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Observations on the Deorkothar Inscriptions and Their Significance for the Evaluation of Buddhist Historical Traditions

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1. The Deorkothar inscriptions

In an important recent article in the previous issue of this journal, Oskar von Hinüber and Peter Skilling (von Hinüber and Skilling 2013, hereafter referred to as vH&S) published two fragmentary pillar inscriptions in Prakrit from the stūpa site of Deorkothar in the Tyonthar Tehsil of Rewa District of Madhya Pradesh.[1] As demonstrated in that article, these inscriptions have profound implications for our knowledge and understanding of early Indian Buddhism. They are among the earliest Buddhist inscriptions after those of Aśoka, dating from some time in or around the second century BCE, and present at least one, and apparently two lineages of the monastic donors which go back to the Buddha himself. The present article is intended as a supplement to von Hinüber and Skilling's learned article, proposing three further points regarding the interpretation of the inscription and their significance.

Both inscriptions record the erection and/or construction of a pillar[2] (*usapito thabho / thabho kārāpito*), apparently by members of the local Buddhist monastic community. Both are incomplete, with an undetermined amount of text lost from the right side of inscription 1 and from both sides of inscription 2, but since their contents and formulae are similar it is possible to reconstruct at least the overall gist, if not the actual text, of the missing portions of the one with the help of the other. Our readings, reconstructions, and translations of the two inscriptions, which for the most part differ from those of vH&S only in minor details, and are presented below.[3]

[1.] The editions by vH&S supersede the preliminary ones by P.K. Mishra, which were described by vH&S (p. 14) as "provisional, but not entirely successful." Inscription 1 was presented in Mishra (no date: [11]) with transcription and a loose paraphrase, and inscription 2 in Mishra 2001: [19] in transcription without translation. References to other publications on the Deorkothar site are provided in vH&S, p. 13, n. 1.

[2.] It seems that the two inscriptions came from the same pillar. vH&S refer (p. 14) to "The inscriptions … on fragments of a massive sandstone pillar," and elsewhere (p. 18, n. 9) comment that "it is likely that all of the fragments are from one and the same pillar," while Mishra (no date: [9]) refers to "over 20 fragments of this pillar." Since the two inscriptions apparently record the construction and/or erection of pillar(s) by different persons, we might have expected them to have been on different pillars, but this seems not to have been the case.

[3.] In our edition, uncertain or incomplete akṣaras are indicated in square brackets in the transcription, while reconstructed akṣaras are put in parentheses and marked with an asterisk. Possible alternative

Inscription 1

Transcription:

1. *bhagavato bū[dh.s.] ///*
2. *utaramitro utaramitrasa [ā] ///*
3. *bhaḍu bhaḍusa ātevāsi nāṃdi [n.d.] ///*
4. *upasakasa ātevāsi savajayo sava ///*
5. *dhamadevena kokuḍikena bahūsūti[ye] ///*
6. *usapito thabo ācariyena kasi ///*

Reconstruction:

1. *bhagavato būdh(*a)s(*a sakamunisa ātevāsi)…*
2. *utaramitro utaramitrasa ā(*tevāsi)…*
3. *bhaḍu bhaḍusa ātevāsi nāṃdi n(*āṃ)d(*isa ātevāsi) …*
4. *upasakasa ātevāsi savajayo sava(*jayasa ātevāsi[4]) …*
5. *dhamadevena kokuḍikena bahūsūtiye(*na) …*
6. *usapito thabho[5] ācariyena kasi …*

Translation:

[1] (*The student) of Lord Buddha (*Śākyamuni) [was] … [2] Utaramitra. The student of Utaramitra [was] … [3] Bhaḍu. The student of Bhaḍu [was] Nāṃdi. (*The student of) Nāṃdi [was] … [4] The student of Upasaka [was] Savajayo. (*The student of) Savajaya … [5] By Dhamadeva, the Kokuḍika-Bahusutiya … [6] the pillar was erected. By the master Kasi…

Inscription 2: fragments 1 and 2[6]

Transcription:

1. */// [ā]tevāsi anūrudho anūrudhasa ātevāsi savanā[ṃ]do sa[v.] ///*
2. */// [.ā]si disagiri disagirisa ātevāsi bharaṇo bha[r.] ///*
3. */// ātevāsi ñātakadhamaguto ñātakadhama[g.] ///*

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readings for an incomplete letter (in fragment 4) are separated by a slash (/) . The reader should note that our notation differs from that of vH&S, who use parentheses to mark incomplete akṣaras and square brackets for reconstructions.

4.   If there was originally another name in the missing part of this line, this word would be *ātevāsi*, as given here. But if *savajaya* was the last name in the line, this word would be modifying *dhamadevena* in the following line, and therefore would have read *ātevāsinā*. See section 4 below for discussion of the question of how many names are missing in this inscription.

5.   In general, the words in both inscriptions are separated by small spaces, but here *usapito* and *thabho* are directly juxtaposed. The same seems to be the case with … *[ch.]dakena thabho* in inscription 2, line 5. Perhaps these word pairs were perceived to be syntactically linked, but more likely the inconsistency is just a matter of informal scribal practice.

6.   Line 6 of inscription 2 is on a separate fragment, labeled "fragment 2" by vH&S, which apparently can be connected with the bottom of the main part of the inscription ("fragment 1") because the partial *i* vowel at the broken bottom edge of the main section lines up with the fragmentary consonant *p* at the top of fragment 2 (vH&S p. 19).

4. /// *sa ātevāsi dhamadino dhamadinasa [ā]* ///
5. /// *[ch.]dakena thabho kārāpito gimjaki[y.]* ///
6. /// *[t.r.n. k.]to thabh. us.p.t. c.*

Reconstruction:

1. … *ātevāsi anūrudho anūrudhasa ātevāsi savanāṃdo sav(*anāṃdasa ātevāsi)* …
2. … *(*ātev)āsi disagiri disagirisa ātevāsi bharaṇo bhar(*aṇasa ātevāsi)* …
3. … *ātevāsi ñātakadhamaguto ñātakadhamag(*utasa ātevāsi)* …
4. … *sa ātevāsi dhamadino dhamadinasa ā(*tevāsi)* …
5. … *ch.dakena thabho kārāpito gimjakiy.* …
6. … *t(*o)r(*a)n(*o) k(*a)to thab(*o) us(*a)p(*i)t(*o) c(*a)*

Translation:

[1] The student of …[was] Anuruddha. The student of Anuruddha [was] Savanāṃda. (*The student of) Savanāṃda [was] … [2] The student of … [was] Disagiri. The student of Disagiri [was] Bharaṇa. (*The student of) Bharaṇa [was] … [3] The student of … [was] Ñātakadhamaguta. (*The student of) Ñātakadhamaguta [was] … [4] The student of … was Dhamadina. The student of Dhamadina [was] … [5] The pillar was caused to be made by …chadaka at (?) the brick … [6] … the gateway was made and the pillar was erected …

Fragment 3[7]

1. /// *pasako*
2. /// *? raja*

Fragment 4[8]

1. ---
2. /// *[k.t/g.]* ///
3. /// *āte[v.s.]* ///
4. /// *vāsinā*
5. /// *[nā] varuṇ.?* ///

Only a few of the differences between our readings and those of vH&S call for any discussion:

- In 1.1, *bū[dh.s.]*, the second syllable is entirely absent in pl. 8, fig. 9 of vH&S, but the photograph of inscription 1 in Mishra 2000: 67 (fig. 4) shows another small fragment

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7. Fragment 3 is presented by vH&S (p. 19) as part of inscription 2, but they note (p. 18, n. 9) that … *pasako* in the first line "may refer to the same *Upasako* mentioned in Inscription I." They conclude, however, that it "cannot be satisfactorily connected to either Inscription I or Inscription II" (p. 18).

8. Fragment 4 seems to contain part of the ends of four lines of inscription 2, probably lines 2 through 5 (vH&S p. 20), but it seems not to be possible to link its text directly to the main part of inscription 2 because the beginnings of the lines are also missing.

of the pillar placed in what is clearly its correct original position, on which the top of the first syllable and the upper half of *dh* are clearly visible. In both images, only the very bottom of *s* is preserved.

      - The vowel diacritic in the first syllable of the same word consists of two lines hanging down diagonally toward the left and right below the consonant *b*. This sign is not exactly the typical form of post-consonantal *ū* in early Brāhmī, which consists of two parallel lines below the consonant; see, for example, *jabū* in Bharhut inscription B 74 (Lüders 1963: pl. XXIII). Nevertheless, the difference between this sign and that for short *u* is clear in *anūrudho anūrudhasa* (2.2), where the vowel of the second syllable in both words has the double line which should indicate long *u*, whereas that of the third syllable has the single mark of short *u*. This shows that at there is at least a visual distinction between short and long *u* in the script of these inscriptions, and we have therefore transcribed the doubled line as *ū* in all cases, including twice in *bahūsūtiye(*na)* (1.5), even though in these long vowels are not etymologically justified. This pattern is at least partially characteristic of early Brāhmī inscriptions, in which the distinction between short and long vowels (other than *a* and *ā*) is often treated casually; compare, for example, *thupadāsāsa*, *bhutaye/bhutarakkhitasa*, and *rupakārasa* in the Bharhut inscriptions.[9] The situation is however still a little unusual in that the usual pattern is to represent long vowels as short, rather than *vice versa* as here.

      - On our reading of *nāṃdi [n.d.] ///* in 1.3 instead of vH&S's *nā[ṃ]di[nu](*tara)*, see section 4 below.

      As for the date of the inscriptions, vH&S note that they were "dated by the excavator [Mishra (no date): [11]; Mishra 2000: 67] to the third century BCE … which is perhaps slightly too early" (pp. 13-14), and they elsewhere suggest, with due caution, a date around 200 BCE: "If a 200 BCE date is correct (but the date is estimated on palaeographic evidence alone, and is therefore precarious) …" (p. 17). The inscriptions are undated (unless perhaps there were dates in the lost portions, but this is unlikely), so we must rely on paleographic comparisons to estimate their period. The archaic form of post-Mauryan Brāhmī script and the early epigraphic Prakrit dialect of the Deorkothar inscriptions are broadly comparable to those of the inscriptions from Bharhut, located some 150 kilometers to the southwest, and to those of Sanchi farther to the west. But the dates of these inscriptions are themselves controversial and uncertain; to cite one authoritative opinion, N.G. Majumdar (in Marshall and Foucher 1940: 268, 271), the early inscriptions from the two sites are datable to approximately 125-75 BCE and 175-125 BCE respectively.

      In any case, a detailed paleographic comparison of the Deorkothar inscriptions with those from Bharhut, Sanchi, and other roughly contemporary inscriptions such as the Besnagar pillar (which was not attempted by vH&S) is rather inconclusive. That the script is post-Mauryan is beyond question; forms such as *a* with a gap between the left

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9.   For references see the word index to the Bharhut inscriptions in Lüders 1963: 191-201.

arms, *dha* with the curved side on the left rather than to the right, and *bha* with a straight vertical at the right are all characteristic of the so-called Śuṅga period, that is, around the second century BCE. The same is true of post-consonantal *i* in the form of a curve or diagonal line rather than a right angle, and the position of the *ū* vowel diacritic at the right side of *b* (in *bū[dh.s.]*, 1.1) rather than at the middle as in Aśokan Brāhmī.[10] Within that general range, the Deorkothar inscriptions do have some relatively archaic features, such as *ga* with pointed top, as usual in Aśokan Brāhmī, rather than the rounded top which predominates in most post-Mauryan inscriptions, and *ma* with a rounded base instead of the later triangular shape. On the other hand, the vertical of *ka* is distinctively elongated in the so-called "dagger-shaped" variety, especially in *kasi* /// (1.6), which is generally diagnostic of later dates, and the right-hand vertical of *bha* is elongated downward, also a typically later feature. The same is true of the semi-triangular shape of the bottom of *va* (especially notable in *[ā]tevāsi* in 2.1), in contrast to the old circular form.

The Deorkothar inscriptions have none of the features which are characteristic of the early inscriptions of the post-Śuṅga period, such as the equalization of the verticals of *p*, s, and *h*, the rounded form of *t*, or the beginnings of a serif at the top of the letters. In short, they certainly belong to the Śuṅga period, but it is not clear where they fall within that period, which is in any case only very roughly defined. All the dates for inscriptions of this period are rough estimates without firm historical anchor points, and in the end all that can be said is that the Deorkothar inscriptions probably date from some time in or around the second century BCE, and more likely from the later rather than the earlier half of that period. Thus vH&S's cautious estimate of a date around 200 BCE is likely to be too early; the ramifications of this estimate will be discussed further in section 4.

A point of paleographic interest in the Deorkothar inscriptions is the distinctive form of *sa*, in which the bottom of the left arm curves down and around toward the right, extending even past the position of the right arm. This feature is particularly prominent in, for example, the sequence *ātevāsi savajayo* in 1.4. Similar forms of *sa* can be found in other inscriptions from the area of Kosambi, less than one hundred kilometers northwest of Deorkothar. For example, a Pabhosa inscription, dated by its editor to the second or first century BCE (Führer 1894: 241), has exactly the same type of *sa* (for example, in *bahasatimitrasa*, line 2), and the same type still occurs in a later *yūpa* inscription (e.g. in *samuchritaḥ*, line 2) from an undetermined location in "the neighbourhood of Kosam, ancient Kauśāmbī, in Allahābād District" (Altekar 1937-38: 245), dated by the editor (p. 246) to the second century CE. Although this feature does not help to determine the date of the Deorkothar inscriptions, it confirms their affiliation with the cultural sphere of Kosambi, the significance of which will be discussed in the following section.

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10. An orthographic feature which is characteristic of some other Śuṅga era inscriptions is the retention of Old Indo-Aryan clusters of occlusives + *r* in the name *utaramitra-* (1.2, twice). This feature is also seen sporadically in the Bharhut inscriptions, where *kr, dr, br* are sometimes preserved (Lüders 1963: xxii), and in the Besnagar inscription, which retains *tr* and *dr*.

2. Anuruddha

Inscription 1 begins with *bhagavato bū[dh.s.]* …, probably to be further reconstructed as *bhagavato būdh(*a)s(*a sakamunisa ātevāsi)* or the like, while the surviving part of the first line of inscription 2 reads …*[ā]tevāsi anurudho anurudhasa ātevāsi savanā[ṃ]do sa[v](*anāṃdasa ātevāsi)* … Given the opening references to the Buddha and to his prominent disciple Anuruddha respectively in the two inscriptions, it would seem that both began with a lineage of masters and students going back to the Buddha Śākyamuni himself -- something utterly unprecedented in early Buddhist inscriptions, as noted by vH&S (p. 17), whose further ramifications will be discussed below.

The surviving portion of inscription 1 implies that the beginning of inscription 2 may be further reconstructed with reasonable confidence as *(*bhagavato budhasa sakamunisa) [ā]tevāsi anurudho*, as proposed by vH&S (p. 19). The reconstruction of the opening of inscription 1, beyond *bhagavato būdh(*a)s(*a sakamunisa ātevāsi)* already proposed above, is more difficult. The Buddha's immediate disciple whose name is lost there may have been Anuruddha, who is mentioned in inscription 2, but we have no way to be sure of this, and it may equally have been someone else.[11] However this may be, it is remarkable that the donor of inscription 2 traces his lineage back to the renowned disciple Anuruddha, because Anuruddha is strongly associated with the Ceti country, and this is consistent with the location of the inscription. For example, in the Aṅguttaranikāya (IV 228 of the PTS edition) Anuruddha is introduced as spending the rainy season retreat at Pācīnavaṃsadāya (or, in some manuscripts, Pācīnavaṃsamigadāya) in the Ceti country (*anuruddho cetīsu viharati pācīnavaṃsa(miga)dāye*) for at least two consecutive years (IV 235, *anuruddho āyatikam pi vassāvāsaṃ tatth'eva cetīsu pācīnavaṃsadāye vihāsi*). In the Vinaya (I 350-351), we read that the Buddha, frustrated with the fractious monks of nearby Kosambi, came to visit Anuruddha there, where he was dwelling in such peaceful harmony with Nandiya and Kimbila that it seemed as if they had only one mind, even though they had separate bodies (*nānā hi kho no bhante kāyā ekañ ca pana maññe cittaṃ;* cf. MN I 206-207).

The Buddha's route on this journey took him from Kosambi to Bālakaloṇakāra-gāma, then to Pācīnavaṃsa(miga)dāya, and then on to Pārileyyaka (Vin I.350-352). Unfortunately, the exact locations of these three places are, as far as we have been able to determine, unknown. But we can safely assume that they were in the Ceti country, since the second one, Pācīnavaṃsa(miga)dāya, is specifically located there in the Aṅguttara, and these places seem to have been nearby each other. Ceti (or Cetiya, Cedi) was one of the sixteen *mahājanapada*s of early Buddhist tradition, adjoining Vatsa, whose capital was Kosambi, to the southeast. According to Dey (1927: 48), Cedi is "Bundelkhand and a part of the Central Provinces … bounded on the west by the Kali-Sindh and on the east by the Tonse. It is the Cheti of the Buddhists." Deorkothar, located at 81°40′ E, 24°56′ N is (according to Google Maps) about 4.5 kilometers to the southeast of the modern

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[11.] See the further discussion of this point below in section 4.

course of the Tons (or Tamas) River, and "commands a breathtaking view of receding mesas that drop hundreds of feet to the valley of the River Tons below" (vH&S, p. 13). Thus although Deorkothar is not strictly in the Cedi country as defined by Dey, it is very nearly so, and given the approximate and unstable borders between the traditional regions it might well have been considered part of Cedi in antiquity. Indeed, in the lists of the sixteen kingdoms in Buddhist literature, Ceti and Vaṃsa (= Vatsa) are always listed together (e.g., AN IV 252, 256, *cetīnaṃ vaṃsānaṃ*), and sometimes joined in compound (e.g., DN II 200, *ceti-*[v.l. *cetiya-*]*vaṅsesu*), so that they seem to have been considered as closely connected or even as a joint entity.

In any case, it is striking that the donor of Deorkothar inscription 2, located some ninety kilometers southeast of the site of ancient Kosambī on the north bank of the Yamuna River, traces his lineage back to Anuruddha, who dwelt in the Ceti country close to Kosambi. At the very least, this correlation shows that the association of Anuruddha with the Ceti country was a living tradition already at this early date; and it at least suggests that Anuruddha did in fact live in Ceti and found a local lineage there. While we cannot know whether the lineages presented (unfortunately incompletely) in these inscriptions were entirely historical or partially fabricated, this early epigraphical testimony which is consistent with canonical texts shows that such traditions should not be treated lightly or dismissed out of hand.[12]

3. *kokuḍikena*

vH&S stress the importance of the reference in Deorkothar inscription 1 to the *bahūsūtiya-*, that is, the Bahuśrutīya school, remarking that "this amply demonstrates how our picture of the distribution of Buddhist schools in ancient India … can change dramatically with the discovery of a single new inscription, like this one" (p. 25). First of all, this reference dates to "at least two centuries earlier than that of almost all other inscriptions that mention Buddhist schools" and is thus "one of the oldest epigraphical references to a Buddhist school" (p. 25), the only other comparably early examples being the reliquary inscriptions from Sanchi and Sonari which mention the Hemavata school. Moreover, the Deorkothar inscription shows that this school had "spread over a larger area than has been assumed" (p. 24), since the Bahuśrutīyas had previously been known only from four much later inscriptions from Nagarjunakonda and Kesanapalli in the Andhra region, and from one "extremely doubtful" (p. 23) reference in a Kharoṣṭhī inscription from Gandhāra (Pālāṭu Ḍherī; compare n. 15 below).

But a closer look at inscription 1 reveals that it has still more to tell us about Buddhist schools at this early period. The description of the donor in line 5, *dhamadevena kokuḍikena bahūsūtiye(*na),* was translated by vH&S as "[by] Dhammadeva from Kokuḍi, a member of the Bahusutiya school" (p. 17), taking *kokuḍi* as the name of a town "of which the location is unknown" (p. 18). However, *kokuḍikena* is surely a reference to the early Buddhist school which in various texts is called Kukkuṭika, Kaukkuṭika,

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[12.] The further ramifications of this point will be discussed in section 5.

Kukkuḷaka, and Gokulika (see, for example, Bareau 1955: 79-80).

Two points in particular confirm that *kokuḍikena* refers to a Buddhist school, or at least some sort of monastic affiliation, rather than to a simple toponym. First, the form of Prakrit word *kokuḍika-* corresponds exactly to the Sanskrit name, *kaukkuṭika*, of the Buddhist school in question, and second, this school is closely associated with the Bahuśrutīyas in most of the early accounts of the origin and affiliation of the schools. The name of the school is attested in several different forms in various sources, and its origin and significance are controversial. The relevant sources have been collected and summarized by Bareau (1955: 79-80), showing that the several names attested in Pali, Tibetan and Chinese and the explanations provided for these names reflect three basic forms: *gokulika*, the usual form in Pali texts; *kaukkuṭika*, "the line of the rooster," from Sanskrit/Pali *kukkuṭa* 'rooster'; and *kukkuḷaka*, "the line of the (mountain of) ashes," from Pali *kukkula/kukkuḷa* 'hot ashes'.[13] He concludes that "Il nous est impossible de déterminer la forme originelle de ce nom" (p. 79), but the early attestation now available to us suggests that *kaukkuṭika* reflects the original name.

In this connection it is interesting that the commentaries on the Dīgha-nikāya (I 318) and the Dhammapada (I 208; see also Przyluski 1923: 73) refer to a merchant named Kukkuṭa as the founder of the Kukkuṭārāma at Kosambī, one of three monasteries founded there by merchants. Given the proximity of Deorkothar to Kosambī and the early reference in Deorkothar inscription 1 to the Kokuḍika/Kaukkuṭika school, its name may actually go back to that of the Kukkuṭārāma at Kosambī, and ultimately to that of its patron, the merchant Kukkuṭa. This is at least far more plausible than the etymology recorded by Kuiji (cited in Bareau 1955: 79) to the effect that the name refers to a brahman clan descended from a *ṛṣi* who fell in love with a chicken.[14]

With regard to the relationship between the Kaukkuṭikas/Gokulikas and the Bahuśrutīyas, Bareau (1995: 16-19) demonstrates that they are closely associated in all of the earliest accounts of the history of the Buddhist schools, that is, those dating from the sixth century CE or earlier. According to the Dīpavaṃsa, the Gokulikas arose from the first schism within the Mahāsāṅghikas during the second century after the parinirvāṇa, and the Bahussutikas came from the Gokulikas after another schism; the Sammatīya account by Bhavya presents the same scenario. The Kashmirian tradition represented by the Śāriputraparipṛcchāsūtra, the Samayabhedoparacanacakra, and the Mañjuśrīpari-pṛcchāsūtra agrees that the Kukkuṭikas and the Bahuśrutīyas arose from the Mahāsāṅghikas, either separately, or the latter out of the former. Later accounts of the schools (the second and third periods according to Bareau 1955: 22-27) are less consistent. The Mahāsāṅghika account (Bhavya's second list) has the Gokulikas coming from the Mahāsāṅghikas, but omits the Bahuśrutīyas; Vinītadeva derives the

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[13] Compare Sanskrit *kukūla*, 'fire made of chaff' (Monier Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v.).

[14] The Kukkuṭārāma at Kosambī is not to be confused with the better known establishment of the same name at Pāṭaliputra (Malalasekera 1937-38: 615). According to Przyluski, the two Kukkuṭārāmas may be related: "On est tenté d'admettre que cette similitude de nom n'etait pas fortuite et qu'il y avait à l'origine quelque lien entre le Kukkuṭa-ārāma de Pāṭaliputra et celui de Kauçāmbi" (1923: 95 n. 1).

Bahuśrutīyas from the Sarvāstivādins, but the "Kaurukullakas" from the Sammatīyas, while the Varṣāgrapṛcchāsūtra has both the "Kurukullas" and Bahuśrutīyas coming from the Sammatīyas.

Thus if we are to follow Bareau's analysis, the Bahuśrutīyas and the Gokulikas/Kaukkuṭikas were closely associated in early times as offshoots, separately or consecutively, from the Mahāsāṅghika, but their origins were forgotten in later traditions, probably as they ceased to be influential schools. Their juxtaposition in the Deorkothar inscription provides strong corroboration of their special relationship in antiquity, although the precise nature of this relationship remains to be explained. Clearly, they were distinct but not mutually exclusive entities, since the donor Dhamadeva identifies himself with both groups simultaneously (*dhamadevena kokuḍikena bahūsūtiye(*na)*). This seems to imply that one of the terms is a subset of the other; perhaps, for example, *kokuḍikena* was at this point in history an institutional designation referring to the bearer's affiliation with the lineage of the Kukkuṭārāma in Kosambī, as mentioned above. In this case, Dhamadeva might have been identifying himself as a follower of the Bahuśrutīya school in the (sub-)lineage of the Kukkuṭārāma.[15]

It is unfortunate that the name of the first disciple of the Buddha is missing from the first line of Deorkothar inscription 1, as it probably would have identified the disciple who was perceived to be the founder of the Bahuśrutīya/Kaukkuṭika lineage, in view of "the consistent concern of the old writers to have the sects date back to the very time of the Buddha and to give them an immediate disciple of Śākyamuni as their leader" (Lamotte 1988: 521). According to Paramārtha (see Demiéville 1931-32: 47), the supposed patriarch of the Bahuśrutīyas was one Yājñavalkya, and it is conceivable, though hardly likely, that this otherwise unknown person would have been named in the missing portion of inscription 1. Alternatively, the first disciple in inscription 1 might have been Anuruddha as in inscription 2, in which case he would have been presented as the patriarch of the Bahuśrutīya/Kaukkuṭika lineage. This is *a priori* quite possible, but since we have not been able to find any evidence of a special association of Anuruddha with the Kaukuṭṭika/Bahuśrutīya tradition, it remains speculative.

4. *nāṃdi*

At the end of the third line of inscription 1, the word *nāṃdi* is clear. This is followed by two incomplete *akṣara*s of which only the bottoms survive. The first one is clearly *n*, but all that survives of the last one is the bottom of a vertical line. This was taken by vH&S as the end of an *u* diacritic, and on this basis they posited the

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15. Conceivably related is the Kharoṣṭhī inscription on jar B from Pālāṭu Ḍherī, which was read by Konow (1929: 122) as containing references to both the Bahuśrutīyas and the Kāśyapīyas (*ṣamanana ba(*u)[ṣuti]a[ka]na kaṣ[y]aviyana (*parigrahe)*, "in the acceptance of the Bahuśrutīyaka and Kāśyapīya śramaṇas"). If the reading is correct, this would be the only inscription from the northwest mentioning the Bahuśrutīyas, although the Kāśyapīyas are mentioned in several other Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions (CKI nos. 66, 67, 233, 257, 367). Bareau (1955: 81-82) accepted this as an attestation of the Bahuśrutīyas in the northwest, but in reality the reading and interpretation, made from eye copies only, are "extremely doubtful" (vH&S, p. 23), so that this inscription has little if any significance for the understanding of the Deorkothar reference.

reconstruction *nāṃdi[nu](*tara nāṃdinutarasa ātevāsi upasako)* for the rest of the line, as "only a tentative reconstruction" (p. 15). However, a comparison of these two partially preserved letters with the two syllables which immediately precede shows that they must have been identical; the vertical stroke at the bottom of the last syllable is certainly the downstroke of *d*. Therefore, the name of this member of the lineage was only *nāṃdi*, and the text here can be confidently restored as *nāṃdi n(*āṃ)d(*isa ātevāsi…)*.

Unfortunately this revision of the reading does not solve the question of whether or not the lost portions of lines 1 through 4 of inscription 1 each contained an extra name. It is clear from the structure of the lineage that at least one name was lost in lines 1 and 2, but there may well have been yet another name lost in each line. Similarly, line 3 might have read simply *bhaḍu bhaḍusa ātevāsi nāṃdi n(*āṃ)d(*isa ātevāsi upasako)*, or it might have contained an additional name (i.e., *bhaḍu bhaḍusa ātevāsi nāṃdi n(*āṃ)d(*isa ātevāsi* NN NN-*sa ātevāsi upasako)*. This issue was discussed in vH&S (p. 15) with regard to the line in question, which, according to their proposed reconstruction, would have comprised "at least about 28 *akṣaras*" if it did not originally contain an extra name. But since the second name in this line is evidently *nāṃdi* rather than *nāṃdinuttara* as hypothesized by them, line 3 would actually have had only twenty-two syllables if it did not contain another name. This would be considerably shorter than the estimated length of lines 1 and 2, which would contain twenty-nine and twenty-eight syllables respectively if the missing names in them contained four syllables each, as hypothesized by vH&S. On the other hand, line 4 would according to their reconstruction have had only twenty-three syllables, and in any case there is no certainty that all of the lines were of equal length.

Nevertheless, these apparent discrepancies support vH&S's tentative conclusion (p. 17) that there were multiple names lost in lines 1 through 3 of inscription 1. If there were no additional missing names in inscription 1, the lineage would have consisted of nine names; if there were extra names in lines 1 through 3, and possibly also line 4, there would be twelve or thirteen members of the lineage. The fact that inscription 2, which is presumably more or less contemporary with inscription 1, probably enumerated fourteen generations also points strongly toward the latter option. This issue was discussed by vH&S in reference to the issue of the date of the Buddha. They note (p. 17) that a lineage of nine persons would cover a period of around 120 to 160 years, assuming a generational difference of 15 to 20 years between master and disciple. If the lineage is accepted as historical, and if the inscription really dates from around 200 BCE, this would imply a date for the Buddha's lifetime around 360 to 320 BCE, which is "definitely too late." If, on the other hand, the lineage consisted of twelve generations, the date for the Buddha's life would be about 420-365 BCE, which they describe as "possible." Similar calculations are presented for the second inscription with an estimated fourteen generations, yielding a range of dates for the Buddha's lifetime of 460-360 BCE, again depending on whether an average of 15 or 20 years per generation is assumed; this range is described as "plausible," with a slight preference for the latter dates (p. 21).

Of course, all of these dates are hypothetical, on several levels. First, the proposed

dating of the inscriptions around 200 BCE is highly uncertain, as vH&S fully realize: "the date is estimated on palaeographic evidence alone, and is therefore precarious" (p. 17), and moreover, we consider this dating to be somewhat too early (see section 1). Second, the assumption of an average of 15 to 20 per generation of the master-student lineage is little more than a guess. And finally, the date of the Buddha's lifetime is a complex problem due to the inconsistent testimony of the various sources. Thus in view of these multiple uncertainties, we cannot use the new inscriptional evidence to definitively resolve the problem of the date of the Buddha.

Yet, there is an important positive conclusion to be drawn from all this fuzzy data: in the words of vH&S, "it is not at all impossible that this is a lineage going back to the Buddha" (p. 17). Although we cannot prove that the lineages in the two Deorthorkar inscriptions are historically authentic, they provide material that is far older than any other documentary evidence of this kind. Moreover, even though their date, determined only by paleographic comparisons, cannot be determined with any precision, it is still at least broadly consistent with what would be expected if the lineages are historically genuine. While this is not proof of their historicity, it certainly speaks in favor of it.

5. Conclusion: Implications of the Deorkothar inscriptions for the evaluation of Buddhist tradition

Modern and western scholars have often disagreed in their evaluation of the historicity of the traditional sources of information about key points in the history of Buddhism, such as the evolution of the various schools. Characteristic of the more skeptical point of view are, for example, Lamotte's comments (1988: 520) on the origins of the schools, where he speaks of "pseudo-historical tradition concerning the formation of the sects," declaring (p. 521) that "the supposed founders of the sects are all fictitious persons" and (p. 528) that the authors of the relevant texts "supplemented the lack of information with treasures of the imagination." All of these charges do have at least some basis in fact, though it is hard to be sure how Lamotte could be so sure, for example, that the founders were "fictitious persons."

The issue at hand is the scholar's evaluative principles, that is to say, the level of certainty which is demanded before an assertion can be accepted as authentic or at least plausible. For while caution and a healthy skepticism are not only a desirable ingredients but absolutely necessary ones for good scholarship, there is always the danger of letting skepticism take over one's thinking, leading to the mindset of "In the end, we know nothing." An argument against such hyper-skepticism with regard to the traditional accounts of the schools was eloquently presented by Bareau (1955: 15), who charged that "certains philologues, pechant par excès de prudence," have even doubted the very existence of the sects, because of the inconsistent descriptions of them in various texts. Bareau concluded (p. 306) that "L'étude d'ensemble à laquelle noun venons de nous livrer nous a montré que ce scepticisme était heureusement quelque peu abusif et que, dans de nombreux cas …. le recoupements de données fournies par des sources très diverses attestent l'exactitude et même la précision de nos informations." Bareau felt that

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when the various sources exhibit an overall agreement or at least a similar pattern on the major points in question, they can be considered valid even if there are substantial inconsistencies on specific points.

A similar spectrum of opinion can be found among scholars discussing the historicity of the lists of the Buddhist patriarchs of the various schools and the related issue of the accounts of the early councils. Here, for example, Hofinger criticized Hendrik Kern, who felt that the inconsistencies between the various lists of patriarchs showed that they are all apocryphal, on the grounds that "le scepticisme d'H. Kern est poussé fort loin" (1946: 159 n. 2). Hofinger concluded that "Nous croyons qu'il importe de réhabiliter partiellement les listes patriarcales ; les faits ne leur sont pas à ce point défavorables .… Les auteurs des documents patriarcaux sont mieux renseignés qu'on n'a voulu le croire et les noms qu'ils mentionnent sont vraisemblablement ceux de docteurs dont on se souvenait assez pour les dater approximativement .… Le désaccord qui sépare les sources ne prouve en aucune façon qu'elles sont dépourvues de toute valeur" (pp. 207, 208, 212). Thus Hofinger, like Bareau, is willing to give the traditional sources at least some benefit of the doubt by focusing on the overall consistencies rather than on their (admittedly many) disagreements, and by taking this as an indication that they are based on an actual historical core – albeit one which is incompletely, inconsistently, and poorly preserved – rather than being made up out of whole cloth. In other words, Hofinger and Bareau are willing to see the glass as half full rather than half empty.

The Deorkothar inscriptions provide strong and unexpected support for the historical veracity of traditional voices with regard to both of these issues, that is, the origin and affiliation of the sects and the lineage of the patriarchs and their disciples, and by implication with regard to other issues in the early history of Buddhism as well.[16] On the one hand, they corroborate, at a surprisingly early date, the association between the Bahuśrutīyas and the hitherto little-known Kaukkuṭika/Gokulika schools which is attested in most of the traditional accounts of the schools; on the other hand, they attest to local patriarchal lineages derived from the Buddha and one of his most favored disciples, Anuruddha, in a geographical context – and again, at a surprisingly early date – which is consistent with canonical information about Anuruddha.

We could hardly hope for a clearer warning against the excessive skepticism regarding canonical and post-canonical traditions, as Bareau and Hofinger have eloquently explained. This is not, of course, to argue that we should naively accept traditional accounts at face value, but only that we should not dismiss them out of hand for lack of corroboration. We should keep in mind, in other words, that lack of

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[16.] The recently discovered Buddhist inscriptions from Kanaganahalli, edited in this volume, Supplement, provide another illustration of this principle in connection with the dynastic chronicles of the Sātavāhana kings. According to the editors (Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 23), "a comparison of the Purāṇic list with the evidence gathered from coins and inscriptions shows that the sequence of at least the later kings and to a certain extent even the length of their respective reign, it seems, might be more trustworthy than usually conceded. This is underlined by the emergence of both these so far undocumented kings." For an example of the distrust of the traditional chronicles to which they refer, see discussion under the heading "Distortions in Purāṇic Texts" (p. 361) in Raychaudhuri 1972: 359-363.

corroboration does not prove that a statement or claim is false, but only that it is unproven. Sometimes, corroboration comes when least expected, so the door should always be left open.

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vH&S = von Hinüber and Skilling 2013.