Thanesar, the Pāśupata Order and the Skandapurāṇa*

Studies in the Skandapurāṇa IX

THE TRADITION OF THE FOUR PUPILS OF LĀGUḌĪ

By the middle of the sixth century the city of Kanauj seems to have emerged as the capital of the rising dynasty of the Maukharis under its king Īśānavarman.¹ This town, in the Sanskrit tradition named Kānyakubja/ Kanyakubja, is known from the *Skandapurāṇa*, and from this text only, as the seat of one of the Pāśupata lineages.

The *Skandapurāṇa* (SP_S 167.123–29) informs us that the fourth pupil of Lāguḍī was a *brahmacārīn* who came from a distinguished family in the (Land of the) Kurus.² He received initiation in Kanyakubja and, as implied by SP_S 167.130, established the fourth lineage of Pāśupata teachers there. Lāguḍī bestowed on him (and the other three pupils) ‘His own doctrine’ (and) *yoga*.³

* The first version of this article was published in *Journal of Indological Studies* 19 (2007), 1–16.

1 As far as I am aware, there exists no direct evidence for this statement. There is circumstantial evidence, though, which has led the majority of historians to accept it as the most plausible hypothesis. Tripathi 1964, 32–36; Majumdar in HCI III, 69 f.; Goyal 1967, 363; Thaplyal 1985, 19 f. Among this evidence is the clay seal-matrix, probably to be ascribed to Avantivarman, that was found in Kanauj (Thaplyal 1985, 153). The major argument for Kanauj being the Maukhari capital, at least at the time of Grahavarman, is based on the evidence of Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* (see Tripathi 1964, 32–36).

2 We deduce from this evidence that the name of the fourth pupil was unknown to the composer of the SP, but that there was a living tradition that connected him with the Kurus or Kurukṣetra. In order to supply a name for the founder of this lineage, this tradition later invented the name Kauruṣya (LiP 1.7.51, 1.24.131, ŚiP *Śatarudrasaṃhitā* 5.49) or Kauruṣa (see above, n. 16 on p. 287).

3 SP_S 167.122–123, 129:

ujjayanyāṃ guruḥyesthaḥ kauśiko nāma nāmataḥ |
dvitīyo gārgya ity eva jambumārge satāpanaḥ || 122 ||
ṭṭīyaś cābhavan mitro mathurāyāṃ mahāmanāḥ |
brahmacārī caturthas tu kuruṣv eva sugotrajaḥ || 123 ||
[...]

kanyakubje tataś cānyam anuḡṛhya jagatpatīḥ |
*svasiddhāntaṃ dadau yogam uvācedaṃ ca lāguḍīḥ** || 129 ||*

* The reading of SP_S 167.123d is uncertain. The syllables *ku-ru* are relatively certain as they are attested in all manuscripts: both SP_S MSS (S₁ and S₂) and all SP_{RA} MSS (R before

The route along which the Pāśupata movement had reached the Land of the Kurus may also be deduced from the *Skandapurāṇa*: 1) Kārohaṇa (where Śiva's incarnation took place), 2) Ujjayanī (initiation of Kauśika), 3) Jambumārga between Ujjayanī and Puṣkara (initiation of Gārgya), 4) Mathurā (initiation of Mitra), 5) Land of the Kurus, 6) Kanyakubja (initiation of the Kuru).⁴

The major city in the 'Land of the Kurus' in the 5th and 6th centuries was Thanesar. In his *Harṣacarita* Bāṇa depicts Thanesar (Sthāṇviśvara) under (the legendary) King Puṣyabhūti as a country completely devoted to Maheśvara.⁵ It is therefore not impossible, at least it is suggested by the *Skandapurāṇa*, that the Pāśupata movement had reached Kanauj from Gujarat via Kurukṣetra and had thus passed through Thanesar.

Plate 117
Thanesar: Excavations at the Harṣa kā Ṭilā

correction). The S MSS read the corrupt °śvava instead of °śveva, but the latter reading is supported by all A MSS. The latter MSS read *sa gotrajaḥ* instead of *sugotrajaḥ*. ** In 129d S₁ reads *lāguḍiḥ*: S₂ *lākulī*.

'And' (SP_S 167.129d) Lāgudi declares:

rahasyaṃ paramaṃ hīdaṃ pañcārtha itī saṃjñitam |
vīprān mocayitum datto yuṣṭabhyaṃ martyabandhanāt |
anayā dīkṣayā vīprān prāpayadhvaṃ paraṃ padam || 130 ||

SP_S 167.130 thus defines the *svasiddhānta* doctrine as 'Pañcārtha' and explicitly declares that these four pupils have the right to initiate, i.e. that they are established as the founders of four lineages.

4 Above, n. 3 on p. 527. For a discussion of this route see below, p. 563.

5 HC* p. 164 *gr̥he gr̥he bhagavān apūjyata khaṇḍaparaśuḥ* | A seal reading 'śrīrudraḥ' in 'first-second century characters' was reportedly found in the Kushana layers of the so-called Harṣa kā Ṭilā in Thanesar (IAR 1987–88, 29).

Some information about this ‘Kuru lineage’ seems to have survived the ages. The (Jaina) tradition—preserved in Guṇaratna’s (fourteenth century) commentary on the *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* of Haribhadra (ninth century) and Rājaśekharaśūri’s *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* (fourteenth century)—records the first four names of the teachers in each of the four lineages that are said to derive from Lakulīśa. The fourth teacher, here named Kauruṣa, was succeeded by Maṇuṣyaka, Puṣpaka and Rāśīkara.⁶

Lāguḍi

The idea of a guru with four pupils named Lāguḍi/Lākulin or Lakulīśa seems to be an example of ‘invention of tradition’. Kauṇḍinya does not know a teacher (incarnation) by the name of Lakulīśa, but speaks only about the Lord (*bhagavat*) descending in Kāyāvatarana (= Kārohaṇa), who initiated only one pupil, Kuśika, in the city of Ujjayanī.⁷ Nor does the name Lakulīśa, or any of its variants, occur in the *Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61*.⁸ It may have been coined in the fifth century to refer to the (divine) teacher who carried a club (*laguḍa*), portrayed in several fifth-century images, and as such came to be attested in the *Skandapurāṇa*.⁹

The apparently oldest image of an ithyphallic Śaiva teacher with a *lakula* resting against his left shoulder is accompanied by only two pupils and may date from the 5th century (Plate 118).¹⁰

6 Guṇaratna *ad* Haribhadra’s *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* (Dalal 1920, 29):

tasya cāṣṭādaśāvatarā amī | *nakulīśo ’tha,*
[1.1] *kauśikah,* [1.2] *gārgyāh,* [1.3] *maitryāh,* [1.4] *kauruṣah,*
[2.1] *īśānah,* [2.2] *pāragārgyāh,* [2.3] *kapilāṇḍah,* [2.4] *maṇuṣyakah,*
[3.1] *kuśikah,* [3.2] *atirih,* [3.3] *piṅgalah,* [3.4] *puṣpakah,*
[4.1] *brhadāryah,* [4.2] *agastih,* [4.3] *santānah,* [4.4] *rāśīkarah,*
vidyāguruś ca |

Cf. Rājaśekharaśūri’s *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, Dayal *op. cit.* 35.

For an elaborate discussion of this *paramparā* see Bisschop 2006, 48 ff. The commentator of the *Pāśupatasūtra*, Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 4.10, apparently placed himself in the lineage of Kuśika and Īśāna: *kuśikeśānasambandhāt*. No doubt the lineage of Kuśika is the oldest Pāśupata tradition (Indraji 1881–82, 322 f., 327; Sircar: SI I, 278), a fact corroborated by the *Skandapurāṇa* itself (see above, n. 3 on p. 527).

7 Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1 (for translation see below, p. 542):

kāmitvād ajātatvāc ca maṇuṣyarūpī bhagavān brāhmaṇakāyam āsthāya kāyāvatarāṇe
avatīrṇa iti | *tathā padbhyām ujjayanīṃ prāptaḥ* | [...] *ato rudrapracoditaḥ ku-*
śīkabhagavān abhyāgatya [...] *kāle vaidyavad avasthītam āturavad avasthītaḥ śi-*
ṣyāḥ prṣṭavān: bhagavan kim eteṣām ādhyātmikādhībhautikādhidaivikānāṃ sarvaduḥ-
khānām aikāntiko ’tyantiko vyapoho ’sty uta neti ||

8 Bhandarkar 1931–32. Above, p. 494.

9 SP_S 167.129 (above, n. 3 on p. 527). See further below, p. 554 ff. and p. 559 f.

10 Shah 1984, 97, Pl. 81: ‘Mathurā, Svāmīghaṭ, Lakulīśa with two disciples, ca. fifth century A.D.’ See Kreisel 1986, 167–169; Bisschop 2004, 46. The image (below, Plate 121) of a (non-ithyphallic) Śaiva ascetic holding a staff or club in his right hand and vessel (*kalaśa*) in his left, dating from the Kuśāṇa period and preserved in the Mathura Museum, may be ‘a prototype of the figure of Lakulīśa’ (Shah 1984, 97, Pl. 80).

Plate 118
Mathurā: Lakulīśa with two pupils

In the first half of the 6th century images of Lakulīśa surrounded by four pupils began to appear, such as the one in the Yogeśvarī Cave near Bombay (below, Plate 128).¹¹

In short, at some stage in the process by which the Pāśupata movement was gathering momentum, the *avatāra* of Śiva/Pāśupati received the name Lāguḍi/Lākulin/Lakulīśa. It became an article of faith common to various traditions, on the one hand serving to account for the spread of several guru lineages that claimed to go back to Śiva's incarnation and, on the other hand, uniting these into one coherent religious movement.

The Kuru lineage

Puṣpaka in the Kuru (Kauruṣa) lineage evokes the name of the (alleged) founder of the Pāśupatinātha Temple in Nepal, Supuṣpa.¹² It may also remind one of

¹¹ Shah 1984, 98, Pl. 88.

¹² The foundation of this temple is credited to a (legendary) king of the Licchavi dynasty, named Supuṣpadeva in the (corrupt) *Gopālarājajavaṃśāvalī* (ff. 19v–20r):

rājā śrīsupuṣpadeva varṣa 76 || tena hi nepālabhūmiś cāturvārṇakṛtā || śrīpaśupati-bhaṭārakasya devālaya kṛtaṃ saṅkhalīsamchādanam || tata sundarīnīrmitanagaram sakalarājyamarjjādā kṛtyaḥ nyāyena prajāḥ samasta pratipālītāniḥ svasvasvakīyena bhūmi ॐ ॐ samtha ॐ ॐ vyavahāra pravartate ||

This Supuṣpa is also known from the genealogy of King Jayadeva, the same who recorded the name of his maternal grandfather, the Maukhari prince Bhogavarman (see below, p. 538): *tasmāl licchavitaḥ pareṇa nṛpatin hitvā parān dvādaśa śrīmān puṣpaśarākṛtiḥ kṣitipatir jātaḥ supuṣpas tataḥ |* (Verma & Singh 1994, 238). According to Slusser 1982, 227 this king is 'alternately known as Pāśuprekha (he who has seen Pāśupati)'. A later (equally legendary) Licchavi king, Supuṣpavarman, is said in the *Gopālarājajavaṃśāvalī* to have renovated the temple of Pāśupati:

Puṣyabhūti, a name spelled in some MSS as Puṣpabhūti, the legendary founder of the dynasty of Thanesar to which King Harṣavardhana belonged.¹³

Puṣyabhūti is depicted in the *Harṣacarita* 3 (pp. 49–55) as being deeply involved in a Śaiva ritual of black magic (Vetālasādhana) in the cremation ground (Mahāśmaśāna), under the guidance of a Mahāśaiva preceptor (*bhuvanaguru*) hailing from the South (*dākṣiṇātya*), Bhairavācārya.¹⁴ In this ritual the deity (*vāstunāga*) of the land (*janapada*) Śrīkaṇṭha, in which Sthāpaviśvara (Puṣyabhūti's capital) is situated,¹⁵ the Nāga Śrīkaṇṭha is conjured up by the *ācārya*;¹⁶ he is forced into submission by the king, who is about to kill him with the magic sword Aṭṭahāsa, a gift of Bhairavācārya. Then, when the king is prepared to let him go because of his brahminhood, a goddess dressed in white, evidently Lakṣmī (Rājyaśrī),¹⁷ emerges from the sword, anoints the king and grants Puṣyabhūti to become the founder of a mighty dynasty. This dynasty is therefore believed to have acquired its legitimacy and authority over the land of Kurukṣetra thanks to the magic of the Śaiva preceptor.¹⁸

The fourth teacher in the Kuru (Kauruṣa) lineage, Rāśīkara, is known from the *Ratnaṭikā* (9th century?).¹⁹ It would seem a plausible hypothesis to

rājā śrīsupuṣpavarmā varṣa 56, tena nepālabhūmi dharmeṇa vṛdhikṛtam || puna śrī-paśubhaṭṭārikasya devālaye atisundara nīrmitam || (ibid. f. 20v)

The first firm evidence of Pāśupata presence in Nepal comes from the reign of King Jīṣṇugupta (AD 624–632). It is found in the Paśupatinātha Temple in a shrine called Chatracandēśvara, in which the pillar next to the image of Chatracandēśvara is engraved with an inscription, which records a donation by a (Pāśupata) teacher (*ācārya*) called Bhagavat Pranardana-prāṇa Kauśika (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 119). The donation was made to some ascetics of the *muṇḍaśrīkhalikapāśupatācārya-parṣad* (the assembly of Pāśupata teachers belonging to the Muṇḍa-Śrīkhalikas). See Bakker 2014, 149f. The *ācārya* Bhagavat Pranardana informs us in another inscription on the pedestal of the same image that he is *varṇāśramadvāsita*, i.e. living outside the *varṇāśrama* confines of society (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 120). The Licchavi inscriptions further provide information about the Śrīkhalika-Pāśupatas who care for the sick (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 132), and Pāśupata *ācāryas* (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 147 l. 8), for whom see below, n. 44 on p. 539.

13 The *Nalanda Clay Seal of Harṣa* describes Harṣa as: *paramamāheśvaraḥ maheśvara iva sarvasattvānukampakaḥ paramabhaṭṭārakamahārājādhirājaśrīharṣaḥ* (Thaplyal 1985, 186). The report on the excavations of the Harṣa kā Ṭilā at Thanesar informs us that the 'Pushyabhuti or Vardhana period (middle of the sixth to end of seventh century) was distinguished by a massive brick building and other structural remains' (IAR 1987–99, 29; see Plate 117).

14 Bāṇa gives a flowery description of this teacher (HC* 3, pp. 169–73). See also Bakker 2014, 78.

15 The *Gaṇḍavaho* refers to Śrīkaṇṭha, as Siriāṃṭha (v. 484). Vākpātirāja describes it as the site where Janamejaya's serpent sacrifice took place (vv. 472–484). Verse 485 makes it clear that Kurukṣetra is meant.

16 The Nāga or goblin/deity (*vetāla*), whose submission is sought, is evoked by the *japa* of the Mahāmantra named 'Mahākālahṛdaya' (HC* 3, pp. 178, 184 ff.).

17 HC* 3, p. 189: *viddhī māṃ nārāyaṇoraṣṭhalilāvivihārahariṇīm*.

18 For the gradual take over of the function of the royal Purohita by Śaiva officiants see Sanderson 2004. Here we are concerned with an early instance of this historic process.

19 Dalal 1920, *Ratnaṭikā* p. 19 ll. 7–9: *tato 'vabhṛtyasnanāṃ kṛtvā bhagavamlakulīśādīn*

connect the branch of Pāśupata teachers with names ending in °*rāśī* to this Rāśikara, and it might perhaps be not too far-fetched to imagine that, by the time that the SP was composed, Kanauij/Kanyakubja possessed a Pāśupata Maṭha of the Rāśī branch, which derived its authority from a *paramparā* that was conceived of as going straight back to Lakulīśa through the guru who came from Kurukṣetra.²⁰

Rāśī ascetics and 'His own doctrine'

Rāśī ascetics are known from inscriptions to have been living in various places. The first epigraphical attestation (c. AD 600) is that of an ascetic called Udbhavarāśī, said to be a Rudra, in an inscription from the Gandharveśvara Temple in Sirpur (Śrīpura) of the time of King Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna, who ruled from c. AD 590 to 650.²¹ This Udbhavarāśī Rudra, called 'an ocean for the streams of his own doctrine', might have reached Dakṣiṇa Kosala in the train of Bālārjuna's mother Vāsaṭā, who was a Maukharī princess, daughter of Sūryavarman, and who had come from Kanyakubja to Śrīpura as the wife of the Pāṇḍuvamśī prince Harṣagupta in the last quarter of the sixth century.²²

rāśīkarāntāṃś ca tīrthakarān anukrameṇa yathāvad bhaktyā namaskuryāt tad anu pradakṣiṇam ekam iti

- 20 The *Skandapurāṇa* (SP_{Bh} 162.45) refers to Śiva as *rāśīvidāṃ varaḥ*, 'Best of the Astrologers', or a reference to the Rāśī ascetics? In this connection attention should be drawn to a passage in the *Skandapurāṇa*, SP 32.103–110. It tells us that the gods out of fear for Kālākarnī, a personification of death, dive into a heap (*rāśī*) of ashes (*bhasman*), due to which they become Pāśupatas and enjoy the protection of Śiva. Could this myth reflect the initiation rite in which the novice takes his first bath in a heap of ashes (*bhasmarāśī*) and receives a sectarian name ending in *rāśī*? (this was suggested to me by Peter Bisschop).

- 21 EI XXXIX, 151, v. 3 (metre Indravajrā):

*śrīmān svasiddhāntadhunīpayo – , – paprabhodbhāsitaśuddhabhūtiḥ |
atrābhavad vāgamṛtena lokān, yas t[ōṣa]yaty udbhavarāśīrudraḥ || 3 ||*

3ab conieci: °*payodhis, tāpa*°.

There (i.e. in Śrīpura) arose Udbhavarāśī, a Rudra, the one who is an ocean for the streams of his own doctrine, whose pure splendour/ash was illuminated by the light of his asceticism, and who satisfies the people with the nectar of his speech.

I take 'Rudra' as a title, which, on the one hand, may be connected to the doctrine, attested in the *Malhar (Junvānī) Plates of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57* (l. 15; above, p. 290), which acknowledges a lineage of sixty-six Rudras (embodiments on earth of Gahaneśa, the Rudra who, in Śaiva cosmology, reigns the 'net of bonds' (*pāśajāla*)), on the other hand, with a development within the Pāśupata fold of a Bhairava tradition, to which the 'Rudra' teachers in particular belong (see above, p. 292, and below, n. 22 on p. 532).

- 22 Bakker 1994b, 14 ff. (above, p. 252 f.). Another early attestation of a Rāśī ascetic is found in the *Indragarh Stone Inscription* of VS 767 (AD 710/11) found in the Mandasor District, which records the erection of a Śiva temple, Guheśvara, by a Pāśupata named Dānarāśī. He is said to be a disciple of the Pāśupata *ācārya* Vinītarāśī, the foremost of the Rudra Śrīṅkhalikas (*rudraśrīṅkhalikāgrāṇīḥ*) (JBRs XLI (1955), 260 vv. 5–7). To mention one more instance of Rāśī ascetics in the kingdom of Kanauij, we may refer to the stone inscription found in Sirsa (Haryana) of the time of the Pratīhāra king of Kanauij, Bhojadeva (middle of the ninth century), which features the name of Ratnarāśī: *ratnarāśīs tapomayapāśupatāgrāṇīs ca* (EI XXI, 295 l. 4).

Although, admittedly, ‘his own doctrine’ (*svasiddhānta*) would normally be taken to mean ‘the doctrine of/adhered to by Udbhavarāśi’, it may be significant to note that SP_S 167.129–30 refers to the Pañcārtha doctrine imparted by Lāguḍi to his disciples as ‘His own doctrine’: *svasiddhānta* (above, n.3 on p. 527). Possibly the phrase ‘his own doctrine’ within this lineage was a shibboleth, a denomination signifying ‘His own doctrine’, thereby claiming that the doctrine was the only true one, revealed directly by Lord Lāguḍi himself. The phrase ‘an ocean for the streams of his own doctrine’ makes sense, if the ‘ocean’, i.e. the ascetic, is conceived a receptacle of the streams that make up the Pāśupata/Pañcārtha tradition. We will come across another Pāśupata ascetic who was devoted to ‘his own doctrine’ below, (p. 539).

THE SKANDAPURĀṆA AND THE PĀŚUPATA MOVEMENT

Vārāṇasī

It is obvious that the *Skandapurāṇa* is an important source for reconstructing the history of the Pāśupata movement, a text composed during the second half of the 6th and first half of the 7th century.²³ The holy town of Vārāṇasī plays an important role in this text and its *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* shows detailed knowledge of the local situation. It is the only holy place that is eulogized in much detail and at great length.²⁴ The *Māhātmya* describes a *kṣetra* that seems to correlate with the historic situation in the late Gupta and early medieval period. The sanctuary of Avimukteśvara takes centre stage. Around it are said to be twelve *līṅgas* of lesser importance (above, p. 471; Figure 12), none of which is known from seals.

The *Skandapurāṇa* testifies to the establishment of a Pāśupata community of ascetics and *ācāryas* in Vārāṇasī, who may well have been in charge of most of the sanctuaries described in the text. Being united in the kingdom of Kanauj by the time the SP was composed,²⁵ the Vārāṇasī Pāśupatas entertained probably manifold relations with their brethren in Kanyakubja. This sectarian affiliation may partly explain why, with the exception of Avimukteśvara, the *tīrthas* mentioned in the SP do not feature in other sources, before their inclusion in the *Tīrthavivecanakāṇḍa* of Lakṣmīdhara who, by quoting the *Skandapurāṇa*,

23 Above, pp. 185 ff., p. 469. See also Bakker 2014, 137f.

24 See *Introduction* to SP II A.

25 Being so near to their homeland in Baghelkhand, Vārāṇasī may have been part of the Maukhari territories from the moment that these kings began to assert themselves in the Gaṅgā Valley, that is during the course of the first half of the 6th century. The three inscriptions of the Maukhari kings were found within a circle of 220 km around Vārāṇasī: in Shankarapur, 200 km SW (Harivarman), Jaunpur, 52 km NW (ascribed to Īśvaravarman, but probably of Īśānavarman or one of his successors), Haraha, 220 km NW (Sūryavarman/Īśānavarman).

canonized them, so to speak.²⁶ The spread of the Pāśupata order itself towards the east, to Vārāṇasī and Magadhā, may have taken off from Kanyakubja earlier, during the period when North India was united in the Gupta kingdom.

In view of the learned tradition of the town, duly observed, for instance, by Xuanzang, it has a certain probability per se that the *Skandapurāṇa* was composed either in Vārāṇasī, or in a (Pāśupata) centre that had close contacts with this city. If the above dating is correct, the text was composed under the rule of either the Maukharis or Harṣavardhana of Kanauj (see below, pp. 601 ff.).

The Māhātmya of Sthāneśvara

The historic relations between the Pāśupatas of Vārāṇasī and those in Kanauj and Thanesar at the time of its composition also seem to emerge from the *Skandapurāṇa* itself. It might be significant in this respect that—after a brief intermezzo (SP 31.15–47) in which Śiva makes Mount Mandara his House (named Vṛṣan) and the question arises why, after having first made Yajña in the form of a cloud his vehicle, he has exchanged him for Vṛṣa, the bull (which again is a prelude to the myth of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice told in SP 32)—the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* is followed by a section (SP 31.48–115) that tells the mythology related to and the Māhātmya of Sthāneśvara.²⁷

This mythology relates that the Śaiva sage Dadhīca (son of Cyavana, grandson of Bhṛgu), whose *āśrama* is on the Sarasvatī River, defeats his Vaiṣṇava rival Kṣupa with Śiva's help.²⁸ To commemorate this victory the site (*sthāna*) named 'Sthāneśvara' is established, one *krośa* in circumference, full of flowers (*puṣpa*) and creepers.²⁹ It is evident that the foundation myth of Sthāneśvara, i.e. Thanesar, is told.

26 TVK pp. 130–135. An exception is Svarlīna, which had passed into the hands of *ācāryas* of the Śaivasiddhānta, at least by the 12th century. One of its incumbents left us an inscription (the *National Museum Kathamandhu Stone Inscription of NS 264* (AD 1144), edited in Acharya 1997), in which an Ācārya Rudraśiva reports, among other things, that he initiated several princes in Nepal. See SP IIA, 72 ff., SP 29.28. The modern Svarlīneśvara Mandir is situated at Prahlāda Ghāt in the north of Benares (A 11/29).

27 This Māhātmya is intricately positioned between the prelude to the Dakṣa myth (SP 31.15–47) and this myth itself (SP 32); see SP IIB, 27. It provides the cause (*kāraṇa*, SP 31.49) of Śiva's victory over all the gods in the Dakṣa myth. This cause is the boon asked by Dadhīca after his victory over the Vaiṣṇava Kṣupa: *bhagavan yadi tuṣṭo 'si yadi deyo varaś ca me | icchāmi viṣṇunā sārdaṃ sarvān devāṃs tvayā jītān ||* 31.101 ||

28 The fight (*vaira*) between Dadhīca and Kṣupa, who argue about the superiority of either the *brahman* or the *kṣatra* principle, resembles in many respects that between Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra, whose *āśramas* are also said to be in Sthāṇputrītha (MBh 9.41.4). MBh 3.81.163–64 locates Dadhīca's *āśrama* in Kurukṣetra, where also the Sthāṇputra is said to be (MBh 3.81.54).

29 SP 31.106: *deva uvāca |*

*sthāneśvaram iti khyātaṃ nāmnaitat sthānam uttamam |
bhavitṛ krośaparyantaṃ nānāpuṣpalatākulam ||* 106 ||

Dadhīca's own *āśrama* is here called 'Sthāṇutīrtha', where the famous Sthāṇuvaṭa is said to stand,³⁰ both already known from the *Mahābhārata*. Sthāṇutīrtha is said to have been established by Lord Sthāṇu (MBh 9.41.6) and is the place credited in the *Mahābhārata* with the birth of Skanda and his consecration (*abhīṣeka*) as *senāpati*.³¹ In MBh 9.43.51 this place is defined as situated on the Sarasvatī in Samantapañcaka (= Kurukṣetra). As has been noted in the *Prolegomena* of SP I (p. 26), one of the few direct borrowings from the *Mahābhārata* by the *Skandapurāṇa* is this description of Skanda's consecration in Samantapañcaka.³²

Plate 119

Thanesar: the Sthāṇuvaṭa

Bāṇa's relationship with Dadhīca, the founder of Sthāṇeśvara

The Māhātmya in the *Skandapurāṇa* thus reformulates the significance of Sthāṇutīrtha and adds to its glory the newly established site Sthāṇeśvara. In his *Harṣacarita* Bāṇa ingeniously adapted this mythological complex by linking his own descent to Dadhīca, when he made the latter's son (by his divine wife Sarasvatī), viz. Sārasvata, the foster brother of another scion of the Bhārgava lineage, namely Vatsa; Vatsa again is the ancestor of the Vātsyāyanas to whom the author of the *Harṣacarita* belongs on his own account (see Figure 13). When he embroidered on the story of Dadhīca's mother Sukanyā, told in *Mahābhārata* 3.121–25, Bāṇa and his audience may have been aware of the mythology that attributed the foundation of Harṣa's native city Thanesar to Dadhīca as told in the *Skandapurāṇa*.³³ It may actually have been the very reason why he gave

30 SP 31.109–10:

sthāṇutīrthaṃ ca bhavitṛ tavaiva pāpanāśanam |
aśvamedhaphalaṃ hy atra snātaḥ prāpnoti puṣkalam || 109 ||
ayaṃ cāpi vaṭaḥ śrīmān sthīto 'haṃ yatra sāṃpratam |
varam dātum madākyāto namnā sthāṇuvaṭo mahān |
bhaviṣyati na saṃdehaḥ phalaṃ cāsyāpi me śṛṇu || 110 ||

31 MBh 9.41.6–7; MBh 9.43–46.

32 See also Bakker 2014, 163 f. For an exciting explanation of the connection between the *Skandapurāṇa* and Thanesar, hometown of Harṣavardhana, see Kropman 2018.

33 SP_S 167.81:

dadhīcena mahad divyam puṇyam āyatanam kṛtam |
sthāṇeśvaram iti khyātam lokeṣu triṣu viśrutam || 81 ||

Dadhīca such a prominent role in the first chapter of his history and why he linked his own descent to him.³⁴

Figure 13
Bāṇa's Pedigree

Compare the version in SP_{RA} 167.4.10, 20:

tapahkṣetre kurukṣetre dharmakṣetre sanātane |
dadhīcena mahad divyaṃ puṇyam āyatanaṃ kṛtam |
dadhīcasyālayaḥ khyātaḥ sarvapāpaharaḥ paraḥ || 10 ||
 [...] *dadhīcena yatas tatra kṛtam āyatanaṃ śubham |*
sthāneśvaram iti khyātaṃ tena lokeṣu triṣv api || 20 ||

- 34 The pedigree constructed by Bāṇa not only links the Vātsyāyanas to the collateral Bhārgava branch of Dadhīca, it seems also to have a geo-political dimension in that it connects two regions: the one along the Sarasvatī and the one along the Śoṇa River. The Puṣyabhūti belonged to the former area, the Maukharis to the latter. Bāṇa's hero Harṣa united both regions within his kingdom. Cf. HC* 4 (p. 244), where the wise brahmin Gambhīra says to Harṣa's brother-in-law Grahavarman, when the latter is about to enter the house of his bride Rājyāśrī:

tāta, tvāṃ prāpya cirāt khalu rājyāśrīyā ghaṭitau tejomayau sakalajagadgīyamāna-
budhakarṇānandakāriḡuṇagaṇau somasūryavaṃśāv iva puṣyabhūtimukharavaṃśau |

THE SKANDAPURĀṆA REACHES NEPAL

It has been argued by Yokochi in the *Introduction* to SP III, taken up in Bakker 2014, 137f., that a major new redaction of our text, the ancestor of the RA recension, came into being in the ninth century.³⁵

It is likely that before this major new redaction took place the *Skandapurāṇa* had reached Nepal, where it became our S recension. This so-called S or ‘Nepalese recension’ has a few particularities of its own. The end of chapter 167 in this recension features two remarkable passages in what is in all probability an accretion to the original text (SP_S 167.163–187), two passages that may betray the background against which this recension S came into being: in one it is said that there are eight places in the country of Magadhā where Laguḍīśvara (Lakuliśa) roamed about together with his pupils (cf. below, p. 564), and in the other, at the end of this interpolation, Paśupati in Nepāla is mentioned together with another sanctuary called Naikatuṅgādhipēśvara, which calls forth associations with the king of Nepal, the lord supreme of many mountain peaks/thrones.³⁶ Could it be that there is a nexus that links both additions to the original text?

It has been argued by Yokochi that this interpolation in what would eventually develop into our ‘Nepalese recension’ was made ‘in an early text of the S recension in northeastern India before it bifurcated and came to be transmitted to Nepal’.³⁷ Since the earliest transmission to Nepal relates to an ancestor of our MS S₁, this transmission must, according to Yokochi’s theory, have taken place before AD 700.³⁸

We know of a formal exchange between North India and Nepal in the decades before AD 700, namely when the grand-daughter (*dauhitrī*) of the Later-Gupta

35 As noted in Bakker 2014, 138 n. 425 this is ‘a slight modification of the date proposed for this redaction in the *Introduction* to SP II A, p. 54, where we had argued that it may have taken place in the eighth, possibly first half of the ninth century’. The earlier date featured also in the original version of the present article, published in 2007.

36 SP_S 167.169 & SP_S 167.186–187:
magadhāsu smṛtāny aṣṭau sthānāni śaśīmaulinah |
śiṣyair parivṛto yāni babhrāma laguḍīśvaraḥ |
tāni dṛṣṭvā bhavet sadyaḥ pumān pāpavivarjitaḥ || 169 ||
 [...] *nepāleṣu ca deveṣaṃ dṛṣṭvā paśupatiṃ prabhum |*
daśāśvamedhān āpnoti rudralokaṃ ca gacchati |
dehabhedam ca samprāpya paśutvād vipramucyate || 186 ||
anyad dhimagirau sthānam naikatuṅgādhipēśvaram |
taṃ dṛṣṭvā na punarmartyo jāyate munisattama |
bhaktānāṃ prapātānāṃ ca sarvakāmapradaṃ smṛtam || 187 ||

See Bisschop 2006, 15–17, 222f. Bisschop 2006, 218 observes about this interpolation: ‘Although the list starts with places in the northwest, the number of toponyms in the northeast is striking’, e.g. Ṛḍhrakūṭeśvara and Pāṭalīputra in Magadhā, where the Prahāsīteśvara *liṅga* is mentioned (SP_S 167.166–169). The same Prahāsīteśvara is apparently mentioned in a Khmer inscription (Sanderson 2003–04, 408).

37 Yokochi in SP III, 52. The ‘bifurcation’ refers to the ancestors of our MSS S₁ and S₂.

38 Yokochi in SP III, 57f. Cf. Bakker 2014, 138.

king Ādityasena of Magadhā (3rd quarter 7th cent.), Vatsadevī, married the Licchavi king of Nepal, Śivadeva II, father of Jayadeva. This Jayadeva and his Indian mother recorded this fact in their *Paśupati Temple Inscription*, [Aṃśuvarman] *Samvat 157* (AD 732).³⁹

Vatsadevī was the daughter of a Maukhari prince, called Bhogavarman (see Figure 14).⁴⁰ The inscription, *ipso facto*, proves that the family of the Maukharis outlived the reign of Harṣa, in one way or the other. If our conjecture above is right and the composition of the SP was begun under the Maukharis of Kanauj, it is conceivable that the princess, or someone in her entourage, took this text to Nepal as part of the Maukhari heirloom. And her Magadhā background was also not forgotten, as the interpolation shows.

Figure 14

Matrimonial alliances of the royal houses of North India in the 6th and 7th centuries

39 IA IX, 178ff. Indrajī & Bühler read 153 (= AD 728); Verma & Singh 1994, 238f. (see *ibid.* pp. xlix f.). Verse 13 (Śārdūlavikrīḍita):

devī bāhubalāḍhyamaukharikulāśrīvarmacūḍāmaṇi-
khyātiḥreṇpitavairibhūpatigaṇaśrībhogavarmodbhavā |

dauhitrī magadhādhīpasya mahataḥ śrīyādityasenasya yā,
vyūḍhā śrīr iva tena (i.e. Śivadeva) sā kṣitibhujā śrīvatsadevy ādarāt || 13 ||

40 This Bhogavarman cannot be the same as the son of Śūrasena and nephew of the Mahā-sāmanta Aṃśuvarman, who is mentioned in the *Deopātana Inscription*, *Samvat 39* (AD 615); Verma & Singh 1994, 140.

The Later Guptas of Magadhā, from whose family the princess stemmed, were well familiar with the Pāśupata tradition.⁴¹ This follows from an inscription of the time of another grandchild of Ādityasena (Vatsadevī's cousin), the Later-Gupta king Viṣṇugupta. In this inscription we are told that the pilgrim Avimuktajja (Skt. Avimuktārya),⁴² who had visited numerous Śaiva holy places inhabited by Siddhas (*anekaśīvasiddhāyatana*°), was devoted to 'his own doctrine' (*svasiddhāntābhirata*).⁴³ It is therefore possible, even likely, that one or more Pāśupata teachers from Magadhā had traveled to Nepal, some of whom may have reached it in the company of the Later-Gupta princess.⁴⁴

When the *Skandapurāṇa* text was thus brought to Nepal, it had undergone the two additions quoted above, (n. 36 on p. 537f.) as part of a wider interpolation, in order to make good for what were, in the eyes of its conveyers and receivers, two neglected issues: the authenticity of the Pāśupata tradition within Magadhā, now said to have been founded by Lakulīśa himself, and the prominence of the holy state sanctuary of Nepal, Paśupatinātha.

Matrimonial alliances and the spread of culture

Historians are used to judge royal matrimonial alliances by their political implications. If our reconstruction holds any water, the cultural implications may also have been significant and may have had a more lasting effect than the political ones. Next to their husbands, princesses on their way to the residences of their grooms were accompanied by a cortège of ladies-in-waiting and dignitaries of all sorts. Among these there may have been religious virtuosi and literati, who, in the train of the two newlywed queens, Vāsaṭā and Vatsadevī, brought the Pāśupata order to Dakṣiṇa Kosala and the *Skandapurāṇa* to Nepal.

41 A post-Gupta Lakulīśa image was found in Benisagar, southeastern Bihar (Panigrahi 1956, 3). Other Lakulīśa images in Bihar are reported in Mitra 1984, 116, n. 16.

42 See von Hinüber 2001, 141.

43 EI XXVI, 246; Thaplyal 1985, 168. Cf. above, n. 3 on p. 527.

44 Vatsadevī's Nepalese husband, King Śivadeva, is known from the *Laganaṭola Inscription* (AD 694/95) to have himself patronized the *ācāryas* of the Pāśupata order, since he handed over to the Pāśupata *ācāryas* the village of Vaidya as an *agrahāra* settlement for the maintenance of the temple (*devakula*) of Śivadeveśvara Bhaṭṭāraka, which the king had built himself. Verma & Singh 1994, no. 147, ll. 5–9:

ayaṃ grāmaḥ śarirakoṭṭamaryādo(papanna)ś cāṭabhaṭānām apraveśyenācandrārka-vanikālīko bhūmicchidranyāyenāgrahāratayā mātāpitror ātmanaś ca vipulapūṇyopacayahetor asmābhiḥ svakārītaśrīśivadeveśvaraṃ bhaṭṭārakaṃ nimittīkrtya taddeva-kulakhaṇḍasphuṭitaśaṃskārakaraṇāya vaśapāśupatācāryebhyaḥ pratipāditaḥ |*

* Diwakar Acharya informed me that it is possible to read °karaṇāyāvaṃśapāśupatācāryebhyaḥ, 'Pāśupata *ācāryas* who are without family'. Cf. Bakker 2014, 132f.