The Temple of Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin*

The Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription of the Time of Udayasena Reconsidered

INTRODUCTION

The hill near the village Ramgarh, on whose top (height 184 m) the so-called ‘Muṇḍeśvarī Temple’ is found,¹ belongs to the northern spurs of the Kaimur Range, the eastern embranchment of the Vindhya. It is situated in the Kaimur District of southwest Bihar, 70 km SE of Vārāṇasī, 170 km SW of Patna, 60 km NW of Rohtasgarh on the River Son, and 8 km SW of Bhabua, as the crow flies.

The present octagonal temple has attracted the attention of scholars since the early days of Francis Buchanan, whose description had been used by Montgomery Martin in his *Eastern India*, which appeared in 1838. Buchanan reports that his description is based on the drawings of a painter whom he had sent up to the place, which might have taken place in January 1813.² A print based on this was included in Martin’s *Eastern India* (Plate 78). Earlier a drawing of the temple had been made by Thomas Daniell (Plate 79), who probably visited the site in February 1790,³ and whose engraving, published in 1808, might have been known to Buchanan.⁴ As can be derived from both pictures, the temple was largely covered by a mound of rubble overgrown with plants and trees. The site was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) after a visit of Theodor Bloch in 1902.⁵ Bloch was also the first to report on the inscription that is the subject of this paper. He notes the following (*op. cit.* 43):

[...] Among the *débris* the second half of an inscribed stone has been found, the first half of which had been sent to the Indian Museum Calcutta in 1891.

* The first version of this article was published in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 56.3–4 (2013), 263–77. This double issue of IJ contained the articles based on papers given at the symposium *Epigraphical Evidence for the Formation and Rise of Early Śaivism*, which was held at the University of Groningen, 4–5 June 2012.

1 The temple and hill are named after the goddess who today is the central focus of worship (see Jayasāl 2017, 117 Fig. 340).

2 Nuss 2003, 533 (based on Oldham 1926). Martin 1838 I, 456: ‘I could not conveniently visit the place, but sent a painter, who drew the most remarkable part. The temple, now very ruinous, has been an octagon supported by four columns (E).’

3 Nuss 2003, 533 (based on Archer 1969).

4 The drawing was engraved by Thomas and his brother William and published in *Antiquities of India*, December 1808.

5 Bloch 1902–03, 42 f. Nuss 2003, 533 f.

This stone is dated year 30, the 22nd of Kārttika, which must be referred to the Harṣa Era, thus corresponding with 635 A.D.

Plate 78

Buchanan: sketch AD 1813⁶

Plate 79

Daniell: drawing AD 1790⁷

The two halves of the stone have been combined and were first edited and published by R.D. Banerji in *Epigraphia Indica* IX (1907–08).

This *Mundeśvarī Inscription of the Time of Udayasena, Year 30* has gone through altogether five editions (R.D. Banerji 1907–08, N.G. Majumdar 1920, P.K. Agrawala 1987, P.R. Srinivasan 1991, J. Neuss 2003), but in spite of the work done by these excellent epigraphists, I think there is still room for improvement.⁸

The temple on Muṇḍeśvarī Hill

Before discussing the inscription in more detail, however, a few words should be said about the temple. Joanna Williams gives the following assessment.

Fragments at the site extend from the sixth century until the eighth or later. On stylistic grounds the surviving octagonal shrine should belong to the first half of the seventh century. [...]⁹

6 Martin 1838, Vol. I, opposite p. 474 (Pl. V No. 1, ‘Temple of Mundeswari’).

7 ‘The Temple of Mandeswara near Chaynpore, Bahar’. Cf. Archer 1980, Plate 76.

8 A recent new edition was made by Arvind Kumar Singh, which is included in Jayaswal *et al.* 2017. I will refer to this as Singh (2017).

9 Williams 1982, 166f. Cf. Deva 1988 in EITA II.1, 119: ‘If the foundation inscription

The interior of the temple consists of a central pavillion supported by four *rucaka* pillars and encircled by a *pradakṣiṇapatha*, which enshrines a tall, c. 13th-century *caturmukhalinga*.¹⁰

Plate 80

Daniell: drawing AD 1790¹¹

Plate 81

The linga in AD 2008

The hill, temple, surrounding débris, and the inscription have been thoroughly examined by Jürgen Neuss (2003).¹² Neuss subscribes to the almost universally accepted theory that dates the oldest elements of the architecture of the present

refers to the Harṣa Era, yielding a date of A.D. 636, the temple stylistically can be assigned to the same period.'

¹⁰ Deva 1988 in EITA II.1, 119.

¹¹ 'Interior of the temple of Mandeswara near Chaynpore, Bahar.' Cf. Archer 1980, Plate 77.

¹² More recently another inventory of the remains on the hill was made by Fiona Buckee (2008). She generously shared her photo documentation with me. In 2018 Buckee presented a paper *The Curious Case of the Octagonal Temple: A Revised History of the Temples of Mundeshvari Hill* in the 24th Conference of the EASAA in Naples, 2–6 July 2018. I refer to this as Buckee *forthcoming*. Again another extensive survey of the archaeological remains of the hill, *in situ* and in museums, was made by Meera Sharma 2017. It is included in Jayaswal *et al.* 2017. This latest inventory is not incorporated in the present essay. Finally an extensive treatment of the historic evidence regarding Muṇḍeśvarī Hill is found in Bakker 2014, 221–39.

temple to the first half of the seventh century.¹³ However, Neuss rejects one piece of evidence used to endorse this theory, viz. the alleged contemporaneity of the temple and the inscription.¹⁴

The date of the Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription

Neuss's main arguments run as follows. Firstly, there is no reason to assume that 'the year 30' refers to the Harṣa Era, as has been done by all scholars following Bloch (see above), apart from Majumdar, who takes it to refer to the Gupta Era. Neuss refers to Asher, who had argued 'that in the ancient written documents of eastern India, time was almost invariably marked according to the regnal year of a current monarch',¹⁵ and, Neuss continues, 'that there is thus no basis to connect the date of our inscription with any known era'.¹⁶

Secondly, a detailed palæographic investigation leads him to the final observation that,

As the Muṇḍeśvarī record still uses the older tripartite *ya*, I would suggest that the Muṇḍeśvarī inscription must have been engraved between A.D. 570 and A.D. 590, and that the script shows influences from writing habits developed in Western India.¹⁷

I subscribe tentatively to Neuss's analysis and would therefore propose to date the inscription to the second half of the sixth or early seventh century. It follows that the otherwise completely unknown Mahāsāmanta Udayasena was a feudatory, not of Harṣavardhana, but of the Maukharis of Kanauj, and most likely ruled under Avantivarman, the last of the great Maukhari kings of Kanauj, whose reign spanned the final decades of the sixth and beginning of the seventh century. The inscription is not the foundation charter of the main temple itself, but it testifies to a historical process in the second half of the 6th century, in which the building of a new religious complex on the hill was in full swing.

Neuss presents a new edition of the inscription and his interpretation thereof has important consequences for his understanding of the type and development of the sacred complex on the hill. The reading and interpretation of the inscription that I present here differ significantly from the one given by Neuss. Our disagreement is mainly the result of a different interpretation of the signs that are found at the end of line 6 and 11 and in the middle of line 16: . Neuss, following Majumdar, takes these as *daṇḍas* that conclude a sentence.

13 Neuss 2003, 543. The temple has a long history of reconstructions. Its architectural history has been investigated by Adam Hardy and Fiona Buckee. Buckee (*forthcoming*) concludes that the present octagonal shape of the temple may go back to a reconstruction, influenced by nearby Suri tombs, made in the 16th or 17th century. The present appearance of the temple is due to a 'creative restauration' made between 1913–1916.

14 Neuss 2003, 535.

15 Asher 1985, 133.

16 Neuss 2003, 534 f.

17 Neuss 2003, 538.

In my view this interpretation is untenable, because it would break up the sentence construction. In line 6 the Sanskrit syntax requires that we do not read a pause after °*devakulasya*, since this is the adjunct of *upanibandhaḥ kāritaḥ* in line 9. If we would take this sign as a *daṇḍa* in line 11, it would separate the subject from the predicate: ... °*upakaraṇāni* ... *dattāni* (l. 12). For these reasons I follow the suggestion first made by Banerji to the effect that, 'The sign at the end of this line has been added in order to fill up the vacant space.'¹⁸ Similar scroll-work is, for instance, found at the end of line 3 (after the double *daṇḍa* that concludes v. 4) of the so-called 'Jaunpur Stone Inscription of Īśānavarman'.¹⁹ In line 16 of our inscription the double scroll sign is used to fill up the line and, concomitantly, to mark a new paragraph, *uktaṃ ca*, so that the concluding, exhortative verse could begin on a new line.

My edition is presented in two ways: first, a literal transliteration of what is readable; second, an edited version with conjectural emendations and standardized orthography. My study is based on the estampage supplied by Sten Konow and published by Banerji in *Epigraphia Indica* IX (Plate 82).

Plate 82
Maṇḍeśvarī Inscription, Year 30

18 Banerji 1907–08 in EI IX, 220 n. 1.

19 CII III (1888), Pl. xxxii; Bakker 2009b, 210 f. above, Plate 77

THE MUṆDEŚVARĪ INSCRIPTION, YEAR 30

Transliteration

-
- [] editorial rendering
 () reading uncertain
 < vowel part of syllable
 ◊ consonant part of syllable
halanta characters are given in bold face
 ~ , - and ≡ : metrical quantity of illegible syllables
-

- 1 [symbol] sambatsa(r)e triṅśati ≡ kārttikadi(va)se dvāviṅśatime
 2 asmi(n s)ambatsaramāsa(d)i ≡ (sa)pūrvvāyā**m** śrīmahāsāmanta
 3 mahāpratīhāramahārāj(o) ≡ yasenarāḷje kulapatibhā(nudayim)²⁰
 4 (ssa)devanikāya**m** daṇḍa ≡ yakagomibhaṭena prārthayitvā
 5 mātāpittor ā(tma)naś ca pu(ṇ)◊<bhivṛddhaye vinīteśvaramaṭhasamā
 6 veśaṃ ma(ṭham) etat kārītakam ≡ nārāyaṇadevakulasya [scroll]
 7 śrīmaṇḍaleśvarasvāmī(pā) ≡ yakoṣṭhikāṭaḥ ācandrārkkasama
 8 (k)āliyam akṣayam prati ≡ ≡ naivedyārtham taṇḍulaprasthadvayam
 9 dipatāilapalasya co ≡ ≡ bandhaḥ kārītaḥ śrīmaṇḍaleśvara
 10 svāmipādānām vici ≡ ≡ (rmmānta)tantrasādhāraṇam pañcāśatām
 11 dīnārāṇam goba ≡ ≡ ≡ bhaktādyupakaraṇāni [scroll]
 12 devanikāyasya dat< ≡ ≡ vaṃ viditvā yathakālāddhyā(s)icī
 13 tāpovanikair vṛā ya ≡ ≡ (ni)baddhasya vighāto na kācy<
 14 (e)vaṃ abhiśrāvito y(o) ≡ ≡ kuryāt sa mahāpātākais sa ≡
 15 ≡ ≡ ke vaset e(vaṃ) ≡ ≡ ≡ dhāraṇayā madhya
 16 ≡ ≡ (bh)āka ≡ ≡ ≡ ≡ tam iti [scroll, scroll] uktañ ca
 17 ≡ ≡ ≡ ≡ ~ - - yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira
 18 ≡ ≡ ≡ ≡ ~ - - dānāc chreyo nupālanam (|)

20 This can be read variously. Banerji, Majumdar, Agrawala & Singh read °bhāgudalana-, and s-sa on line 4 (Majumdar s-sa°, Agrawala and Singh emend to °sya) and note that na has been written above the la. Srinivasan reads: °bhāgudalanes, s-sa°. Neuss reads: °bhā[nu]dalana°, and sva° at the beginning of line 4. I do not see the na (according to Banerji added above the line), but rather think that this is the vowel mātṛā i (similar to the i above the n in nikāyaṃ in the next line) of the akṣara ya, of which the third vertical stroke may have broken off. It looks as if there is an anusvāra above this i-mātṛā, but this may be just damage or there might have been one more akṣara on this line, pressed together due to lack of space (cf. the haplography that occurs at the end of line 8 where °dvayam should be read as °dvayasya).

Emended, orthographic edition

- () editorial addition
 () conjectural reading
 ∘, – and ː : metrical quantity of illegible syllables

Where the inscription has a *halanta* character, or where absence of saṃdhi indicates pausa, a comma has been inserted. Where the interpretation requires a *daṇḍa* or double *daṇḍa*, these have been inserted between () marked by *. Line numbers are inserted in bold between [].

[1] siddham²¹

saṃvatsare trimśati(me)²² kārttikadivase dvāviṃśatime,

[2] asmin²³ saṃvatsaramāśadivasapūrvāyām,
 śrīmahāsāmanta**[3]** mahāpratīhāramahārājo(da)yasenarājye²⁴

kulapatibhā(nūdayiṃ)²⁵ **[4]** (sa)devanikāyam,
 daṇḍa(nā)yakagomibhaṭena prārthayitva

[5] mātāpitror ātmanaś ca pu(ṇyā)bhivṛddhaye
 vinīteśvaramaṭhasamā**[6]** veśaṃ maṭham etat kārītakam²⁶ (*|)

(śrī)nārāyaṇadevakulasya **[7]** śrīmaṇḍaleśvarasvāmipā(dī)yakoṣṭhikātaḥ,
 ācandrārkaśama**[8]** kāliyam akṣayam prati(dinam) naivedyārtham
 taṇḍulaprasthadvayaṃ²⁷ **[9]** dīpatailapalasya co(pani)bandhaḥ²⁸ kārītaḥ (*|)

21 Expressed by spiral symbol.

22 Irregular for *trimśattame*, maybe under influence of the following *dvāviṃśatime*, which is haplographic for *dvāviṃśatitame* (Oberlies 2003, 127). As argued above the year 30 is best explained, if we assume that it refers to regnal years. The only dated Maukhari inscription (the *Haraha Inscription of Īśānavarman*, EI XIV, 110–20) is assigned to the Vikrama Era, 611 (AD 554). The dates on the Maukhari coins are problematic: difficult to read and difficult to assign to any known era (see Burn 1906; EI XIV, 113; HCI III, 70). I presume with Asher, Neuss, and Singh that the present ‘year 30’ refers to the thirtieth year of Udayasena’s governorship (*rājya*).

23 Maybe to be emended to *asyāṃ*. As it stands, I take this synonymous with *atra* or *iha*.

24 The reading °*rājodayasena*° was first proposed by Banerji and taken over by all later editors. That we are here concerned with a feudatory rather than a sovereign king follows from his titles (three (of five) Mahāśabdas), bestowed upon him by a suzerain: *mahāsāmanta*, ‘feudatory’; *mahāpratīhāra*, ‘chief chamberlain’; *mahārāja*, ‘viceroy’. The monarch who had bestowed these titles may have been either Śarvavarman or Avanti-varman, Maukhari kings of Kanauij, who were themselves called great on account of their overlordship of Magadhā’ (*magadhādhīpatyamahatām*), in the *Sirpur Lakṣmaṇa Temple Stone Inscription of the time of Śivagupta Bālārjuna* (Shastri 1995 II, 143; EI XI, 191).

25 For this reading see above n.20 on p.396. As has been remarked by Sanderson (e-mail 15-2-2012), the beginning with *bhā* suggests a Pāśupata name, but no satisfactory interpretation has suggested itself. I conjecture *bhānūdayiṃ*, assuming that the curve to the left at the bottom (note also the little vertical stroke above the *akṣara*) indicate the long vowel *ū*; cf. *nu* in line 18. The noun *udayin* is declined here as a vowel stem in *i* (Oberlies 2003, 94).

26 Banerji reads *maṭham etat kārītakam*, but Majumdar noted that the inscription actually reads *mayetat kārītakam*. We agree with Banerji, just as Neuss (cf. Srinivasan 1991, 315). The end of this sentence *kārītakam* remains noticeable (cf. Fleet in CII III, 69, 113, 135; Oberlies 2003, 267 n.3).

27 The syntax requires that we read °*dvayasya*, as first suggested by Majumdar.

28 The reading *copanibandhaḥ*, proposed by Banerji, was taken over by all later editors.

śrīmaṇḍaleśvara[10]svāmipādānām vici(traka)(rmānta)tantrasādhāraṇam²⁹
 pañcāśatām [11] dīnārāṇām goba(lisraja)bhaktādyupakaraṇāni³⁰
 [12] devanikāyasya dat(tāni) < * || >³¹

< e > vaṁ viditvā yathākālādhyāsi(bh)i(s) [13] tāpovanikair vā

ya(thopa) nibaddhasya³² vighāto na kāryaḥ,

[14] evam abhiśrāvito yo < 'nyathā >³³ kuryāt sa mahāpātakais sa(ha)

[15] < nara > ke³⁴ vaset,

evam ∽ ∽ ∽ dhāraṇayā³⁵ madhya [16] ∽ ∽ (bh)āka ∽ ∽ ∽ ∽ tam iti < * || >

uktaṁ ca,

[17] < svadattām paradattām vā >, yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira < * | >

[18] < mahīm mahīmatām śreṣṭha >, dānāc chreyo 'nupālanam (||)³⁶

Translation

Success!

In the thirtieth year, at the twenty-second day of Kārttika; here, at the above year, month and day—within the reign of the illustrious Mahāsāmanta, Mahāpratīhāra, Mahārāja Udayasena—after having requested the permission of the head of the community (*kulapati*), Bhānūdayin (?), and the Temple Council, General Gomibhaṭa has commissioned the building of this accomodation as part of the Vinīteśvaramaṭha, in order to increase the merit of his father, mother, and himself.

He has made an assignment to the temple of the illustrious Nārāyaṇa of a *pala* of lampoil and two *prasthas* of rice for the daily food-offering (to the deity), permanently, for as long as sun and moon exist, to be taken from the storeroom that belongs to the temple of the illustrious Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin.

(And) to the Temple Council he has given the means, such as cows, offerings, garlands, and food, at the value of fifty *dīnāras*, meant collectively for the

29 This is a real *cruz interpretum*. Banerji (followed by Singh) proposed to read: *vicchitti-viśrānta*°. Majumdar read *vicchitti* – – *nta*° and acknowledged that he was 'unable to interpret this passage'. Srinivasan reads: *vici* (*chehitti*) Agrawala: *vicchitti-nimitta*°; Neuss: *vicchittimānta*°. I tentatively read: *vicitrakarmāntatantra*°.

30 The reading *gobalīśrajabhaktādy*° was first proposed by Majumdar and was taken over by Neuss. After this follows scroll-work to fill up the line.

31 Banerji proposed to read here (see also beginning of next line): *dattam etad evam*, corrected by the editor of EI (Sten Konow), to *dattāny etad evam*, which was taken over by Majumdar and Neuss. I see no reason to conjecture *etad*. If there is room for one more syllable I would conjecture: *dattānītyevam*.

32 Banerji conjectured *yathānibaddhasya*, corrected by Majumdar to *yathopanibaddhasya*, taken over by Neuss.

33 'nyathā first conjectured by Banerji and taken over by all later editors.

34 *saha narake* first conjectured by Banerji and taken over by all later editors.

35 The *akṣara* preceding *dhā* (just after the gap) was read as *va* by Banerji and Srinivasan (reading *ava*°), and *vā* by Majumdar, who conjectures *yathāvad dhāraṇayā*, taken over by Neuss. None of the editors has been able to restore this sentence.

36 Restored according to Sircar's *Indian Epigraphy* (1965), No. 131.

regular set of various observances for the sake of the illustrious feet of Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin.

Having learned so, there should not be a disruption of what has thus been assigned, neither by future incumbents nor by the ascetics.

The one who, having thus been informed, acts otherwise, will live in hell with great sins.

Thus [...]

And it has been declared,

O YUDHIṢṬHIRA, zealously protect the land, whether it has been given by yourself or by others. O foremost of the landlords, protection is superior to giving.

Interpretation

General Gomibhaṭa made altogether three donations, for which he had to make two formal requests, namely one to the head (*kulapati*) of the Vinīteśvara(maṭha), and the other to the Temple Council (*devanikāya*), of which he himself may have been a member.³⁷ The task of the Devanikāya may have been to supervise and administer the temple properties on the hill and that of the Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin temple complex (*devakula*) in particular. The membership of general Gomibhaṭa of such a council would not be surprising, if we consider the people who are reported to sit on such a council. To this effect the *Taleśvara Copperplate Grant of Dyutivarma* provides information.³⁸ The latter grant was made at the request of the Mahāsattrapati Trāta and the Devanikāya, ‘which was headed by the minister Bhadraviṣṇu, the governor of the fort, the officer in charge of the king’s betel-box, the custodian of the sacrificial fire, and the head of the royal guard’.³⁹

Gomibhaṭa needed the permission of *kulapati* Bhānūdayin for his first donation, viz. accomodation or housing (*maṭha*) for the ascetics, since that was to be built on the premises of the Vinīteśvaramaṭha. The word *kulapati* poses a problem. Literally it signifies ‘head of a community’. Because the community here is defined as that of a *maṭha*, a likely interpretation is that the *kulapati* is

37 If we read with Neuss *svadevanikāya* in l. 4, this membership would be explicit.

38 EI XIII No. 7, 109–21: *Two Talesvara Copperplates* by Y.R. Gupte (1915–16). These two copperplates have been found in Taleśvara in the Almore District, United Provinces (modern Uttarakhand). Though they appear to be forgeries, they are nevertheless documents pertaining to the period ‘between the middle of the 6th and second quarter of the 7th century’ (Gupte *op. cit.* 113), i.e. to the same period as to which the Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription belongs.

39 EI XIII, 115 ll. 6–8: *rājadāuvārikāgnīsvāmikāraṇīkakoṭādhikaraṇīkāmātyabhadraviṣṇu-puraḥsareṇa ca devanikāyena vijñāpitaṃ*, which is rendered by Gupte as ‘preceded by royal doorkeepers, the attendants of the sacred fire, the *kāraṇīkas*, the superintendent of the female (temple) slaves, the minister Bhadraviṣṇu’.

the Mahant or abbot of the community of ascetics (*tāpovanikas*) of the Vinīteśvaramaṭha.⁴⁰ Alternatively, as was pointed out to me in the conference, *kulapati* may be shorthand for *devakulapati*, ‘head of the temple’, in which case probably the temple connected to the *maṭha* was meant.

He needed the approval of the Temple Council for his second donation, viz. a daily offering of lampoil and rice meant for the Nārāyaṇa Temple (*devakula*), since this was to be taken from the storeroom (*koṣṭhikā*) connected to the Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin Temple. How this was paid for remains unclear, unless we assume that the third donation to the Temple Council was considered to be sufficient to cover the costs of this as well.

His third donation to the Temple Council, for which he also needed approval, was meant for the worship of Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin himself and is said to have had a value of 50 *dīnāras*. For this amount he provided the means needed for worshipping the deity, such as milk (a cow), food and garlands, epitomized in the words *vicitrakarmāntatantra*^o (regular set of various observances), if our conjecture (l. 10) is correct.

The inscription attests to the existence, in the second half of the 6th century, of a main Śaiva temple complex, called Maṇḍaleśvara. Connected to this temple was a storeroom, which could also supply the daily offerings for a minor Vaiṣṇava sanctuary dedicated to Nārāyaṇa. In addition, and possibly closely connected to the Maṇḍaleśvara complex, was a monastery of Śaiva ascetics, named Vinīteśvaramaṭha. Whether there was a temple or shrine of Vinīteśvara cannot be deduced from this inscription with certainty, but the existence at the time of such a temple is very likely indeed. The monastery or/and its temple was headed by Bhānūdayin.

MAṆḌALEŚVARA AND THE SKANDAPURĀṆA

This is as far as epigraphy (and archaeology) can bring us. It does not tell us why ascetics and pilgrims flocked to this hill in great numbers. Why the site was considered holy. In order to answer these questions we need texts, and such a text has become available. I refer to the original *Skandapurāṇa*.

In the context of the Kauśikī Cycle the *Skandapurāṇa* contains a *Maṇḍaleśvara Māhātmya*.⁴¹ This *Māhātmya* tells the story of the demons Sunda and Nisunda and the nymph Tilottamā, also known from the *Mahābhārata*,⁴² which serves as an aetiological myth of the origin of the *caturmukhalinga*.

40 Cf. Vallabhadeva *ad Raghuvamśa* 1.94, who glosses *kulapatinā* as *āśramaguruṇā*. Parallels for this usage are also found in Khmer inscriptions (Coedes 1937–66) K 95, K 309, K 362.

41 The credit for the discovery of the relevance of this text for the Muṇḍeśvarī Hill goes to Yuko Yokochi (Yokochi 2005, 88 n. 28).

42 MBh 1.200.18–204.26; Mbh 13.128.1–6. See Bakker 2001; below, pp. 489 ff.

Tilottamā, her creator Brahmā, and the other gods assemble in the Vindhyas for worshipping Śiva, but he is invisible at first. Then Śiva appears on the scene in the form of a *līṅga*. When Tilottamā makes her *pradakṣiṇā* around him (and the gods), four faces emerge on the four sides of the *līṅga*, which gives her the power of sexual desire, the *tejas*, namely, that had been stored within Śiva ever since he had burnt Madana. Thus the *caturmukhaliṅga* comes into being (SP 62.8–26). Then Śiva says that,

Because she [Tilottamā], as well as the gods, has circumambulated Him in a circle (*maṇḍala*), this place on Mt. Vindhya, which is sacred to Him, will be called Maṇḍaleśvara, and He will always be present here.⁴³

The story continues, again in the words of Yokochi.

After sending Tilottamā to the demons, all the gods huddle together. They see Parameśvara in their midst. Because He appeared in the midst of the gods while they were huddling together (*piṇḍyamāna*), He was called Piṇḍāreśvara there.⁴⁴

A holy place called Piṇḍāraka is known to the *Mahābhārata* (MBh 13.26.54), and other places with this name are known to several Purāṇas. The Piṇḍāreśvara at issue, however, must be located in the vicinity of Maṇḍaleśvara. The word *piṇḍāra* means mendicant and the aetiological myth told in the *Skandapurāṇa* probably refers to a local *līṅga* that was worshipped by Śaiva ascetics.

The place where our text locates these two *līṅgas* is in the northern part of the Vindhyas, since Tilottamā is said to go to the south to find the two demons in the foothills of the Vindhya (*vindhyapādeṣu*). Our investigation thus seems to corroborate Yokochi's hypothesis, to the effect that both *Skandapurāṇa līṅgas* are to be situated on the Muṇḍeśvarī Hill—the Maṇḍaleśvara being the ancient *caturmukhaliṅga* preserved on the site near the main, octagonal temple and named as such in the *Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription, Year 30*, and the Piṇḍāreśvara being one of the many of 5th to 7th century *līṅgas* that are scattered all over the hill, possibly the 5th or 6th century *ekamukhaliṅga* found at site A.⁴⁵

43 Yokochi 2005, synopsis; SP 62.27–28:

abravīc ca surān sarvāms tatredaṃ vacanaṃ śivah |
yasmād iyaṃ māṃ yūyaṃ ca maṇḍalena pradakṣiṇam || 27 ||
cakre sarve suraśreṣṭhāḥ sthānaṃ tasmād idaṃ mama |
bhaviṣyati girau vindhye maṇḍaleśvarasaṃjñitam |
sāmnidhyaṃ sarvadā hy asmin kariṣyāmi varapradam || 28 ||

44 Yokochi 2005, synopsis; SP 62.36–38:

atha sampreṣayitvā tu devatās tāṃ tilottamām |
ātmanāṃ piṇḍayāmāsaur devās te sarva eva hi || 36 ||
kaḥ kaḥ katama āyāta ihādyeti suraśabhāḥ |
tato madhye sthitaṃ bhūyas te 'paśyan paramēśvaram || 37 ||
piṇḍyamāneṣu deveṣu yasmān madhye samāsthitaḥ |
piṇḍāreśvara ityeva tatrāsāv abhavat tataḥ || 38 ||

45 For this site A on the hill see Neuss 2003, 546, 558–60, Fig. 2; Bakker 2014, 231 ff.

Plate 83
Old *caturmukhalinga* ⁴⁶

Plate 84
Ekamukhalinga of site A ⁴⁷

Once the hill had established its reputation, it began to attract patronage of the elite. Gomibhaṭa exemplifies this development and we have suggested elsewhere that the Vinīteśvara temple may have been founded by someone named Vinīta, who may have ruled from the stronghold of near-by Rohitāgiri, Rohtasgarh. ⁴⁸ The inscription and earliest archaeological material on the hill belong to the period in which we date the beginning of the *Skandapurāṇa* composition, that is after AD 550, when North India became united again, for the first time since the fall of the Gupta Empire, under the Maukhari rulers, whose homeland was in the near-by valley of the River Son. It is the period in which the Śaiva movement was beginning to organize itself through sectarian settlements

⁴⁶ This *linga* is found in the temple compound, near the entrance. Neuss 2003, 546 n. 37: 'This *caturmukhalinga* seems to be the model for the one which is at present in the temple and which most likely is a substitute for the former.' Photo by the author (2011).

⁴⁷ This *linga* is presently stored within the temple. For its history see Neuss 2003, 546 f. It came from 'site A'. Photo courtesy of F. Buckee (2008).

⁴⁸ In inscriptions of the Tuṅga dynasty, ruling in the tenth century as feudatories of the Bauma-Kara kings of Orissa in the Yamagarta-maṇḍala in the Dhenkanal District of Central Orissa, this dynasty of petty kings claims that its ancestor, named Vinīta, came originally from the Rohitāgiri. See Bakker 2010b.

or *maṭhas* in centres of pilgrimage that were on the rise, such as Vārāṇasī. Muṇḍeśvarī Hill, that is Maṇḍaleśvara, may have been a knot in the emerging network of Pāśupata ascetics, important enough to deserve a Māhātmya of its own in one of the movement's greatest literary undertakings, the Purāṇa of Skanda.⁴⁹

49 For further reading see Bakker 2014, 221–39.