Jayati Bhagavāñ Jinendraḥ! Jainism and royal representation in the Kadamba plates of Palāśikā

Bisschop, P.C.; Cecil, E.A.

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Articles

Jayati Bhagavāñ Jinendraḥ! Jainism and Royal Representation in the Kadamba Plates of Palāśikā

Peter C. Bisschop
Leiden University

and

Elizabeth A. Cecil
Florida State University

In the fifth–sixth century CE the rulers of the Kadamba dynasty claimed the town of Halsi (ancient Palāśikā) in modern Karnataka as the northern capital of their expanding polity. Their investments in this locale are recorded in a corpus of copper-plate inscriptions spanning four generation of kings. The plates record the growth of a thriving Jain community at Palāśikā and are revelatory of their relationships with the Kadamba rulers and their agents. This study of the donative and political processes converging in Palāśikā shows that the use of Sanskrit inscriptions as media for royal representation and public self-fashioning was highly developed in the Kadamba polity, where idioms and trends developed independent of the Gupta royal model. Moreover, the evidence from Halsi is indicative of the centrality of Jain religious communities, ideologies, and institutions in the administration of the Kadamba polity and the expression of a lineage identity.

tato vijñāpito rājā kārayām āsa māsataḥ |
śaratkālāmbudākāraṃ jinendrabhavanaṃ śubham ||
meghacumbitakūṭāgraṃ sphuratketuvirājitam |
caladghaṇṭāravonmiśraṃ jvalatkāñcanapīṭhikam ||
Then the king, as instructed, in one month had a splendid temple of the Jinendra made,
resembling a [bright] autumn cloud, its pinnacles kissing the clouds,
brilliant with fluttering banners, combined with the ringing of tinkling bells,
and possessed of a blazing golden throne.
(*Varāṅgacarita* 15.137–38)[1]

INTRODUCING THE JAIN COMMUNITY AT PALĀŚIKĀ

This study focuses on a collection of seven sets of copper plates from Halsi (ancient Palāśikā), one facet of the extremely rich Kadamba epigraphic corpus, which remains largely untranslated and understudied. Attention to this epigraphic corpus succeeds in capturing a significant cross-section of political and religious life in a pivotal period of South Asian history (ca. fifth–sixth century CE). Spanning four generations of kings—Kākusthavarman

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1. Edition Upadhye 1938.

– Mṛgeśavarman – Ravivarman – Harivarman[2]—the plates record an extended dialogue among rulers, religious specialists, administrators, generals, and the monuments, rituals, and institutions in which they collectively invested. Through the snippets of conversation captured on the plates, we can begin to trace the growth of the Jain community at Palāśikā and gain some sense of its diversity via the lineages of *tapasvin*s and *śramaṇa*s, and temple-based priests who took part in donative acts, as well as the rituals, seasonal festivals, and ethical positions they advocated. The plates are also revelatory of the relationships between the Jain community at Palāśikā and the Kadamba rulers and their agents. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of geographical and material context in the study of copper plate inscriptions; this article contributes to such a contextualized perspective for a dynasty, region, and religious tradition often marginalized in studies of "Gupta Period" North India.[3]

The discovery of this remarkable cache of copper plates was first described by J. F. Fleet in his address to the Royal Asiatic Society in 1870 (Fleet 1870). He reported that the seven sets of plates had been discovered about ten years earlier, buried in a mound near a small well called Cakratīrtha, on the outskirts of Halsi, a town in the Belgaum district of Karnataka. A full study of the plates, including transcription, translation, and prints of the rubbings, was subsequently published by Fleet in 1877. In terms of paleography, Fleet described the characters as written in the so-called cave-alphabet, by which he meant a proto-Kannada script of the mid-fifth century characteristic of the early Western Deccan.[4] The grants, dated in Kadamba regnal years, range between three and five plates and are held together by a ring and a seal.[5] Following Fleet's death the inscriptions were entrusted to the British Museum, Department of Printed Books and Manuscripts. They were migrated to the British Library in the 1990s when the new building was ready.[6] The Halsi Plates were republished by G. S. Gai in 1996 in a collection of inscriptions of the early Kadambas. In our study, we have reproduced the numbering used by both editors, which differs on occasion, for easy reference. We have also added the unique identifier codes used to refer to the inscriptions on the Siddham database, which includes some photographs of the original plates.[7] Unless otherwise noted, the Sanskrit text follows Fleet's edition of 1877, including his conventions of transcription.[8] We have not undertaken a full translation of all the inscriptions, but have chosen to selectively translate the passages that bear sustained discussion and where we think our translations and interpretations improve upon those of Fleet.

Read in isolation, the sets of plates suggest a preference for and dedication to the Jain community on the part of the early Kadamba rulers and a significant investment in the ritual life of Palāśikā's Jain institutions. In their broader context, however, these donations are

2. Between Kākusthavarman and Mṛgeśavarman was one more king named Śāntivarman, but no plates issued during his reign were recovered from Halsi.

3. On the distribution of copper plates in this period, see Hawkes and Abbas 2016. On the use of copper plates in early South Indian polities, including the Kadambas, see Gomes 2017. For an archeological perspective of the Kadamba territory, see Suvrathan 2013.

4. On regional forms of premodern Brāhmī and their classifications, see Salomon 1998: 17–19.

5. The seals of the grants of Harivarman and Mṛgeśavarman are inscribed with their names. In the case of one of Ravivarman's grants and one of Kākusthavarman, the seal bears an image that was described by Fleet as a dog, but which Moraes (1931: 375–76) and Sohoni (1979: 19–20) argued more accurately represents a lion.

6. Gaur 1975: 33–36.

7. https://siddham.network (last accessed September 7, 2021).

8. Fleet uses square brackets [] for illegible syllables and parentheses () to indicate a proposed correction of the preceding syllable. Following the transcription of Dániel Balogh in the Siddham database, we have transcribed the *upadhmānīya* sign in the inscriptions with *-ƒ* and the *jihvāmūlīya* sign with *-x*. Where applicable we have introduced verse division and added *daṇḍa*s indicated by an asterisk between square brackets [*].

only a few of many gifts given and relationships cultivated across the geographically and socially diverse landscape of the early Kadamba polity. For example, the famous Tāḷagunda Pillar inscription of Mṛgeśavarman records the donation of a tank to a temple of Śiva,[9] while the Guḍnāpur Pillar Inscription of Ravivarman details the endowment of a temple to Kāma in the heart of the royal capital at Vaijayantī (Banavasi).[10] These examples are only a few of the diverse grants to Brahmin, Buddhist, and Jain religious communities and institutions elsewhere in the region.[11] With this broader view in mind, the intensity with which the Kadambas invested in this particular community on the geographic margins of their kingdom is significant since it is the only example of their continued patronage in a particular locale over such a span of time.[12] Our discussion of the Palāśikā corpus thus raises new questions about how these investments contributed to the public persona of the dynasty and participates in current considerations of the use of copper plates as media for royal representation in early South Asia.[13]

In order to thematize the historical developments represented in the inscriptions, the discussion that follows is organized into three sections. The first section focuses on the two earliest plates issued from Palāśikā and considers their details in light of developing conceptions of land ownership, religious lineage, and kingship. The second section includes donations made during the reign of Ravivarman, under whose authority the political landscape of the Kadamba polity expanded and the northern and southern districts were consolidated. We hypothesize that donative alliances made in the northern capital at Palāśikā both contributed to and reflected this political process and provided a valuable platform for political self-representation.[14] The three sets of plates from this period also shed an important light on the dynamics of the Jain community—comprised of mendicants, religious specialists, temple administrators, and teachers—and the larger lay community at Palāśikā. The third section concerns the final two donative charters issued by Harivarman, the son and successor of Ravivarman. These inscriptions introduce a corporate mode of donative practice that involved extra-lineage agents responsible for the continued prosperity of the Jain community. In doing so, they also add additional complexity to the Kadamba lineage identity.

PART I. JINENDRA AND THE ARHATS AT PALĀŚIKĀ

Halsi Plates of Kākusthavarman (Year 80) [Fleet No. 20; Gai No. 3; Siddham IN01052]

The first set of Kadamba copper plates from Halsi records the gift of a plot of land (*kṣetra*) in a village called Kheṭagrāma by the crown prince (*yuvarāja*) Kākusthavarman to the general (*senāpati*) Śrutakīrti.[15] The plates open with an invocation to the Jinendra composed in *āryā* metre. This opening verse becomes a signature that continues to be used in

9. See Gai 1996: 64–68; Kielhorn 1905–6.

10. See Gai 1996: 107–11; Gopal 1973; Cecil and Gomes 2021.

11. See also Bhatta 1994: 179–81.

12. While the Kadambas did make repeated investments at Tāḷagunda and around the capital at Banavasi, Halsi is the only locale in which multiple rulers invested repeatedly and over time. For a comparable example of copper plates tracing the history of royal patronage over time we might compare the Bagh corpus of copper plates issued by the Valkhā rulers. See Ramesh and Tiwari 1990.

13. On this topic see Ali 2000; Gomes 2017.

14. This understanding is also proposed by Sircar (1939: 267–69).

15. There are different opinions about the reference of the eightieth year in these plates. In any case it cannot be the eightieth year of his own reign, since he was only a *yuvarāja* and eighty years would be implausible. For a summary of the various arguments put forward by different scholars, see Sohoni (1979: 21–25), who argues that the record refers back in time and in fact belongs to Ravivarman's reign.

subsequent Kadamba records from Halsi, with the notable exception of the final two sets of copper plates issued by Harivarman.

> *jayati bhagavāñ jinendro guṇarundraḥ pra[thi]ta[parama*]kāruṇikaḥ [|*]*
> *trailokyāśvāsakarī dayāpatākocchritā yasya* ||
> Victorious is the Blessed Jinendra, who is rich in merits, who is celebrated for his supreme compassion, who comforts the three worlds, whose banner of sympathy is raised up! (Lines 1–2)

The verse introduces the Jinendra "King of the Conquerors" as a benevolent being and a refuge for all. The martial imagery of the banner of victory, a fitting symbol for the general who is the recipient of the grant, has here been reimagined to symbolize the triumph of compassion. While the ethical ideals of the Jinendra are clearly, if tersely, expressed, the poet offers no further details about the precise identity of this figure—he may be identified as Ṛṣabha (the first of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras) invoked in the last line of the inscription (*ṛṣabhāya namaḥ*)[16]—who continues to be the object of worship at Palāśikā. This signature verse from Palāśikā, distinguished from similar benedictions by the inclusion of the honorific *bhagavān* to describe the deity, likely inspired the famous Aihoḷe Inscription of Ravikīrti of the time of Pulakeśin II, inscribed on a slab in the wall of the Meguṭi temple in 634 CE. Ravikīrti's poem begins with the same invocation of Bhagavān Jinendra.[17]

In addition to the Jinendra, the inscription also refers to the group of Arhats. Their role in the context of the donation has not been addressed in detail, since previous scholars have relied on the problematic interpretation provided by Fleet. His translation is as follows:

> *paramaśrīvijayapalāśikāyām prajāsādhāraṇā[śā]nām || kadambānāṃ yuvarājaḥ śrīkākusthavarmmā svavaijayike aśītitame saṃvatsare bhagavatām arhatām sarvvabhūtaśaraṇyānām trailokyanistārakāṇām kheṭagrāme badovarakṣetra[m] śrutakīrti(rtti) senāpataye || ātmanas tāraṇārtham dattavā[n] [||]*
> At the most glorious and victorious (city of) Palāśikā in the eighteenth year of his victory, Śrī-Kākusthavarma,—the Yuvarāja of the Kadambas, who enjoy the general good wishes of their subjects,—gave to the General Śrutakīrtti, as a reward for saving himself, the field called Badovarakṣetra, in the village of Kheṭagrāma, which belongs to the holy Arhats, who are the refuge of created beings and the saviours of the three worlds. (Lines 2–7; tr. Fleet 1877)

Fleet understood *bhagavatām arhatām* as a subjective genitive ("which belongs to the holy Arhats"), connecting it to *kheṭagrāme*, but this seems forced and preempts the donative act by making Śrutakīrti the final recipient of the pious gift. We propose an alternative by reading *bhagavatām arhatām* as an objective genitive, which would mean that the Arhats are the divine beneficiaries of the land given over to Śrutakīrti to administer.[18] In this understanding, the general acts as the king's agent and executor in managing a gift of land presumably intended to provide material and monetary support for the worship of the Arhats. This revi-

16. However, note that this last line is not repeated in any of the subsequent inscriptions from Halsi.

17. EI VI: 1–12. Verse 1: ***jayati bhagavāñ jinendro*** *vītajarāmaraṇajanmano yasya | jñānasamudrāntargatam akhilañ jagad antarīpam iva* ||. That Ravikīrti drew inspiration from the Kadamba records is indicated by the three opening verses of his inscription, which share the structure of the three opening verses of the Tāḷagunda Inscription (see Kielhorn 1900–1901: 7 n. 15). Verse 35 of Ravikīrti's inscription mentions that the temple was dedicated to Jinendra. As will be seen below, the donations at Halsi indicate a strong presence of adherents of the Yāpanīya sect (see also Singh 1975: 121–22). It is possible that Ravikīrti was a Yāpanīya too, as many Yāpanīyas mentioned in inscriptions have names ending in *-kīrti* (Nandi 1973: 56), but it must be noted that it is a common lineage indicator among Digambaras as well.

18. Compare a similar construction with dative and genitive in the Halsi Plates of Mṛgeśa discussed below (*yāpanīyanirgranthakūrcakānām . . . dattavān bhagavadbhyo rhadbhyaḥ*), which Fleet does understand as an objective genitive.

sion also prompts a reappraisal of the phrase *ātmanas tāraṇārthaṃ*. Fleet understands this as a reference to some incident in which the general Śrutakīrti saved Kākusthavarman's life, thus providing the impetus for the latter's gift. This phrase does indeed refer to the king's motivation, but rather than an external incident, his pious act is inspired by his own desire for personal salvation.[19] The revised part of the translation now reads:

> [. . .] *śrī*-Kākusthavarman [. . .] gave to the general Śrutakīrti, for the sake of his own salvation, the field called Badovarakṣetra, in the village of Kheṭagrāma, for the blessed Arhats, who are the refuge of all beings and the saviors of the three worlds.

We can conclude that this land grant was not meant for Śrutakīrti's own benefit, but for the upkeep of the worship of the Arhats in Palāśikā, the divine saviors capable of effecting Kākusthavarman's salvation. Like the Jinendra, the subject of the opening verse, the Arhats are described as saviors of the three worlds. These Arhats are identical with the liberated Jinas or Tīrthaṅkaras who are the object of devotion in the Jain tradition, and they are the ultimate recipients of the grant. We assume that these exalted figures were represented locally in the form of venerable images, a pattern that fits with subsequent references to image worship in the later plates. What is noteworthy, however, in comparison with the other inscriptions from Halsi, is that there is not (yet) any mention of a temple. This could suggest that we are here offered a glimpse of a nascent stage of Jain worship at Palāśikā, and it may be that Kākusthavarman's donation of land was a catalyst for what would quickly become a thriving religious center.

The final section of the plates, preceding the concluding invocation of Ṛṣabha, includes an exhortation to respect the land grant. It starts with a line in prose, which is followed by two verses introduced with the words *api coktam*. These two verses form part of the established idiom of donative inscriptions[20] and show the Kadambas participating in a Brahmanical paradigm, with which the lineage is strongly affiliated.[21] The line in prose, on the other hand, occurs—with some variations—in several Kadamba grants, but has few attestations elsewhere. It curses one who would disrespect the grant to be afflicted with the five great sins, while it promises great merit to one who preserves it.[22] Fleet observes that the five major sins (*pañcamahāpātaka*) probably do not refer to the Brahmanical sins but to the Jain ones. On the other hand, the expression *mahāpātaka* (or a Prakrit equivalent) does not seem to be used in early Jainism to designate the infringements of the five great vows (*mahāvrata*).[23]

Halsi Plates of Mṛgeśa (Year 8) [Fleet No. 21; Gai No. 11; Siddham IN01053]

The second set of Halsi copper plates introduces important details about the religious landscape at Palāśikā—including donations for a structural temple and grants of temple lands—that was shaped by royal institutions together with multiple lineages of religious specialists within the developing Jain community.

19. This is also the opinion of Sohoni (1979: 18–19), although he takes it to refer to Śrutakīrti's salvation.

20. These two verses are among the "most frequently quoted stanzas" on *bhūmidāna* (Sircar 1965: 174). They correspond to verses 23 and 132 (with variations for the second line) in Sircar's list (Sircar 1965: Appendix II, "Stanzas on bhūmi-dāna quoted in rāja-śāsanas"). See also Willis 2009: 84–88, who observes that these verses are found in the southern recension of the Āśvamedhikaparvan of the *Mahābhārata*, in Malayalam manuscripts, which could be relevant in view of the geographical location of the Kadambas.

21. On the Brahmanical leanings of the Kadambas, see Gai 1996: 46–49.

22. Lines 7–9: *tad yo [hi]nasti svavaṃśyaḥ [pa]ravaṃśyaḥ vā sa pañcamahāpātakasaṃyukto bhavatī(ti) [\] yo bhirakṣatī(ti) tasya satyarvvaguṇapuṇyāvāptiḥ [\\]*. Fleet suggests correcting the last part to either *sarvvaguṇa-* or *satya[m sa]rvvaguṇa-*.

23. We thank Paul Dundas for pointing this out to us.

While the first set of plates were issued from the city of Palāśikā, this second set, by the king Mṛgeśa, were issued from the primary seat of Kadamba power, the city of Vaijayantī (Banavasi). The motive for donation also distinguishes this inscription from the previous one. This grant is offered as a memorial and records Mṛgeśa's endowment of a Jain temple in honor of his, presumably deceased, grandfather Kākusthavarman.[24] The inscription begins with the same invocation of the Jinendra given above, but here praise of the Kadamba rulers is also offered in terms that strike a balance between the virtues of piety and praise of military prowess. Like the Jinendra, whose military insignia is a banner of compassion (*dayāpatākā*), the description of Mṛgeśa offers a clever juxtaposition of the values of military might and piety:

> *tatpriyajyeṣṭhatanayaḥ śrīmṛgeśanarādhipaḥ*
> *lokaikadharmmavijayī dvijasāmantapūjitaḥ [||]*
> *matvā dānaṃ daridrāṇāṃ mahāphalam atīva yaḥ*
> *svayaṃ bhayadaridrā(dro) pi śatrubhyo dād mahābhayam [||]*
> His dear eldest son was king *śrī*-Mṛgeśa, who conquered the world through piety (*dharma*) alone,[25] and who was worshipped by the twice-born and the feudatories. Having considered that the gifts of the poor yield an exceptionally great reward, he, though poor in fear himself, gave great fear to his enemies. (Lines 5–7)

This line together with a reference to the defeat of two rival lineages—the Tuṅgagaṅgas and the Pallavas—suggests that this donative act, like the one recorded in the previous grant, was part of the ritual conclusion of a victorious military campaign. And the mention that Mṛgeśa is not residing in Palāśikā could mean that, while it became a secondary capital for the Kadambas, it had not yet achieved that status at the time of the present grant.

The actual donation by Mṛgeśa offers important details about the development of a Jain religious landscape in the area. The ruler donates a temple for the Jina (*jinālayam*) and offers land to the Arhats. In addition to the offering made to these divine figures, the donation also mentions provisions for a community of mendicants described as *yāpanīyanirgranthakūrccaka*s.

> *[. . .] svāryyake nṛpatau bhaktyā kārayitvā jinālayam [||] śrīvijayapalāśikāyām yāpani(nī)-yanirgranthakūrccakānām svavaijayike aṣṭame vaiśākhe saṃvatsare kārttikapaurṇamāsyām mātṛsarita ārabhya ā iṅgiṇīsaṅgamāt rājamānena trayo(ya)tri(stri)ṅśannivarttanaṃ śrīvijayavaijayantīnivāsī dattavān bhagavadbhyo rhadbhyaḥ [||]*
> While residing at the glorious and victorious city of Vaijayantī, he commissioned a temple for the Jina with devotion to his [deceased] grandfather, the king, at the glorious and victorious [city of] Palāśikā, and in the eighth Vaiśākha year of his victorious reign on the day of the full moon of [the month of] Kārttika (Oct–Nov), he gave to the blessed Arhats thirty-three *nivartana*s [of land], according to the royal measure, from the river Mātṛ up to the confluence of the Iṅgiṇī, for the [purpose of supporting] the Yāpanīyas, the Nirgranthas, and the Kūrcakas. (Lines 9–12)

The offering of land to the Arhats echoes the donation treated above, but the specification of a temple for the Jina in memory of Mṛgeśa's grandfather adds a built feature to the land-

24. Fleet (1877: 25) and Gai (1996: 85) consider the memorial to have been dedicated to Mṛgeśa's father, i.e., Śāntivarman, who was the son of Kākusthavarman. However, *āryaka*, the word used in the inscription, rather means grandfather. No record of Śāntivarman has come to light from Halsi, but the famous Tāḷagunda pillar inscription (Gai No. 13) is dated to the period of his reign. The Tāḷagunda inscription expresses devotion to Śiva, which may perhaps explain Śāntivarman's absence from the Jain records of Palāśikā. A total of nine inscriptions survive from Mṛgeśa's reign (Gai Nos. 5–13).

25. Fleet translates "most eminent in piety among all mankind," which seems far off. The claim of conquest or rule by *dharma* is also reflected in his appellation Dharmamahārāja Śrī-Vijaya-Mṛgeśavarman in the Hosanagara Plates (Gai No. 8) and Dharmamahārāja Śrī-Vijaya-Śiva-Mṛgeśavarman in the Hiṭna Hebbāgila Plates (Gai No. 9).

scape that was absent from the earlier inscription. It is not clear from the details provided if the temple expands upon sites of worship that were already in use or if it initiates a new structural practice. The most significant detail concerns the mention of three discrete groups of religious practitioners who are also supported by the land donation: the Yāpanīyas, the Nirgranthas, and the Kūrcakas.[26] This provides important evidence for the presence of distinct, yet interrelated, Jain communities operating within the Palāśikā area. References to Yāpanīyas are found in numerous inscriptions from early medieval western Karnataka, but the present plates provide the earliest epigraphic evidence.[27] They are distinguished from the Nirgranthas (naked mendicants), most probably a reference to the Digambaras. The identity of the Kūrcakas, on the other hand, is obscure and their name, which likely indicates that they were bearded, is found only in the Kadamba epigraphic corpus.[28] The other epigraphical reference is in the Halsi Plates of Harivarman, year 4, discussed below. Albeit rather terse, this description of the religious landscape indicates an internally complex community of religious specialists—some in residence at the temple and others likely seasonal residents—supported by a lay community in which the Kadamba rulers present themselves as key players. And much like the early examples of grants to Brahmanical temples, the deities (Arhats / Jinas) enshrined in Palāśikā's temple(s) were similarly understood as juridical personalities capable of owning land.[29]

Finally, the grant of Mṛgeśa introduces an important term for royal agents who are involved in the administration of the temple and the granted lands: Bhojaka. In previous discussions of this term, Fleet and others took Bhojaka as a proper name for a priestly class operating in Jain temples.[30] Sircar, on the other hand, understands it to mean a freeholder (lit. 'enjoyer').[31] In this case the Bhojaka is identified as Dāmakīrti. Mentioned only briefly

26. Fleet understands the compound *yāpanīyanirgrantha-* as providing a further description of the Kūrcaka community: "the Kūrchakas, who are naked religious mendicants." He appears to take Yāpanīya in a very general sense as "mendicant." We rather suggest taking the compound as a *dvandva* referring to three separate Jain communities.

27. For a survey of the many epigraphical references to Yāpanīyas, in particular in the south, see Upadhye 1933 and 1974: "What is striking is that they appear like Trustees managing the temples and also looking after the maintenance of the Sangha by receiving land-grants from kings and other dignitaries in the society." (1974: 18). They are primarily known for upholding the view that women can attain liberation and for the practice of remaining naked but concealing their nudity in public (Jaini 1991: 42–44).

28. Their name derives from *kūrca*, which Tayal (2018: 860 n. 23) takes to mean that they carried "a bunch of peacock feathers." Paul Dundas (pers. comm., Jan. 7, 2020) suggests that it may rather hint at their being "bearded": "The word *kūrca* seems to have the basic sense of a bundle of grass, hence brush and also beard." He also provided us with a reference to the *Niśīthabhāṣya*—a ca. fifth-century Śvetāmbara source in Prakrit—in which the Kūrcaka is listed as one of the various categories of individuals from whom a nun (*niggaṃthī*) should not seek clothing: *kāvālie ya bhikkhū suivādī kuccie a vesatthī | vāṇiyaga taruṇa saṃsaṭṭha mehuṇe bhoaye ceva* || "A *kāpālika*, a Buddhist monk, a brahman, a *kūrcika*, a prostitute, a merchant, a boy, a libertine (?), a cousin, a husband (*bhoyae*)" (*Niśīthabhāṣya* v. 5077, ed. Kusumaprajñā 2015; tr. Dundas). He further observes: "The term *kūrcika* does here seem to mean 'bearded' (another version of the verse in the *Bṛhatkalpabhāṣya* (v. 2822, ed. Bollée 1998) has *kuvvie*, but the Sanskrit commentary has *kuccie*, glossed as *kūrcandharaḥ*; the verse's reading *bhoyie* is glossed by *pati*); as fourth in the list after the sectarian rivals it can, I think, be taken as referring to the most dangerous social individual for a nun, namely a mature, hirsute and virile male. It could then be that the term *kūrcaka* as used in the Halsi plates signals a category within the Jain community, possibly semi-renunciant or sedentary, which did not engage in the otherwise obligatory renunciant practice of *keśaloñca*, the regular pulling out of hair and beard."

29. On the juridical personality of the deities in the context of Brahmanical land grants, see Willis 2009: 122–28. Cf. also Sontheimer 1964 and Schopen 1990 (on the Buddha as a juridical personality).

30. See, e.g., Deo 1954–55: 571–72; Singh 1975: 48.

31. Sircar 1939: 94, 265. He also observes that *bhoja* was the title of South Indian kings and that the derivative *bhojaka* could indicate the same in a degraded sense (a protected chief). An overview of inscriptions referring to early Bhoja rulers in the western Deccan is provided by Gouda 1993: 35–44. See also Dayma 2008: 109–10.

here, in later charters Dāmakīrti is shown to be part of a larger lineage of individuals (with names ending in *-sena* and *-kīrti*) who had close ties to the Kadamba family as well as to the city of Palāśikā and its Jain institutions. Keeping these ties in mind also helps to contextualize the dynamics of the previous grant in which Śrutakīrti acted as the royal representative in administering the land grant.

PART II. RAVIVARMAN AND THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF THE KADAMBA POLITY

The next three copper plates, perhaps the most significant from Halsi, were issued by the ruler Ravivarman and his younger brother Bhānuvarman. The third of Ravivarman's plates, in particular, is critically important for our understanding of the development of the Jain community and practices of temple worship under the Kadamba rulers. In addition, the plates record important developments in the self-presentation of the royal lineage at Palāśikā.

Ravivarman's rule marked a pivotal period for the Kadambas, and we know from other inscriptions that record his deeds that this ruler made significant interventions in the religious landscape. For example, his pillar inscription from Guḍnāpur records the construction of a temple for Kāmadeva in the vicinity of the royal palace at Banavasi and details the ritual festivities as well as donations of land made to ensure the continued maintenance of the institution.[32] In the presentation of the royal lineage, Ravivarman's inscriptions are also formative. Building on the earlier genealogy inscribed on the Tāḷagunda pillar, commissioned by his predecessor Kākusthavarman, Ravivarman's Guḍnāpur pillar expands upon the presentation of the lineage and introduces a set of royal epithets that quickly become stock phrases in the Kadamba epigraphic repertoire. While the copper plates do not reproduce the Guḍnāpur genealogy in full, they do expand upon that given in the previous plates. These plates also incorporate the key royal epithets recorded in the pillar inscriptions—for example, the identity of the kings as sons of Hāritī, born of the Mānavya *gotra*, and consecrated in their rule by Mahāsena and the Mothers.[33] The increased complexity and embellishment in the genealogies recorded in the copper plates of this section reflect the increased complexity in the poetic structure in Ravivarman's epigraphs, which are longer and characterized by a variety of metrical and syntactic form not observed in the grants discussed above.

Halsi Plates of Ravivarman (Year 11) [Fleet No. 23; Gai No. 17; Siddham IN01054]

The first set of plates attributed to Ravivarman are, in fact, not his, but those of his younger brother, Bhānuvarman. A king from Banavāsī by name of Bhānuvarman also appears as a literary character in the *Daśakumāracarita*, which Mirashi and, later, Spink have argued is simply an alias of Ravivarman.[34] The details of this plate disprove this hypothesis. Since Palāśikā was a secondary capital within the Kadamba realm and located a considerable distance north of Banavāsī, Bhānuvarman may have overseen this locale as a regent of his elder brother. Palāśikā was also closer to Vidarbha where the events of the *Daśakumāracarita* purportedly took place, which might explain Bhānuvarman's appearance in that narrative.

In addition to the relationship between the brothers—a detail missing from the more "official" genealogies recorded on the pillar inscriptions—the plates also provide an expanded genealogy from Kākusthavarman – Śāntivarman – Mṛgeśa – Ravivarman not provided in

32. Gopal 1973; Gai 1996: 107–11; Cecil and Gomes 2021.

33. For these descriptions in the copper plates see the first set of undated plates of Ravivarman below. This account of the origin of the lineage matches that of the Guḍnāpur and Tāḷagunda Pillar Inscriptions (Nos. 13 and 22 in Gai 1996).

34. Mirashi 1945: 29–30; Spink 2006: 115–46.

the earlier two copper plates.[35] It is worth noting that the genealogy here does not begin with the first known Kadamba ruler—this would be Vīraśarman according to the Guḍnāpur pillar—rather, it starts with the seventh king of the lineage, Kākusthavarman. This abbreviated version may have been better suited to the more condensed nature of the copper plate medium. Alternatively, it could indicate the importance of these particular rulers for the political and religious development at Halsi.[36] Kākusthavarman was the first of the Kadambas to make a donation at Palaśikā (or to have had one made in his name) and Śāntivarman and Mṛgeśavarman are the only other rulers from the family to have been mentioned in the previous grants. While it is speculation, we might assume that, at the time the grant was made, this particular group of the family was most invested in the development of the northern Kadamba capital.

Like the previous records, this grant begins with the familiar invocation of the Blessed Jinendra recorded above. In terms of its details, the donation by Bhānuvarman is rather brief and consists of a grant of land—a field called Kardamapaṭī at Palāśikā—made to support the monthly worship of the Jinas. No explicit mention is made here of a temple, but the performance of regular worship certainly suggests an institutionalized religious community with a stable group of lay devotees and perhaps religious specialists to oversee regular worship. The grant of additional land suggests the expansion of the temple territories overseen by the Jinas or Arhats as juridical personalities.

Regarding the identity of the donor, the plates do not praise Bhānugupta in terms of military prowess or political power, but rather mention that he was one who "effects the welfare of himself and of others" (*svaparahitakaro*). This reference to Bhānugupta's magnanimity might be productively read in light of the donative details provided in the lines that follow:

> *teneyaṃ vasudhā dattā jinebhyo bhu(bhū)tim icchatā [|*]*
> *paurṇṇama(mā)sīṣv anucchidya [|] snapanārthaṃ hi sarvvadā ||*
> By him, desirous of prosperity, this land was given to the Jinas, in order that the ceremony of ablution might always be performed without fail on the days of the full-moon. (Lines 7–8; tr. Fleet)

While each of the three grants discussed thus far has concerned the maintenance of the Jain community and its religious institutions, in each case the expressed motivations vary. For Kākusthavarman the motivation was one we might most readily identify as "religious"—i.e., his aim was the salvation of his soul or Self (*ātman*). Mṛgeśa's donation was made to honor his deceased grandfather. As a memorial donation, this gift might have been intended (although it is not explicitly stated as such) to earn merit (*puṇya*) for both his father and himself. Bhānuvarman's gift highlights another facet of public giving by emphasizing the potential of the gift, and the rituals it provided for, to ensure material prosperity and well-being (expressed with the terms *bhūti* and *hita*). Here the rituals are not directed toward the saving of one's soul, but to ensure well-being and prosperity for the royal agent and for others in the kingdom. An emphasis on well-being and material success in the world is perhaps

35. Lines 3–6: *śrīmatkākustharājapriyahitatanayaś śāntivarmmāvanīśaḥ tasyaiva jyeṣṭhasūnuf prathitapṛthuyaśāś śrīmṛgeśo nareśaḥ tatputro ||(|) dīptatejā ravinṛpatir abhūt satvadhairyyārjjitaśrīḥ tadbhrātā bhānuvarmmā svaparahitakaro bhāti bhūpax kanīyān ||*.

36. A third option would be to consider these rulers as the "core group" of the Kadamba lineage and those that were present in the historical memory of people at the time the grants were composed. A survey of the surviving Kadamba epigraphic corpus suggests, in fact, that these rulers were the most active. It may be that those kings preceding Kākusthavarman in the official genealogies had achieved the status of "mythical rulers" in the memories of later generations. These considerations serve as a reminder that while the genealogical portions of inscriptions are often prized for providing "historical details," these sections, too, are rhetorical and ideological constructions.

not a value typically associated with Jainism,[37] but in the Halsi plates we see clearly that the Jain community accommodated a wide range of socio-religious concerns and goals: including personal liberation, the commemoration of the dead, and worldly success. To conclude, we might also read in Bhānugupta's grant a concern for those outside of the royal family, since the monthly rituals at the temple would presumably ensure the welfare of the residents at Palāśikā as well.

The specifications of the land grant follow and include the additional details that the land is exempt from taxes, and specifically the tax on gleaning. As before, the grant specifies the involvement of a "Bhojaka," who is here named Paṇḍara and who is further described as "favored by the feet of the glorious *mahārāja* Ravivarman" and a "supreme devotee of the Arhat."[38] This description lends further support to the hypothesis that these Bhojakas performed some kind of administrative office within the Jain community at Palāśikā beyond that of simply "enjoying" the fruits of the donation.

Halsi Plates of Ravivarman (Year?) [Fleet No. 24; Gai No. 21; Siddham 01056]

The fourth set of plates, the first issued by Ravivarman himself, introduce a striking new detail concerning the geography of the Kadamba polity. Ravivarman is described as being "settled in Palāśikā." No mention is made of his younger brother Bhānuvarman of the previous plates and he leaves no further trace in history. This is the first reference to one of the Kadamba rulers residing in the city and could indicate that Palāśikā had by this time been officially recognized as the northern capital. The opening verses of the grant praise Ravivarman for his conquest of the entire earth, after he had defeated kings such as Viṣṇuvarman and Caṇḍadaṇḍa, the lord of Kāñcī.[39] The military victories of Ravivarman are also a leitmotif in the description of his reign in the Guḍnāpur pillar. Here the mention of both military victory against rulers associated with the southern boundaries of Kadamba rule and a reference to a royal residence in the north gestures to a geographic consolidation of power under Ravivarman's leadership.[40] The text consists of eight verses composed in a mixture of different metres (*āryā*, *upajāti*, *indravajrā*, *anuṣṭubh*).

The grant itself concerns a gift of four *nivartana*s of land to the Jinendra,[41] who has been the subject of the invocation of the Halsi plates from the time of Kākusthavarman. This grant provides further evidence for the juridical personality of the deity enshrined in the temple and the continuity of the worship of Jinendra at Palāśikā under the Kadamba rulers. The somewhat elliptical verse that follows states that the king gave the land after he had "obtained the favor of the feet of the mother of Dāmakīrti," whose younger brother was Śrīkīrti. The mother is described as "the single embodiment of piety." The motivation for the donation is "for the benefit of the growth of his merit."[42]

37. But see Cort 2001 for a refutation of this stereotype in Western scholarship.

38. Lines 9–11: *[…] ucchakarabharādivivarjitā śrīmadbhānuvarmarājalabdhaprasādena paṇḍarabhojakena paramārhadbhaktena […]*.

39. Lines 3–4: *śrīviṣṇuvarmmaprabhṛtīn narendrān nihatya jitvā pṛthivīm sama[stām] [|*] utsādya kāñcīśvaracaṇḍadaṇḍam palāśikāyāṃ samavasthitas saḥ [||]*. On these events and the identity of Viṣṇuvarman ("a king of the Palāśikā division of the Karṇāta country") and Caṇḍadaṇḍa ("a *biruda* of Pallava Nandivarman … or one of his successors"), see Sircar 1939: 272–73.

40. This is also observed by Sircar 1939: 267–73.

41. Line 6: *mānena catvāri nivarttanāni dadau jinendrāya mahī(hīm) mahendraḥ [||]*.

42. Lines 7–8: *saṃprāpya mātuś caraṇaprasādaṃ dharmaikamūrter api dāmakīrtteḥ [|*] tatpuṇyavṛddhyartham abhūn nimittam śrīkīrttināmā tu ca tatkaniṣṭhaḥ* ||.

Fig. 1. Halsi Plates of Ravivarman (Year?) [Fleet No. 22; Gai No. 23; Siddham IN01055]. Anon (2017). Ind. Ch. 60 Grant of the time of Ravivarman High Resolution TIFF. Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1069732

We will return to the question of the identity of Dāmakīrti and his mother below, but begin by drawing attention to the prominent position that the mother takes in blessing the donation of the king. In light of her centrality in the grant, and the suggestions of her authority in the context of the donation, her position among the Jain community in Palāśikā must have been quite remarkable.[43] On the other hand, the text is frustratingly lacking in details about other persons involved in the transaction. For these details we must continue reading the next set of plates of Ravivarman, which include a wealth of details that help to contextualize this grant.

This is the most extensive record from Halsi, composed in twelve verses in different metres (*āryā*, *vasantatilakā*, *śālinī*, *upajāti*, *anuṣṭubh*, *vaṃśastha*, *indravaṃśā*, and *upendravajrā*) and covering five plates in total. It serves as further testimony to the significant investment of Ravivarman at the site. With this grant the Kadamba ruler establishes an ordinance for the annual celebration of an eight-day community-based festival dedicated to Jinendra at the city of Palāśikā, thus making a significant intervention in the social life of the city. The primary donor is Ravivarman, but several of the members of the Kīrti family, whom we have already heard about, play a key part in the grant as well. The plates allow us to untangle some of the

43. We have considered the possibility that she may have become an eminent Jain nun, but in that case it is curious that she should not be mentioned by name. Yāpanīyas are known for holding the position that women can attain liberation (Desai 1957: 163–66, 168–69; Nandi 1973: 60; Jaini 1991) but the view is not unique and there have always been Digambara nuns despite their tradition's denial of *mokṣa* to women.

history of the previous donations and shed particular light on the involvement of the Kīrti family as Bhojakas in Palāśikā and the administrative memory that linked the two families.

After the standard opening evocation of Jinendra, the record takes us back to the time of Śrutakīrti, whom we had earlier encountered as the general of Kākusthavarman and the recipient of a plot of land in the village of Kheṭagrāma in the first set of plates. Here he is not described as a general, however, but eulogized as a supremely pious person with close ties to the royal family. In addition to this reorientation of his public identity, the plates inform us that he was not just the recipient of a field in Kheṭa, but of the entire village.

> *kākusthavarmmanṛpalabdhamahāprasādaṃ(daḥ)*
> *saṃbhuktavāñ chrutanidhiś śrutakīrttibhojaḥ [|*]*
> *grāmaṃ purā nṛṣu varaf purupuṇyabhāgī*
> *kheṭāhvakaṃ yajanadānadayopapannaḥ* ||
>
> The Bhoja Śrutakīrti, who had obtained the great favor of king Kākusthavarman, a receptacle of sacred knowledge, best among men, who reaped the rewards of abundant merit, who was worshipful, generous, and compassionate, in the past enjoyed the village called Kheṭa. (Lines 5–10)

In introducing Kākusthavarman, the text specifies that he belonged to the Kadamba family and in doing so adopts the standard phraseology of the royal inscriptions, including their being favored by Mahāsena and the Mothers, their birth in the Mānavya *gotra*, their descent from Hāritī, and their piety.[44] It underscores the royal character of these plates and sets them apart from the others discussed so far.

After the death of Śrutakīrti, we are told that the pious Mṛgeśa, the son of the Kadamba ruler Śāntivarman, handed over the granted land, following the instruction of his father, to the mother of Dāmakīrti.[45] In a curious omission, the poet does not give the name of Dāmakīrti's father. Since we can reasonably infer that the mother of Dāmakīrti was Śrutakīrti's widow, the most likely scenario is that Dāmakīrti was, in fact, Śrutakīrti's son and heir.[46] Yet, if this is the case, why does the poet not explicate the genealogy of this prominent family so intimately connected with the donative realia of the grant? Following the earlier suggestion of S. V. Sohoni, we might hypothesize that Śrutakīrti had become a Jain renunciant before he died. The act of renunciation that preceded his physical death might explain why only Dāmakīrti's mother is mentioned in the grant (and, it may be noted, not by proper name). Dāmakīrti's father was effectively removed from the world.[47] These connections between the ruling lineage and the Kīrti family are further elaborated and complicated in another passage which refers to a donation of land made by the eldest son of Dāmakīrti named Jayakīrti. Jayakīrti

44. Lines 2–5: *svāmimahāsenamātṛgaṇānudyā(dhyā)tānāṃ mānavyasagotrāṇāṃ hāritīputrāṇāṃ pratikṛtasvāddhdyā(dhyā)yaca[rccā]pāragāṇām svakṛtapuṇyaphalopabhoktṝṇām svabāhuvīryyopārjjitaiśvaryyabhogabhāginām saddharmmasadambānāṃ kadambānām* ||.

45. Lines 8–10: *tasmin svaryyāte śāntivarmmāvanīśaḥ mātre dharmmārtthaṃ dattavān dāmakīrtteḥ [|*] bhūmau vikhyātas tatsutaś śrīmṛgeśaḥ pitrānujñātaṃ dhārmmiko dānam eva* ||.

46. A Dāmakīrti Bhojaka is named as the engraver in another Jain copper plate of the time of Mṛgeśa, found at Devagiri (Gai Plate 6). This Jain endowment does not begin with the Jinendra evocation that is common to the Halsi plates, but invokes the Arhat, Lord of the Three Worlds.

47. Sohoni 1979: 23–24. On the other hand, Paul Dundas reminds us that "historically the Jains have not subscribed to the 'social death' model of renunciation found in Hinduism (e.g. newly initiated Jain renunciants don't perform their own funeral rituals; the ceremony is more akin to a marriage)" (pers. comm., Jan. 7, 2020). On the much-debated question of a widow's rights of inheritance, see Altekar 1962: 250–70 (some epigraphic examples from medieval South India evincing the need for "the express permission of the revisioners" are given on pp. 265–66). Jain customary law—as formulated in such medieval texts as the *Indranandijinasaṃhitā*—on the other hand makes a case for a woman's inheritance of her husband's property, but how far back this practice goes is another matter. See Sethi 2020.

gave the village Purukheṭaka to his maternal grandmother for the sake of merit.[48] Is she still alive at the time of this donation or is this a memorial offering for the benefit of her merit? In either case, the donation again emphasizes the respected position of this woman within the Jain community in which the Yāpanīyas were prominent.

While we might expect Jayakīrti to be described as a Bhojaka, as were other members of his family, here he is called a Pratihāra ('chamberlain'), which suggests that he performed a different administrative function than his predecessors. In addition to mentioning his official rank, the description of Jayakīrti introduces another enigmatic lineage detail of the Kīrti family: they are said to be descended from a preceptor (*ācārya*) called Bandhuṣeṇa.

> *śrīdāmakīrtter urupuṇyakīrtteḥ saddharmmamārggasthitaśuddhabuddheḥ [|*]*
> *jyāyān suto dharmmaparo yaśasvī viśuddhabuddhyā(ddhya)ṅgayuto guṇāḍhyaḥ ||*
> *ācāryyair bandhuṣeṇāhvaiḥ nimittajñānapāragaiḥ [|*]*
> *sthāpito bhuvi yadvaṃśaḥ [...] jayakīrttif pratihāraḥ*
> The eldest son of *śrī*-Dāmakīrti, who was renowned for his great merit, and whose pure intellect adhered to the path of the true religion,[49] was the chamberlain Jayakīrti, intent on piety, honored, possessed of a pure intellect and body, abounding in good qualities, whose lineage had been established on earth by the venerable preceptor called Bandhuṣeṇa who was versed in the knowledge of omens . . . . (Lines 10–14)

The name Bandhuṣeṇa also appears in the Guḍnāpur inscription of Ravivarman as the son of the lineage progenitor, Vīraśarman, and the father of Mayūravarman. Vīraśarman ("Heroic Brahmin") is praised in the pillar inscription as a great brahmin, while his son is praised as the first in the lineage to adopt the warrior ethos.

> *yo tha vīraśarmmaṇo jyeṣṭhaḥ śrībandhuṣeṇaḥ priyātmajaḥ |*
> *sa hi babhūva kṣatravṛttilatāguṇāmbuprasecitaḥ ||*
> *Śrī*-Bandhuṣena was the beloved eldest son of Vīraśarman. For he was bathed in the water that was the virtue that formed the root of the Kadamba "vine"—namely, the warrior ethos. (Guḍnāpur Inscription, verse 4)[50]

As mentioned above, little is known of these early, and perhaps legendary, rulers in the Kadamba lineage. That said, this rhetorical construction of Bandhuṣeṇa's kṣatriya identity is indicative of a period of social change or mobility within the Kadamba family in which they moved from a role as brahmin specialists to kṣatriyas.[51] The epigraphic explanation of this shift records a process of publicly negotiating and presenting what appear to be opposed ethical commitments within the lineage—on the one hand, the piety and Vedic learning of the brahmin and, on the other, their adherence to an authoritative model of kingship. We can also read this public shift in the changing names of the earliest rulers: the suffix *-śarman* (traditionally brahmin) is abandoned in favor first of *-sena* and, finally, the suffix *-varman*

48. Lines 14–15: *jayakīrttipratihāraf prasādān nṛpate raveḥ [|*] puṇyārthaṃ svapiturmmātre dattavān purukheṭakam ||*.

49. We take *saddharmamārga* to refer to the Jain religion. The same compound is attested in *Varāngacarita* 23.97, where it clearly refers to the Jain religion: *ācandratāraṃ jayatūrjitaśrīḥ saddharmamārgaḥ paramārthasāraḥ | sukhībhavatv ārhatasarvasaṃghaḥ siddhālayāḥ sphītatamā bhavantu ||*.

50. Edition Gai No. 22.

51. This shift in family identity is described in two of the most important Kadamba stone inscriptions: the Tāḷagunda Pillar Inscriptions of Śāntivarman (Gai No. 4) and the Guḍnāpur Pillar inscription of Ravivarman (Gai No. 22). The subject of genealogy is a prominent theme in both inscriptions, and each of them devotes considerable effort to explaining and exploring the rise of the family within the ruling class while, at the same time, emphasizing their continued identity as pious brahmins.

common to many ruling lineages in both South and Southeast Asia.[52] In the Halsi Plates, Bandhuṣeṇa's identity as a transitional figure becomes further complicated by an affiliation with the Kīrti family. Is the Kīrti family claiming to be related to the main Kadamba line through Bandhuṣeṇa? If so, they may represent a branch of the lineage that, while not represented in the official genealogies of the stone inscriptions, clearly played an integral role in the administration of the northern capital of Palāśikā.[53] Although this is only a working hypothesis, the details provided in the copper plates call attention to the potential for social mobility in early South Asia and the role of these inscriptions and donative acts as forums in which to publicly refashion one's lineage identity.

Following the praise and donation of Jayakīrti, the inscription shifts focus to discuss the special order of the Kadamba king, Ravivarman. In this case, the donation made is not for a temple nor is it restricted to a particular community or sect; rather, Ravivarman provides for the performance of a festival dedicated to the "greatness" (*mahiman*) of the Jinendra that should be performed using the wealth obtained from that village. The *Varāṅgacarita*, a kāvya of the seventh-century poet Jaṭāsiṃhanandin, tells of this eight-day festival, which corresponds to important harvest times in the agricultural calendar.[54]

> *jinendramahimā kāryyā pratisaṃvatsaraṃ kramāt [|*]*
> *aṣṭāhakṛtamaryyādā kārttikyān taddhanāgamāt* ||
> [. . .]
> *iti sthitiṃ sthāpitavān ravīśaḥ palā[śikā]yāṃ nagare viśāle* ||
> The Lord Ravi established the institution at the mighty city of Palāśikā, that the [festival celebrating] the greatness of Jinendra, which lasts for eight days, should be celebrated regularly every year on the full moon of the month of Kārttika from the revenues of that [village] (i.e., Purukheṭaka). (Lines 15–17, 21–22)

Here we see that the donative acts of Jayakīrti and Ravivarman converge. The village of Purukheṭaka, perhaps an extension of the field originally given by Kākusthavarman to Śrutakīrti and then by Mṛgeśa to the mother of Dāmakīrti, and which has passed to the hands of his grandson, Jayakīrti, and, finally, from Jayakīrti back to his grandmother, has here been publicly dedicated by Ravivarman to provide the funds and agricultural surplus needed to support an annual festival. Given that the village was the property of the Kīrti matriarch, it is striking that the revenues from it are donated by Ravivarman in the same set of plates. If we read between the lines (and behind the scenes) we might assume that the grandmother herself is behind this donation—an act that while certainly one of piety was perhaps not deemed suitable for a woman and required legal sanction. In this way, Ravivarman becomes the royal and "public face" for a donation conceived by Jayakīrti's grandmother. This hypothesis is strengthened further by the additional note that the Yāpanīya ascetics should enjoy the surplus from the festival.

> *vārṣikāṃś caturo māsān yāpanīyās tapasvinaḥ [|*]*
> *bhu[ñjīraṃs tu] yathānyāyyam mahimāśeṣavastukam [||]*
> *kumāradattapramukhā hi sūrayaḥ anekaśāstrāgamakhinnabuddhayaḥ [*]*
> *jagaty atītās sutapodhanānvitāḥ gaṇo sya teṣāṃ bhavati pramāṇataḥ* ||
> *dharmepsubhir jjānapadais sanāgaraiḥ jinendrapūjā satataṃ praṇeyā [|*]*

52. Cf. Sohoni 1983: 294.

53. Compare to Bhānuvarman, who is also unknown from the stone inscriptions.

54. *Varāṅgacarita* 15.137–44. Edition Upadhye 1938. See also Nandi 1973: 37 and Singh 1975: 46–47. The term *aṣṭāhnika* is effectively a generic term for any Jain extended temple-oriented ceremony.

> […] the Yāpanīya ascetics should enjoy, according to rule, the remaining wealth of [the festival celebrating] the greatness during the four months of the rainy season—for the group (*gaṇa*) of the sages (*sūri*) headed by Kumāradatta, their intellects wearied from [the study of] many treatises and scriptures, who are uninvolved in the world, abounding in great austerity, are his authority; and that the worship of Jinendra should be continually performed by the citizens desirous of piety. (Lines 17–21)

The stipulation underscores once again the prominence of the Yāpanīyas at Palāśikā. Their ascetic features are highlighted,[55] and a special position is reserved for the chief ascetic named Kumāradatta. The injunction that the citizens should perform the worship of Jinendra is emphasized by the closing line of the inscription:

> *yasmiñ jineṃdrapūjā pravarttate tatra tatra deśaparivṛddhiḥ [|*]*
> *nagarāṇāṃ nirbhayatā taddeśasvāmināñ corjjā ||*
> Wherever the worship of Jinendra takes place, there the country prospers, the cities are free from danger, and the rulers of the country are empowered. (Lines 28–29)

The prosperity of the kingdom has come to be dependent upon the worship of the Jinendra at Palāśikā.

PART III. LINEAGE AND LEGACY IN THE NORTHERN CAPITAL

Our study concludes with a discussion of two sets of copper plates issued by Harivarman, the son of Ravivarman. In the first set of plates this relationship is merely assumed but it is expressed clearly in the second set. Harivarman also does not specifically mention his lineage forefathers or provide a genealogy in these plates. In addition to this omission, Harivarman's donative records from Halsi are unique in that they involve a number of agents external to the Kadamba lineage—including rulers from other lineages, generals, and religious specialists—and he does things on the advice or at the request of others rather than for his own merit. These donative alliances could indicate a move to a more corporate form of donative activity than had been seen in the previous grants. They also significantly lack the opening evocation of Jinendra that we find in all the other Halsi plates. Finally, these donations further complicate the evolving image of the Jain landscape at Palāśikā with further details about the particular lineages, teachers, and doctrines represented within the community.

Halsi Plates of Harivarman (Year 4) [Fleet No. 25; Gai No. 27; Siddham IN01057]

Both of the grants of Harivarman begin with the lines of praise referring to Mahāsenā, the Mothers, Hāritī, and the Mānavya *gotra* that had become a standard part of the Kadamba epigraphic repertoire (see above). Praise of individual rulers is limited to Harivarman himself—styled as the ideal king combining piety, learning, and martial prowess—and, in the second grant, Ravivarman, who is cast in very similar terms.

> *[…] mahārājaḥ śrīharivarmmā bahubhavakṛtaiḥ puṇyai rājyaśriyaṃ nirupadravām prakṛtiṣu hitaḥ prāpto vyāpto jagad yaśasākhilam śrutajalanidhiḥ vidyāvṛddhapradiṣṭapathi sthitaḥ svabalakuliśāghātocchinnadviṣa(m)dvasudhādharaḥ [|\|]*
> The great king *śrī*-Harivarman, who is well disposed toward his subjects, who has attained the glory of sovereignty, free from calamities, through the merit produced in many [previous] existences, who has pervaded the entire world with his renown, who is a receptacle of the waters of

55. We have translated *jagaty atītās* as "uninvolved in the world" (lit., "gone beyond in the world"). Fleet translates "who were renowned in the world," which does not appear correct.

sacred knowledge, who adheres to the path taught by those mature in science, who has destroyed the mountains that are his enemies with his own mighty thunderbolt-blows. (Lines 3–6)

The context of the donation and the event(s) that inspired it are a bit obscure. We are told that the donative pronouncement was made on the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Phālguṇa and was issued from a place called Uccaśṛṅgī. This toponym, designating a place with a peaked or high hill, is not mentioned in any of the other grants. It has been identified with the hilltop fortress presently known as Ucchangidurga,[56] which lies more than two hundred kilometers southeast of Halsi. The toponym indicates that Harivarman was far away from the capitals of Vaijayantī and Palāśikā when he made this donation, perhaps engaged in battle with the Pallavas or the Pāṇḍyas in the south. It is also interesting that we are told that his pronouncement was not self-motivated, but at the instruction of his paternal uncle Śivaratha.

sarvvajanamanohlādanavacanakarmmaṇā sa pitṛvyeṇa śivarathanāmadha(dhe)yenopadiṣṭaḥ palāśikāyām bhāradvājasagotrasiṅhasenāpatisutena mṛgeśena kāritasyārhadāyatanasya prativarṣam āṣṭāhnikamahāmahasatatacarūpalepanakriyārtthaṃ tadavaśiṣṭaṃ sarvvasaṃghabhojanāyeti suddikundūraviṣaye vasuntavāṭakaṃ sarvvaparihārasaṃyutaṃ kūrccakānām vāriṣeṇācāryyasaṅghahaste candrakṣāntaṃ pramukham kṛtvā dattavān

Through a speech act that gladdened the hearts of all the people, he, being instructed by his father's brother named Śivaratha, having made Candrarakṣānta the executive, gave into the hands of the community of the preceptor Vāriṣena of the Kūrcakas [the village of] Vasuntavāṭaka in the district of Suddikundūra, free from all claims, for the sake of the perpetual performance of the anointing [of the image] and the *caru* oblation each year at the eight-day great festival of the temple of the Arhat in Palāśikā, that was caused to be built by Mṛgeśa, the son of the general Siṃha of the Bhāradvāja *gotra*; what remains is for the feeding of the entire community. (Lines 7–13)

In just a few lines Harivarman's donation incorporates a complex network of agents. In addition to his uncle, on whose behalf he was likely making the donation, another individual named Candrarakṣānta is involved as the *pramukha*, which we understand to mean the executor of the grant.[57] He may have been the local person representing the royal family in Palāśikā since Harivarman was not there himself at the time of the donation. The precise relationships between these agents may be impossible to recover, but the intent is clear. Here we can see how donative acts serve to reinforce alliances and relationships in very public and enduring ways—the mention that Harivarman made a "speech act" (*vacanakarman*)[58] that pleased the hearts of all the people implies a public declaration in front of an assembly, much like a modern political press conference, rather than a private affair.

The grant is presented to Vāriṣena, the preceptor (*ācārya*) of the community of the Kūrcakas. Together with the earlier plates of Mṛgeśa this is the only known epigraphical reference to the existence of this Jain tradition. The fact that the preceptor of this community is the recipient of the grant shows them to be a well-established lineage that received patronage from multiple generations of Kadamba rulers in Palāśikā. The name ending in *-sena* is significant as well; it recalls the name of the *ācārya* Bandhuṣeṇa, the progenitor of the Kīrti family mentioned in the earlier plates of Ravivarman.[59]

56. Gupta 1973: 114.

57. See Sircar 1966: 256. Fleet translates this term as "principle donee," which seems not to work if the Jain *ācārya* is, in fact, the donee.

58. The Sanskrit compound perfectly matches J. L. Austin's concept of the "speech act" developed in his philosophical classic *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin 1962).

59. See also Dundas 2014: 239 n. 17, on the component *-sena* as a lineage indicator.

As in the previous grant, the land is to be used for the annual performance of an eight-day festival, in particular for the anointing of the image[60] and the *caru* oblation.[61] The reference to the term *caru* is remarkable and highly unusual in a Jain context. One more case is known, however, again from the Kadamba epigraphical corpus, in the Devagiri plates of Mṛgeśavarman (*carubali*).[62] It may be an instance of the coopting of a Brahmanical ritual idiom in a Jain setting. In addition to providing the means for performing the annual eight-day festival, it is stated that whatever remains of the donation should be used for feeding the members of the community (*saṅgha*). While the term *saṅgha* would normally refer to the entire Jain community (i.e., both the renunciant and the lay communities), it seems that in the plates from Halsi the term is used to refer specifically to the renunciant community.

In accordance with the absence of the Jinendra opening evocation, there is no mention of the Jinendra here. Rather the grant refers to a temple (*āyatana*) dedicated to the Arhat. While the mention of the building of the temple by Mṛgeśa suggests a connection to the earlier temple dedicated by the Kadamba king Mṛgeśa in memory of his grandfather, the Mṛgeśa mentioned here appears to be a different person, for he is said to have been the son of a general (*senāpati*) named Siṃha.[63] The grant thus points to multiple Jain temples at Palāśikā at the time.

The closing lines of this grant introduce a new feature of the religious landscape with a reference to a specific Arhat called Vardhamāna and his teaching of *saṃyamāsana.*

> *vardhatāṃ vardhamānārhacchāsanaṃ saṃyamāsanam [|*]*
> *yenādyāpi jagajjīvapāpapuṃjaprabhaṃjanam [||]*
> *namo rhate vardhamānāya*
> Let the teaching of the Arhat Vardhamāna ("Prosperous"), [the practice of] sitting in control of the senses, by which at this very moment one destroys the heaps of sins of a worldly soul, prosper!
> Homage to the Arhat Vardhamāna! (Lines 18–19)

This reference to Vardhamāna (i.e., the twenty-fourth Tīrthaṅkara Mahavīra) marks the only specific reference to an individual deified figure from the Jain pantheon aside from the invocation of Ṛṣabha (the first Tīrthaṅkara) in the very first plates of Kākusthavarman. All the other references have mentioned only Arhats or Jinas as a general class of venerable beings. In addition, the quoted passage refers to a teaching that recommends a physical practice of sitting with one's senses restrained. Whereas the previous donations have emphasized the centrality of temple worship and the ritual worship of icons, this is the first reference to a doctrine or practice that indicates a sphere of religious authority outside of worship in a temple.[64] Moreover, the explanation that this practice destroys the sins that attend worldly existence gestures to a set of concerns about the human condition and personal salvation that were not much in evidence in the previous grants, with the notable exception of Kākusthavarman's grant.

60. For the elaborate Jain *abhiṣeka* ritual, with reference to the description in the *Varāṇgacarita*, see Nandi 1973: 33–37.

61. Fleet translates *carūpalepanakriyā* as "anointing with clarified butter," which does not appear to be correct. For the identification of *caru* as a ritual involving the oblation of a cooked porridge, see Willis 2009: 108.

62. See Gai No. 7, line 23.

63. Sircar (1939: 276 n. 2) speculates that Siṃha "may have been the general of Mṛgeśavarman and named his son after his master." Another son of Siṃha *senāpati* named Jinanandi is mentioned in a set of plates from Honnāvar issued by Ravivarman (Gai No. 26). Like the Kīrti family, lineage(s) of *senāpati*s are also closely involved in a number of Kadamba grants.

64. Note also the reference to the *jīva*, a central concept in Jain philosophy.

Halsi Plates of Harivarman (Year 5) [Fleet No. 26; Gai No. 28; Siddham IN01022]

The final grant from the set of Halsi plates was also issued in the time of Harivarman and begins with praise of the ruler and his father Ravivarman. These verses continue to develop the presentation of pious kingship identified above. In this case Harivarman is said to be one "the goodness of whose body and intellect has been produced by the extensive merit heaped up by many good deeds [in previous existences],"[65] while his father Ravivarman was one "who had conquered the senses, which was clearly made manifest by the abstention from the group of enemies starting with desire" and one "who endowed the pious people with riches acquired in the appropriate manner."[66] These aspects suggest that the Kadamba ruler wished to be portrayed in terms and with epithets that would be compelling for the Jain audience at Palāśikā.

Although this grant was issued only one year after the previous one, by this time Harivarman is present in Palāśikā, having apparently left the hilltop fort of Uccaśṛṅgī. Significantly there is no mention of a date aside from the fifth year of his reign. The grant sheds light on political alliances at the time, for it was made at the request of king Bhānuśakti of the Sendrakas. The Sendraka-*viṣaya* has been identified with the present-day Shimoga district of Mysore, and Bhānuśakti is generally considered to be a feudatory of Harivarman.[67] The support of Jain worship at Palāśikā was clearly not restricted to the space of the temple, but deeply embedded in the politics of the region. After Harivarman the main line of the early Kadambas ends, and the Cālukyas take over control of the former Kadamba territory, which leads to the Sendrakas aligning themselves with the new rulers.

The grant itself concerns the gift of a village called Marade.

> *ahariṣṭisamāhvayaśramaṇasaṅghānvayavastunaḥdharmmanandyācāryyādhiṣṭhitaprāmāṇyasya caityālayasya pūjāsaṃskāranimittam sādhujanopayogārtthañ ca sendrakāṇāṃ kulalalāmabhūtasya bhānuśaktirājasya vijñāpanayā maradegrāman dattavān [|]*
> […] for the sake of the ceremony of worship at the shrine which is the property of the lineage within the community of Śramaṇas called Aharişṭi and which falls under the jurisdiction of the preceptor Dharmanandi, and for the use of the pious people (*sādhujana*). (Lines 8–11)

The language used in this record once again introduces terms not present in the previous donations.[68] First of all, the sanctum is not referred to as a temple (*āyatana*) of the Jinendra or the Arhat, but as a shrine (*caityālaya*). There is no mention of the deity worshipped in the shrine, but in light of the other plates from Halsi it seems most probable that it likewise concerns a Jain institution.[69] The community to whom it belongs are referred to as the "Aharişṭi Śramaṇas." While the designation *śramaṇa* would normally suggest a mendicant, the shrine is said to be the "property" (*vastu*) of the members of this community. This description suggests a community of domesticated temple-dwelling monks, which may also be deduced from the otherwise unattested and obscure name Aharişṭi ('those who sacrifice daily'?). The term *sādhu* also occurs in the previous grant of Harivarman, but not in any of the other

65. Lines 6–7: […] *pūrvvasucaritopacitavipulapuṇyasampāditaśarīrabuddhisatvaḥ […]*.

66. Lines 4–5: […] *kāmādyarigaṇatyāgābhivyañjitendriyajayasya nyāyopārjjitārttha[saṃ]hitasādhuja[na]sya […]*.

67. Sircar 1939: 244. See also Gupta 1973: 49.

68. Sircar (1939: 277) speculates that the record was written by a non-Jain.

69. For the term *caityālaya* in a contemporaneous Jain literary source, cf. *Varāṅgacarita* 22.48, which describes the hero's building of a *caityagṛha* dedicated to the Jina(s) (48d: *yo 'tiṣṭhipac caityagṛhaṃ jinānām*). This is followed by an extensive description of the installation of the image of the Jina and the many endowments made to the shrine.

plates. The endowment is declared to have been made for their "use" (*upayoga*), which presumably refers to the provision of temporary lodgings for renunciants during the rain-retreat.

The record leaves open a number of questions that cannot be answered at the moment in the absence of further evidence, but once again evinces a flourishing and diverse community of Jains at Palāśikā, who were able to draw significant and continuous support from several generations of Kadamba rulers and their associates. With the disappearance of the main Kadamba line after the death of Harivarman, support may have waned and there is no further epigraphic evidence for the presence of Jains at Palāśikā afterward.

CONCLUSIONS: ROYAL REPRESENTATION AND JAINISM IN THE "GUPTA PERIOD"

The epigraphic corpus of the Early Kadamba rulers, including the Halsi plates, falls squarely within the chronological horizons of what is typically identified as the "Gupta Period" (fourth–sixth century CE). Yet, while representing what has often been considered a formative historical period in the socio-political world of early South Asia, the Kadamba polity only rarely finds a mention in the historiography.[70] Considerations of Jainism, too, are underrepresented. As the discussion above has demonstrated, this marginalization of the southern borderland of Gupta North India betrays a pervasive historical bias that excludes significant bodies of historical evidence. This study of the donative and political processes converging in Palāśikā presents a regionally focused study of a circumscribed body of evidence in an effort to draw productive attention to the unproductive limitations imposed by traditional constructions of this period. By reading against the grain and from the margins of the archive of epigraphic sources, this focused study challenges a number of assumptions about political formations and the religious landscape in the fifth and sixth centuries. More specifically, it shows that the use of Sanskrit inscriptions as media for royal representation and public self-fashioning was highly developed in the Kadamba polity, where idioms and trends developed independent of the Gupta royal model.[71] Moreover, the focus on Vaiṣṇavism and early Brahmanical Hinduism as a political tool, while well developed in North and Central India, presents only a partial view. The evidence from Halsi is clearly indicative of the centrality of Jain religious communities, ideologies, and institutions in the administration of the Kadamba polity and in the expression of a lineage identity.

Material evidence shows that Jainism was a well-established tradition in North India in the centuries prior to and during the Gupta Period[72] and that Jain lineages and religious communities participated in some of the most important temple sites of the period—for example, at Udayagiri, Nachna, and Deogarh.[73] These indications of a prominent Jain presence have not been emphasized in the historiography, in part because they are difficult to contextualize within the broader epigraphic and material landscape in which images of the saving *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu were emblematic of Gupta royal power and identity.[74] And, it should be noted, even these emblems can be challenging to tie to particular rulers since the corpus of inscriptions recording the donations of particular kings is limited to a handful of sources. Those inscriptions that do tie the rulers and their associates to the Jain community

70. On the problematic construction of the "Gupta Period" and some of the limitations of this periodization, see Bisschop and Cecil 2021.

71. For more on this topic see Gomes 2017 and Cecil and Gomes 2021.

72. Sculpture from Mathura is particularly rich for the early history of Jainism. See Quintanilla 2007: 97–141.

73. For the Gupta remains at Udayagiri, Nachna, and Deogarh, see Williams 1982: 86–89, 105–14, 130–36. For a study of the Jain complex at Deogarh, see Bruhn 1969.

74. These associations have been detailed most recently by Willis 2009.

are few, but important: namely, the Kauham Pillar and Rāmagupta's inscribed Jinas.[75] For these reasons, the ties between Jainism and royal power in Gupta North India are difficult to parse and have led to the inference that Jain communities were poorly integrated or incompatible with the Brahmanical Hinduism that the Guptas supported.[76] While evidently not widely adopted or supported as a religious ideology by the Imperial Guptas, the Kadamba epigraphic archive records a divergent account of the same historical period. The patronage offered to the Jains of Palāśikā over four generations of rulers indicates the perceived importance and even power of the religious community and suggests that the patronage of Jain religious specialists and institutions aided in the geographic expansion of the Kadamba lineage and their establishment of a second capital on the northern border of their polity. Moreover, their patronage of Jains did not present a challenge to the rulers' public pronouncements of Brahmin identity. As was discussed above, the plates from Halsi combine the celebration of Jain religious figures and institutions with the stock formulations of Kadamba lineage identity, including their origins in the Mānavya gotra.[77]

The copper plates from Halsi are not the only records testifying to the Kadambas' support of Jainism.[78] For example, the Devagiri plates of Mṛgeśavarman (year 3) record the gift of forty *nivartana*s of land in the village of Bṛhat-Paralūra to the "supreme Arhat deity" (*paramārhaddeva*) for the purpose of sweeping the temple (*saṃmārjana*), anointing the icon (*upalepana*), performing worship (*abhyarcana*), and repairing what is broken (*bhagnasaṃskāra*). Some further pieces of land are reported to have been given for decorating the icon with flowers.[79] Furthermore, the Devagiri plates of the following year of the same king record the gift of the village of Kālavaṅgā, divided into three parts: one part for the "blessed Arhat, the great Jinendra deity" (*bhagavadarhanmahājinendradevatā*), a second part for the use of the Saṅgha of the Śvetapaṭa *mahāśramaṇa*s (i.e., Śvetāmbaras), and a third part for the use of the Saṅgha of the Nirgrantha *mahāśramaṇa*s (i.e., Digambaras).[80] These plates not only provide further evidence for the different branches of Jain traditions that received support from the early Kadambas, but also highlight, once again, the divinity of the icon installed in the temple and his role as a recipient of land. The implications of these donations for the juridical personality of the Arhat or Jinendra have not been sufficiently theorized in the literature on Jain image worship. Such conceptions align closely with the Hindu conception of a localized deity and challenge the doctrinal understanding of the Jina image as an object of veneration representing a liberated being who is inaccessible and no longer tied to a particular place.[81] In the case of Palāśikā, the Jinendra was thoroughly emplaced.

75. The Kauham Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta was published in Fleet 1888: 65–68. The inscribed Jinas of Rāmagupta were discovered only late and first published by Gai (1969).

76. See Dundas 2014.

77. Cf. also Dundas 1999: 176, concerning the bigger question of the support of Jainism by kings in Medieval South India: "in general terms, it is probably more appropriate to view South Indian kingship as an institution which transcended conceptual boundaries such as Jainism or Hinduism and, instead, we might surmise that kings and their feudatories incorporated elements of Jainism into their cosmology not only to achieve 'Aryan' respectability, as Stein suggests, but also because the presence of sizable Jain communities possessing considerable economic power made it expedient to do so."

78. Prior to the Kadambas, the earliest epigraphical evidence for the support of Jainism in Karṇāṭaka comes from the Gaṅgas. See Singh 1975: 100–101, referring to the land grant by the Gaṅga king Mādhava to the temple of the Arhat established by the Mūla Saṅgha.

79. Gai 1996: 71–73.

80. Gai 1996: 74–76.

81. Cf. Cort 2010: 63, referring to the doctrinal viewpoint: "According to Jain theology each Jina has attained the state of a pure soul, devoid of all karmic bondage. [. . .] It is also a state that is totally devoid of all contact with the material world, as the liberated soul resides in the highest realm of the cosmos. In contrast to many Hindu and

The question as to whether Jainism was compatible with imperial ideologies has been much discussed.[82] The plates from Halsi leave no question about the deep entrenchment of the Jain community at Palāśikā in the political landscape of the time. The very first plates of Kākusthavarman report the donation to a general (*senāpati* Śrutakīrti), in words invoking martial imagery while, at the same time, advocating an ethic of compassion. The name Jinendra ("King of the Conquerors") itself is most fitting for a martial and imperial ideology. Beyond the members of the immediate royal family, the Halsi plates also indicate the popularity of Jainism within the wider community. The laity involved here are not the familiar Jain merchants from Western India, but generals, landowners, and headmen with close ties to the Kadamba court. We can gain some impression of Jainism as an imperial religion from the earlier-mentioned *Varāṅgacarita*, the kāvya of the Jain poet Jaṭāsiṃhanandin, who lived and worked in seventh-century Karṇāṭaka.[83] The poem describes the life and adventures of prince Varāṅga, who rules his kingdom in accordance with Jain principles and becomes a forest monk at the end of his life, where he is joined by several members of his entourage and finally starves himself to death in meditation on top of a mountain.[84] The novel portrays an idealized biography that unites the principles of Jainism with the duties of a king, a life that would no doubt have found approval from the community in Palāśikā.

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Buddhist theologies of images, the Jain theorists insisted that the Jina in no way is present in an image." In actuality, images of the Jinas have been throughout history firmly localized as miracle-working objects of devotion in particular sites. See Granoff 1994–95 and 1998; Cort 2006.

82. Cf. Zydenbos 1999; Dundas 1999 and 2006; Taylor 2020.

83. For a summary of the poem, see Warder 1983: 148–64.

84. *Varāṅgacarita*, Cantos 29–30.

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