. They are magical objects that produce coins.<sup>34</sup> The most important *nidhis* are *padmanidhi*, the lotus treasure, and *śaṅkhanidhi*, the conch shell treasure. They might take the form of the objects, but also appear as personifications: in the form of dwarves with the lotus and the conch shell on their heads from which coins flow. The treasures are represented at the side of Kubera, but also as auspicious objects by the entrances of buildings; with the most beautiful *nidhi* couple being discovered in Nagarjunakonda.<sup>35</sup> In the recently discovered relief in Phanigiri,<sup>36</sup> both magical objects from which coins flow are shown on either side of the *cakravartin*. In one representation of the Māndhātara narrative from Nagarjunakonda (Figure 8), both *nidhis* appear as personifications, dwarves with *padma* and *śaṅkha* on their heads. But *nidhi*-dwarves were not only depicted beside Māndhātara, they also appear in the entourage of other *cakravartins* and are shown in one Ajanta painting<sup>37</sup> as companions of the *cakravartin* whose form the nun Utpalavarṇā took to stand in the first row and see the Buddha descend from Trāyastriṃśa heaven in Sāṅkāśya (Utpalavarṇā, the *cakravartin* in Ajanta XVII, is shown with breasts).<sup>38</sup> The appearance of the magical objects giving good fortune depicted alongside the *cakravartins* transforms the representations into auspicious symbols.

Returning to our question posed at the outset – why Māndhātara? – let us turn to the representations in



**Figure 9**

33. Cf. footnote 8.

34. Cf. Monika Zin, *Ajanta – Handbuch der Malereien, Handbuch of the Paintings 2: Devotionale und ornamentale Malereien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003) No. 36, with an analysis of the development of the motif, and references to pictorial and literary sources and earlier research; cf. also No. 22.

35. Archaeological Museum in Nagarjunakonda, Nos. 11 and 12, represented e.g., in: Ram Nath Misra, *Yaksha Cult and Iconography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981) Pl. 58; drawing in Zin, *Ajanta*, 216, fig. 9.

36. Illus. in: Peter Skilling, “New discoveries from South India: The life of the Buddha at Phanigiri, Andhra Pradesh,” *Arts Asiatiques*, 63, Paris (2008): 96-118 and Peter Skilling, “Nouvelles découvertes en Andhra Pradesh: la vie du Bouddha de Phanigiri,” *Images et imagination – Le bouddhisme en Asie* (Paris: Musée Guimet, 2009) 26-57, Pl. 23.

37. Ajanta XVII, antechamber, left sidewall; for the literary and pictorial tradition cf. Dieter Schlingloff, *Ajanta – Handbuch der Malereien / Handbook of the Paintings 1. Erzählende Wandmalereien / Narrative Wall-paintings* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000) No. 86, Vol. 1: 486 drawing; *ibid.* references to illustrations of the painting; Utpalavarṇā as *cakravartin* is best visible in the nineteenth century copy illustrated in: John Griffiths, *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave-Temples of Ajanta, Khandesh, India* (London 1896-1897) Vol. 1, Pl. 54.

38. In this same function as personifications of wealth-bestowing objects, the dwarves also appear on the Ajanta representation of the goddess standing on the lotus, apparently Śrī; Ajanta XVII, right sidewall, the story of Sindhala; for the literary and pictorial tradition, cf. Schlingloff, No. 58; *ibid.* references to illustrations of painting in books; Schlingloff takes the goddess to be the demoness in disguise.

the reliefs of the Amaravati School (Figure 9). The Buddhist ending of the story, with Māndhātara falling from heaven, appears only three times, and not before the third century; thus, evidently, it was not the main message of the representations. The scenes most often represented are of Māndhātara treading on the Nāga and Māndhātara sharing the throne with Indra – both motifs were, apparently, used to depict the king's ideology. Māndhātara treading on the Nāga creates an apotropaic image and serves to illustrate the power of the protection given by *vijigīṣu*. Gonda, in his *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, explains – on the basis of literary references – the Indian understanding of *vijaya*, victory, as being closely connected with *śrī*, welfare and majesty, and *bhūti*, prosperity.<sup>39</sup>

The second scene of the Māndhātara narrative, which is among the most popular representations of the Amaravati School, shows two kings sharing a throne. Here also, it is worthwhile referring to *Ancient Indian Kingship*: the royal throne, as a seat of authority, was connected with an altar, a pedestal for a god or a king.<sup>40</sup> The representation of a human king enthroned on the seat of a god, a warrior-god, whom he himself conquered, must have had tremendous import, not only in terms of the depiction of the story, but also in terms of the visualisation of the idea. Parimoo points out that according to Hindu sources (which perhaps made it common knowledge at the time), Māndhātara, as a descendant of Viṣṇu, was believed to have been part of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, so that one might even consider the Ikṣvāku of Nagarjunakonda to be his successors.<sup>41</sup>

The enormous popularity of the story corresponds with the emphasis on the special role of the kings as guarantors of protection and bestowers of prosperity in Andhra. The visualisation of this idea seems to be etched on the reliefs of the still little-known *stūpa* in Kanaganahalli (Karnataka, distr. Gulbarga). The dome of the *stūpa* was covered with ca. 3 m high reliefs which, in my working hypothesis, I date to the first half of the first century CE. The slabs have a unified design and show two panels, one above the other, separated by a frieze of geese. Beneath both panels there appear inscriptions that label the representations above.

When the Kanaganahalli inscriptions are published, they are bound to give rise to a great deal of discussion regarding their dating and significance as primary references for Indian history, among other things. It is not possible here to fix their palaeography and chronology; however, before embarking on a discussion on them, we should be mindful of one fact which might be of great significance for palaeographical results: the reliefs in Kanaganahalli were painted. Chemical analysis of the remains of the colours (undertaken by the Technical University of Munich)<sup>42</sup> even reveals repeated re-paintings. Although there is no reason to doubt the antiquity of the inscriptions that label the events, we will have to accept that the earliest inscriptions might have only been painted and not carved, and what we see today might be a later addition, repeating the painted ones, perhaps imitating the earlier script, or even giving incorrect explanations. It may be noted that while the style of the uniformly designed 3 m high relief slabs is homogeneous, their inscriptions show a range of *akṣaras*, from the elegantly worked characters with serifs, to hastily executed handwork.

The reliefs on the slabs show *jātakas* and scenes from the life of the Buddha. The subject “royals and royalty” apparently played an important role here. To begin with, there are many *rājas* in Kanaganahalli. There is, for example, the famous *rāyā Asoko*, named in the inscription beneath the relief, which depicts an episode from the life of the Buddha, and there are a number of *rājas* with titles not known elsewhere, such as the *bodhisato kusarāyā* (Bodhisatva Kuśarāja), the protagonist of the *Kusajātaka*. Nāgas are called *nāgarāyo mujalindo*, *nāgarāyā paṇḍarako*. Moreover, there is a *rāyo Mahāgovindo* (Mahāgovinda is

39. Significant is a saying from the *Mahābhārata* “No monarch can acquire the earth, prosperity (*bhūti*-) and royal well-being (*śrī*-) by being only *dharmātmā*” cf. Gonda 141; it is *MBh* III.34.56, in trans. of Johannes A.B. van Buitenen (Vol. 3: 289): “No king has ever conquered earth by being solely law-minded, nor have they won prosperity and fortune.”

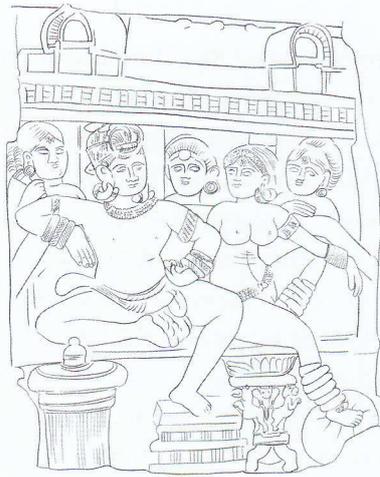
40. Gonda referring also to Jeannine Auboyer's *Le trône et son symbolisme dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris: Presses universitaires, 1949); Gonda 45.

41. Parimoo 42.

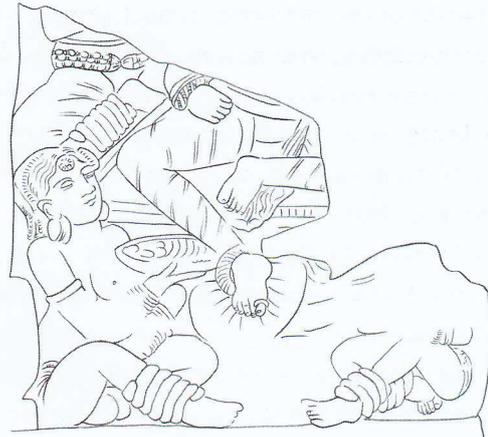
42. I would like to express my thanks to Mrs. Catharina Blaensdorf, research conservator, Chair of Restoration, Art Technology and Conservation Science, Technische Universität München.

**Figure 10:** Kanaganahalli, slab No. 58, upper part, drawing by the author.

**Figure 11:** Kanaganahalli, slab No. 58, lower part, drawing by the author.



**Figure 10**



**Figure 11**

not a king in known sources), and the *Mahākapijātaka* is labeled *jātakam aridamiya* after the human king from the story, Arindaman. And of course – and how could it be any different in the region – we also encounter in the inscription the ideal of all kings, *rāyā-cakavatī sata-radano, rāja-cakravatin* and the Seven Jewels, *sapta-ratna*. Although the king is not identified here by his personal name, he is obviously Māndhātara since coins rain down from heaven behind him.

The repeated appearance of kings, and even the word *rāja*, may illustrate a rather complex issue that can be discussed when all the reliefs and inscriptions are published. In this paper I provide the reader only an impression of what I, as one of the few to have visited the Kanaganahalli site, have observed: *rājas* are depicted everywhere.

But apart from the *jātakas*, i.e., stories of great antiquity, and episodes from the life of the Buddha, the reliefs on the huge slabs at Kanaganahalli also depict other scenes in which, according to the labelling inscriptions, kings of the Sātavāhana dynasty appear. The kings are known to us not from mythology, but from sources generally considered to be historical, such as inscriptions, coins or *purāṇic* records. The question as to how “historical” or “mythical” the personalities were for the visitors to the *stūpa* cannot be answered. We might as well ask how “historical” or “mythical” stories about Kuśa or Aśoka were. As we shall see, the depictions have narrative character and illustrate stories about “historical” persons rather than “the history”.

The following must be viewed as preliminary research, the results of which are still open to discussion since exploration of Kanaganahalli is only in its infancy. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first attempt to interpret the representations of the Sātavāhana kings and their role in the decoration of the *stūpa*.

At least five Sātavāhana kings are named in the label inscriptions of Kanaganahalli. One should first of all note that these kings are not depicted differently; yet they are somehow more richly adorned than other kings. Their turbans are bigger, their clothes have especially large loops and folds, and their necklaces are particularly heavy and ornate. In some instances, the necklaces, made of rosettes and strings of pearls, remind one of the ornamentation on the Sātavāhana bull<sup>43</sup> or on the domes of the Amaravati *stūpas*. The number of kings is “at least” five because one similarly clad king appears, but without an inscription.<sup>44</sup>

Two slabs that lie in the east-southern quadrant of the *stūpa* were most probably placed side by side and show two kings. The first (slab No. 58)<sup>45</sup> is inscribed with *rājā siri chimuko sādavāhano nāgarāya-s[i]kh[ā]dh[i]bho* (?) Nāgarāja Śikṣādibha. This must be Śrī Simuka,

43. Archaeological Museum in Amaravati, No. 854, illus. in: Shayam Sharan Gupta, *Sculptures and Antiquities in the Archaeological Museum, Amaravati* (Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2008) Pl. 61.

44. The king on the lower panel of the slab No. 51 is wearing the same ornament, this being similar to the ornamentation on the Amaravati *stūpa*. The inscription is only partially preserved; it seems to start with *kumāra*...

45. The underlined numbers repeat the numeral system used for the reliefs by the site archaeologist.

the founder of the Sātavāhana dynasty, probably in the second century BCE,<sup>46</sup> from the name of Chimuka that appears on coins.<sup>47</sup> The king is shown in the upper panel (Figure 10)<sup>48</sup> sitting in his palace beside his wife. In front of their seat stands a very Roman-looking chair. The lower part of the slab (Figure 11) is, unfortunately, badly damaged. The final part of the inscription, however, clearly indicates that it was a Nāgarāja who was named there. His name is hardly legible but it was probably Śikṣādibha (“having brilliance outshining the flame”?). There are no Nāgas depicted in the upper panel of the relief, nor in the preserved part of the lower relief. The principal figure in the lower panel wears a toe ring and an anklet that looks like a thick rope.

The *nāgarāja* in the inscription puts the “historical” Simuka into mythical dimension. We might even speculate that there is a legend depicted here connecting the king with the Nāgarāja. The most important story about Nāgas and a “historical” king in the Buddhist context is, of course, a tradition of the relics being received from the Nāgas. Tradition has it that the Nāgas kept their share of the relics in Rāmagrāma, this also being depicted on one slab in Kanaganahalli: the *stūpa* labelled *rāmāgāmilo āṭhabhāgathubho upari*, “Rāmāgrāma stūpa of one-eighth part above”, is represented on one of the 3 m high reliefs (No. 46).<sup>49</sup> In another relief (No. 33) we encounter the *stūpa* again – now no longer guarded by Nāgas, but covered with heavy strings of pearls arranged like snakes in other reliefs – below is a ‘strong room’, *dalhaghāro*, with relics visible inside. Would this perhaps suggest that the humans secured the relics from the Nāgas? According to the *Aśokāvadāna*,<sup>50</sup> the Nāgas did not give their share to Aśoka,<sup>51</sup> but guarded the relics in their *stūpa* in Rāmagrāma. However, alternative stories also exist,<sup>52</sup> as e.g., the one in the *Mahāvamsa* (XXXI) which relates that King Dutthagāmaṇi of Sri Lanka (101-71 BCE) succeeded in taking the eighth part of the relics from the Nāgas. Do the panels with Simuka and the Nāga, as well as the Rāmagrāma *stūpa* and the one with the ‘strong room’, suggest a similar scenario? Nothing could have brought more prestige to the Sātavāhana family than being in possession of the real relics.

According to the label inscription, the relief on the side of Simuka shows King Sātakarṇi (slab No. 59), his legal heir and successor,<sup>53</sup> who is known from other sources as well.<sup>54</sup> Sātakarṇi (Figure 12) is holding a water pitcher which symbolises the act of giving. In front of him stand two monks, which might be the earliest depiction of monks in Indian art.



Figure 12

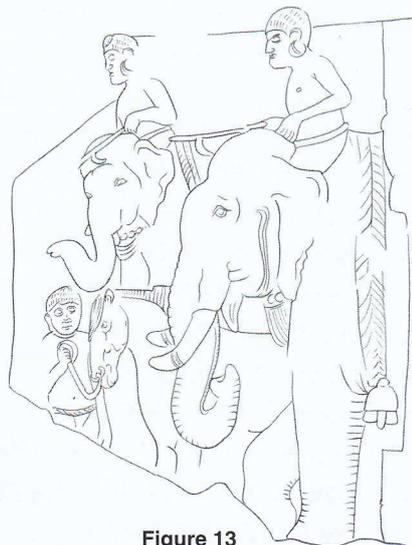


Figure 13

Figure 12: Kanaganahalli, slab No. 59, upper part, drawing by the author.

Figure 13: Kanaganahalli, slab No. 59, lower part, drawing by the author.

46. Cf. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, ed., *The Age of the Imperial Unity* (Bombay 1968) 195ff.

47. Cf. Mala Dutta, *A Study of the Sātavāhana Coinage* (New Delhi: Harman Publishing House, 1990) 27-28, 246ff; for numismatic material of. Joe Cribb, “Western Satraps and Satavahanas: Old and New Ideas of Chronology,” *Ex Moneta, Essays on Numismatics, History and Archaeology in Honour of Dr. David W. MacDowall*, ed. A. K. Jha and S. Garg (Nashik: Harman Publishing House, 1995) 151-164.

48. For Figures 10-16, all drawings were made from photographs taken by Maiko Nakanishi and the author with the kind permission of the Archaeological Survey of India (F. No. 15/2/2009-EE). The photographs were taken in April 2009 during a field trip to Kanaganahalli financed by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Project (C), no. 20520050) led by Prof. Noritoshi Aramaki.

49. The motif of a *stūpa* guarded by Nāgas appears in other reliefs in Kanaganahalli, one of which was published in: Jitendra Das, “Spread of Buddhism in northern Karnataka,” *Kevala-Bodhi: Buddhist and Jaina History of the Deccan (the BSL Commemorative Volume)*, ed. Aloka Parasher-Sen (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 2004) Vol. 1, 139-147, Pl. 18.

50. “... then he proceeded to Rāmagrāma. There the nāgas took him down to the nāga palace and told him: ‘We here pay homage to our droṇa stūpa.’ Aśoka, therefore, let them keep their relics intact, and the nāga king himself escorted him back up from the palace. Indeed as it is said: Today in Rāmagrāma the eighth stūpa stands / for in those days the Nāgas guarded it with devotion. / The king did not take the relics from there / but left them alone and, full of faith, withdrew.” John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka. A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) 219.

51. The scene is represented in one relief from Amaravati, known today only in the Mackenzie drawing from the nineteenth century British Library, folio 81.

52. Cf. Strong 110ff.

53. The usurper between Simukha and Sātakarṇi was Kaṇha, known from the inscription in Nasik; for historical sources cf. e.g., Vidya Dehejia, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples, A Chronological Study* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972) 171ff.

54. Cf. e.g., Himanshu Prabha Ray, *Monastery and Guild. Commerce under the Sātavāhanas* (Delhi/New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 331ff.

**Figure 14:** Kanaganahalli, slab No. 39, upper part, drawing by the author.



**Figure 14**

The reading and the meaning of the inscription are far from certain. The inscription is broken into two pieces leaving a gap, which may be filled with two or three *akṣaras*. The provisional reading is as follows: *rāyā sātakaṇa ....yasa rupāmayāni payumāni oṇayeti*. Lore Sander suggests that *...yasa* might be restored to *(ce)[t](i)yasa*, here: “for the *caitya*”. Because the reading and meaning of the verb *oṇayeti* in this context is extremely problematic (*o* in *oṇayeti* might stay for *ava*<sup>o</sup> as well as for *apa*<sup>o</sup>,<sup>55</sup> so perhaps for Skt. *avanāyayati*, he “lets [to] pour down or over” or Skt. *apanāyayati* “he lets [to] bring away”; so far as recorded until now, in causative forms of *nāyati* the *a* of the root *nay-* is always lengthened), a translation cannot be given with certainty. The object of donation for the *caitya* are silver (*rupāmayāni* for Skt. *rūpyamayani* “made of silver”)<sup>56</sup> lotus flowers (*payumāni* for Skt. *padmāni*). The inscription corresponds so well with the depiction that below the pitcher a female dwarf stands holding a tray with – perhaps silver – lotus flowers. The lower panel (Figure 13) represents royal mounts which are perhaps being brought away.

On another side of the Kanaganahalli stūpa, in the west-north quadrant, *royo matalako* is represented (slab No. 40 – the precise position of the slab on the body of the dome is not clear to me). The *Purāṇa* list mentions King Mantalaka.<sup>57</sup> He is seated on a richly ornamented bench in the palace with his wife. In the lower panel, royal animals appear; the elephant and the horse are accompanied by their grooms.

55. Cf. Oskar von Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick*, 2. erweiterte Auflage (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 467. Bd.: Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Sprachen und Kulturen Südasien, Heft 20. Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 2001) § 138 u. 139. Cf. also von Hinüber § 158 with Pali *oṇajeti* for Skt. *avanāyayati*.

56. Such as *kubhīyo rupāmayiyo* (silver waterpots) in the Nanaghat inscription no. IA, left side, line 8, cf. Georg Bühler, “The Nanaghat Inscriptions,” *Report on the Elura Cave Temples and Brahmanical and Jaina Caves in Western India, Archaeological Survey of Western India*, Vol. 5, ed. James Burgess (London, 1883) 60 and 62.

57. Mantalaka (or Mandulaka) is named in the *Matsyapurāṇa* (273, trans. 338) as the follower of Hāla (first half of the first c. CE); he is supposed to have ruled for 5 years. From Table No. V of the Andhras on p. LXXIII, we learn that the king is known under different names in other *Purāṇas*, namely Pattalaka, Talaka and Saptaka. Cf. “Andhra kings known from *Purāṇas*”, Appendix 1 to Dutta with data from *Matsya-, Vāyu-, Brahmanḍa-, Viṣṇu- and Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.



Figure 15

symbolising that he is giving something to the other. The inscription *rāya pulumāvi ajayatasa ujeni deti* can hardly be explained other than that Pulumāvi is giving Ujjayinī (Pali: Ujjenī) to Ajayata. Royal mounts may also be seen on the lower part of this slab.

Probably a slab with another king was placed next to Pulumāvi (slab No. 30). Its upper part is broken, but the portion that is intact clearly shows a couple (Figure 15). The man does not wear a turban and his hair is peculiarly cut;<sup>61</sup> the figure is repeated in the panel below (Figure 16), where apparently the same man rides a horse. On his foot he wears an anklet which

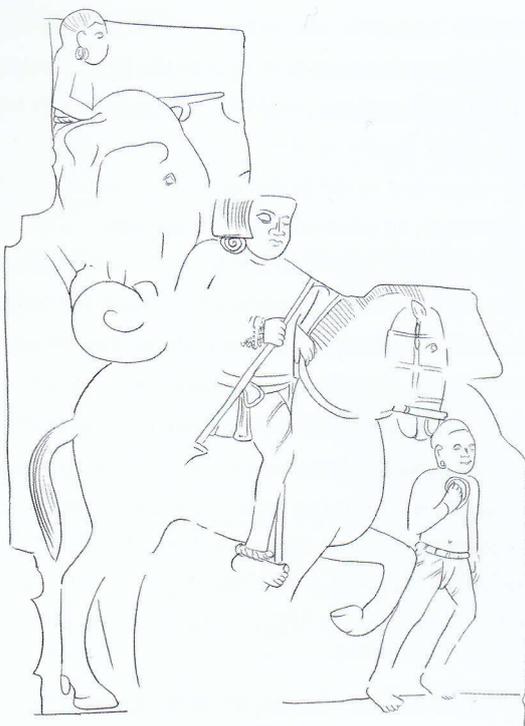


Figure 16

looks like a rope. The inscription labels him: *rāyā s[a]d[a]ra sa(?)takani*,<sup>62</sup> “King Saḍara Satakani”. *Purāṇic* lists of the Sātavāhana kings mention King Sundara Sātakarṇi; knowing that – one can perhaps even recognize a tiny dash for *su* in the inscription – Saḍara (for Sundara) Sātakarṇi.<sup>63</sup> King Sundara is supposed to have ruled for only one year.

Without doubt, there is going to be a considerable amount of discussion about depictions of the Sātavāhana kings in Kanaganahalli and possible historical events represented therein. Prior to this, three of the kings (Mantalaka, Sundara Sātakarṇi and the early Pulumāvi) were not known from inscriptions.<sup>64</sup> However, this is not the

**Figure 15:** Kanaganahalli, slab No. 30, upper part, drawing by the author.

**Figure 16:** Kanaganahalli, slab No. 30, lower part, drawing by the author.

58. For historical sources concerning Vaṣiṣṭhuputra Pulumāvi, cf. e.g., Ray 39ff; Ajay Mitra Shastri, “Sātavāhana-Kṣaharāta Chronology and Art History,” *South Asian Archaeology* 1999, ed. Ellen M. Raven (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2008) 341-351; for coins, see Dutta 291ff.

59. Cf. Shastri; arguments for a different dating in Joe Cribb, “Numismatic Evidence for the Date of the ‘Periplus,’” *Indian Numismatics, History, Art and Culture. Essays in Honour of Dr. P.L. Gupta*, ed. David W. MacDowal, et al. (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1992) 131-145.

60. *Matsyapurāna* 273, trans. 338 and Table No. V, Andhras on p. LXXIII.

61. Perhaps it is a head gear of a prince; cf. a person standing next to Pulumāvi in Figure 14.

62. The list in the *Matsyapurāna* (273, trans. 338 and Table No. V, Andhras, on p. LXXIII) puts the king Sundara Sātakarṇi after Hāla (first half of the first century CE), Mantalaka and Purīkasena. *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (first part of the first century CE) names “Sandares”, on which Majumdar (p. 200, fn.) comments: “It has been suggested that Sandares was a Śaka Viceroy. Some scholars, however, prefer the identification of Sandares with the Andhra king Sundara Sātakarṇi, who is placed in the Puranic lists a few generations earlier than Gautamiputra Sātakarṇi (c. A.D. 106-30).”

63. Even when the reading of the inscription can be taken for granted, it should be noted that both *sa* are written differently. The first one descends spikily and ends in a tiny, irregular *u*-sign, while the second *sa* is rounded and skewed. The inscription might perhaps indicate that the earlier painted inscription has been repeated and was done by someone who was not quite sure of its content. Further examples can verify such assumptions, which might be proved when all the inscriptions of the site are explored.

64. It has been assumed that one copper coin (found in Aparānta in the West) was issued during the reign of Sundara, cf. Dutta 40, with references to the earlier discussion.

65. Bhagvanlal Indrajī, in: *Bombay Gazetteer* 1882: 288: "... rock-cut chamber about 28 ½ feet square. The front of the chamber is open, but it seems once to have had a wood-work facing as there are holes in the floor, probably for wooden pillars. A rock-cut bench runs along the right and left walls, and in a recess which fills almost the whole of the back wall, are traces of nine life-sized standing figures, and above each figure an inscription, in letters of about a century before Christ, recording its name. Beginning from near the left end of the wall, the feet alone of the first statue are left with traces of a body, which apparently wore a hanging waistband. Above the figure, are written the words 'The fair-faced king Shātavāhana.' [*Bombay Gazetteer*, XVI: 611: *Rāyā Simuka Śātavāhana Sirimāto*] To the right of Shātavāhana's statue two figures stood side by side, but all trace of them is gone except the feet of the figure to the visitor's right. Above these figures, an inscription of two lines, records that the statue to the visitor's left was queen Nāyanika, and the other, King Shātakarni. Of the fourth statue only the feet and the end of the waistcloth, hanging between them, remain. Above is an inscription of which a little near the end is lost. The letters that can be made out are Kumāro Bhāya, that is Prince Bhāya. The missing letter was probably *la*, which would make the name Bhāyala, for the Sanskrit Bhrājila (...). The fifth and sixth statues stood side by side, but except the feet of the sixth nothing remains; even the inscription above is lost. (...) The seventh statue is entirely lost. A hole has been cut in the wall in the place where the statue stood. An inscription above is called *Mahārathāgrānika*, that is the leader of great heroes, or the leader of the Marāthās. Of the eighth statue nothing remains except the feet. The inscription above shows that it was a statue of prince Hakushri. A certain roughness in the wall is the only trace of the ninth statue. The inscription above records that it was a statue of prince Shātavāhana." The earlier description by W.H. Sykes from the year 1833 (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1837): 287-91), which contains the eye-copies of the inscriptions, does not mention the statues.

66. Cf. Heinrich Lüders, *A List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to About A.D. 400, with the Exception of those of Asoka* (Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica*, 10, Calcutta 1912) Nos. 1113-1118: 121-122; transcript and trans. in: Bühler 64; for further references cf. Keisho Tsukamoto, *A Comprehensive Study of the Indian Buddhist Inscriptions* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1996-98) 485-487: Nanāghāt, Nos. 2-7.

67. Cf. Lüders, Nos. 1112: 121; transcript and translation in: Bühler 59-64; for further references cf. Tsukamoto 484-485: Nanāghāt, No. 1; cf. also, Shastrī 347 "Large cave at the Nanāghāt pass" (with references).

68. A study by Giovanni Verardi compares Nanāghāt with representations of the Kuṣāna Kings in Māt, in Mathura, and in Surkh Kotal in Afghanistan. Giovanni Verardi, "The Kuṣāna Emperors as *cakravartins*. Dynastic Art Cults in India and Central Asia: History of a Theory, Clarification and Refutations," *East & West*, 35, Rome (1983): 67-101; Verardi, photos from the Nanāghāt cave showing remains of the statues; cf. also, Seshabhāta Nāgaraju, *Buddhist Architecture of Western India* (c. 250 B.C. – c. A.D. 300) (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1981) sv. Nanāghāt.

place to discuss the whole complicated subject, and we shall concentrate here only on the depictions.

The inscribed depictions at Kanaganahalli are not the first time that members of the Sātavāhana family were represented. Now destroyed, nine statues were carved on the back wall of cave XI in Nanāghāt. In the nineteenth century, the feet and the lower part of the apparel of five persons were still partially extant<sup>65</sup> (with only the feet of four statues remaining today), but the inscriptions above, which name the persons, are still legible: Simuka Sātavāhana; Sātakarṇi with Queen Nāyanikā; a prince whose name starts with Bhāya...; (the two following inscriptions are lost); general Mahārathi Tranakayira (Tranakārya); Prince Hakusiri; and Prince Sātavāhana.<sup>66</sup> The large inscriptions on the flanking-walls of the cave shed light on the Sātavāhanas, and refer to Brahmanical gods, *śvamedha* and other sacrifices.<sup>67</sup> Clearly, the Sātavāhana rulers were not Buddhist. Nanāghāt provides the evidence that it was thinkable, perhaps even customary, to represent the members of the royal family,<sup>68</sup> but the depictions of the kings at Kanaganahalli are of quite a different character.

The representations evoke the impression of story illustrations. Something must have been known about King Sundara for him to be shown without a turban. There are, apparently, events backing representations of donations to the monks by Sātakarṇi and to another king by Pulumāvi. There must be a story behind the depiction of the founder of the dynasty alongside a Nāgarāja.

It is impossible to judge with any certainty if the representations of the Sātavāhana kings were understood as "historical" or "mythical". The slab (no. 38) labelled *bodhisato kusarāyā* (bodhisatva Kuṣārāja), which shows the king with his consort in the upper panel and the king riding an elephant and two horses in the lower, could also be depicting a "historical" king. The panel was most probably placed immediately after that bearing Pulumāvi. The figures labeled in Kanaganahalli with the names of the Sātavāhana kings certainly do not represent a dynastic portrait gallery but, rather, are representations of narratives from more recent history, perhaps deliberately inserted in between depictions of stories from mythical times, thereby creating a "historical" approach to all the other narratives on the side.

The key question that, however, remains concerns the reason for depicting the non-Buddhist kings amid Buddhist themes. Were the *stūpa* an endowment of the Sātavāhanas, the answer would be easy. In such cases the representations could be explained as being commissioned to enhance the prestige of the royal family in the eyes of fellow Buddhist citizens. The kings are shown as being equally important to the Buddhist stories and in the act of making donations to the monks. There is, however, no evidence that the site was really one of Sātavāhana patronage. Although inscriptions mention Sātavāhana rule, and testify that the surrounding area fell under their administration, there is no real evidence that the royal family financed the site. The *stūpa* appears to have been the product of collective patronage, as for all known Buddhist sites from the epoch.<sup>69</sup> But why should someone else finance the representations of the non-Buddhist kings depicted on the Buddhist monument? The answer is undoubtedly complex and multi-layered. One possible explanation presupposes a quasi "historical" understanding of the kings. The dynasty was certainly understood as the successor to Aśoka in promoting Buddhism. A representation commissioned by the Buddhist community that shows the Sātavāhanas as sponsors and protectors of the *stūpa* is all the more significant if the assumption about the real relic taken from the Nāgas, or at least connections between the kings and the Nāgas, is correct.

First, one must ask what, apart from Buddhist themes, was depicted on *stūpas*, *vihāras*

or *caityas*? The answer is well-known – anything auspicious: luck-bringing symbols or animals and deities who bestow prosperity, riches and provide protection against negative powers. The representations of the Sātavāhana kings must have had exactly the same role to play, even where they also played other roles. What the reliefs show are extremely richly clad and luxuriously ornamented persons, identifiable as members of the royal family through inscriptions for all those who could read them, and through iconography (royal mounts, absence of turban, depiction of donations, Nāga – apparently reflecting current beliefs) for those who could not read. The kings are *per definitionem* auspicious; they are protectors of the kingdom, guarantors of freedom and trade.

If this were the case, it then becomes unimportant whether they were Buddhist or not. In the event that the site proves to be of Sātavāhana patronage and the reliefs are portraits of these kings, the same message would be of even greater intensity. But even without this, it appears possible that the kings were represented to illustrate their role as protectors and guarantors of prosperity. In this region, the representation of kings was already old (Nanaghat), as was the representation of the auspicious royal persona to bring wealth.

This tradition represents the *cakravartin* king, and particularly the most auspicious of them – Māndhātār. The Sātavāhanas might have perceived themselves as *cakravartins*,<sup>70</sup> and certainly as *vijigīṣus*. Māndhātār's violence, which puts him on a par with his human counterparts, might be one of the reasons why he, and no other *cakravartin*, was so popular in the region.

The depictions of the Sātavāhana kings in Kanaganahalli were undoubtedly auspicious in nature and comparable with representations of *yakṣas*, believed to bestow protection and wealth. But it is *rājas* and not *yakṣas* who are depicted here,<sup>71</sup> which suggests that in this geographical area, kingship was closely associated with welfare. As known from many sources, the consecrated king possessed *śrī*, prosperity;<sup>72</sup> he was *śreyas* “by the possession of *śrī*,” which Gonda, in his *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, recognises also in the names of the Sātavāhana kings, such as Siri-Sātakarṇi, Siri-Pulumāvi, etc.<sup>73</sup>

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69. Cf. Vidya Dehejia for an analysis of the donative inscriptions in older Buddhist sites. Vidya Dehejia, “The Collective and Popular Basis of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, 100 BC-AD 250,” *The Powers of Art. Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992) 35-45.

70. The *cakra* signs appear on Sātavāhana coins, cf. Dutta, Pl. VI, XIV.

71. At Kanaganahalli two sculptures of *yakṣas* were discovered.

72. Cf. to Hopkins 1931 and first of all Hara 1996-97.

73. Gonda 102.

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