

SĀTAVĀHANA AND NĀGĀRJUNA:
RELIGION AND THE SĀTAVĀHANA STATE

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One of the main characters in *Līlāvai*, a romance in Prakrit verse probably composed in the eighth century, is a king named Sātavāhana. At one point in the story, he has learned that the girl he intended to marry has resolved to die, and, in his desperation, suggests that he will follow her into death in the hope of being reunited with her in the next life. At this juncture enters Nāgārjuna, a monk (*bhikkhu*-) and teacher (*guru*-). He accosts the king with the following speech:¹

Now wait a minute, your majesty. Why are you talking like this? Are you a common man, that your words should be so ignoble? (1009)

People in this world who don't live for the pursuit of righteousness, pleasure, or liberation – they spring up and die off like grass. (1010)

They're born just to die, and die just to be born again. For the small-minded, that's all there is to worldly existence. (1011)

But the wise, my lord, can obtain incomparable powers here in this world, without having to give up their own lives. (1012)

Don't you understand what death means? Once you go, you're gone. Think about it. How you would ever see your loved ones again? (1013)

Why should you die a useless death like a common man? If you don't want your kingdom here, fine. Then let's go to Pātāla. (1014)

¹ *hamho siri-sālāhaṇa kīsa tumaṃ erisaṃ samullavasi / pāyaya-puriso vva mahāṇubhāvā-guṇa-vajjiyaṃ vayaṇaṃ // 1009 // je dhammāya ṇa kāmāya ṇeya mokkhāya ettha saṃsāre / tāṇupatti-viṇāso hoi taṇṇaṃ va purisāṇa // 1010 // jammaṃ maraṇassa kae maraṇaṃ jammaṃ kevalaṃ ceya / ṇaṇṇaṃ kumaīṇa phalaṃ saṃsāre saṃsaraṃtāṇa // 1011 // sumāṇa puṇo ṇaravaī aṇṇāo aṇuvamāo siddhīo / labbhanti aṇujjhīya-jīvieṇa iha jīva-loyami // 1012 // kiṃ ṇa gaṇasi saṃsāre paṃcattaṃ jo gao gao cceya / pattiya suvalahehi mi samayaṃ melāvayaṃ katto // 1013 // tā kiṃ pāyaya-purisaṇusāriṇā nipphaleṇa maraṇeṇa / jāi necchasi iha rajjaṃ tā ehi visamha pāyālaṃ // 1014 // tatthaṭṭhaūṇo bhogo saggāhīṃto ṇarāṇa dhīrāṇa / vāsa-sahassāi alakkhiyāi jara-vāhi-rahīyāim // 1015 //*

The enjoyments that realm offers to wise men eclipse those of heaven eight-fold. There, a thousand years pass unnoticed, without old age or disease. (1015)

Nāgārjuna and Sātavāhana are both legendary figures in their own right. Nāgārjuna is a monk who is said to have received, from Nāgas in the underworld, a set of Buddhist teachings that would form the basis of the Mahāyāna. Sātavāhana is a king whose exploits are told in a number of story-cycles.² Underlying the legends, in both cases, are historical persons. Or perhaps we should say historic. Nāgārjuna is one of the most influential Buddhist thinkers of all time. Many of his Sanskrit writings survive – some only in Tibetan or Chinese translation – and he is credited with founding the Madhyamaka school of philosophy and providing a philosophical basis for the Mahāyāna, arguably the most important dispensation of Buddhist teaching after the career of the Buddha himself. Sātavāhana is the family name of a dynasty that ruled over the Deccan between the early first century BCE and the early third century CE. They presided over a period of urbanization and economic growth. Their long reign and their conflicts with neighboring rulers, including especially the Kṣatrapa kings immediately to the north, have secured them a prominent place in the political history of the subcontinent.

Līlāvai is hardly the only text to connect these two figures.³ The relationship of Sātavāhana and Nāgārjuna is as legendary as the figures themselves. Sylvain Lévi, who addressed the symbolic and historical significance of this relationship in the final pages of his final paper, compared them to “un autre Saint-Rémy en face d’un autre Clovis” (Lévi 1936: 102). From a structural-anthropological perspective, it instantiates an archetype wherein religious power, concentrated in the person of the monk, unites with political power, in the person of the king, and conclusions can be drawn from the legends about the role and contributions of each party. Yet we know that, like Remigius and Clovis, their historical conjuncture was real. Several scholars, for whom this synchronism offers one of the few

² One of those story-cycles, besides *Līlāvai*, is the *Vīracarita*, discussed by Jacobi (1876).

³ See Sohoni 1999; for medieval biographies of Nāgārjuna in Sanskrit and Prakrit, see Granoff 1994; for Tibetan and Chinese sources see Walleser [1921] 1979.

tangible possibilities for locating the elusive Nāgārjuna in history, have been tempted to identify “his” Sātavāhana with a specific Sātavāhana king.⁴ I will state at the outset that I do not believe the evidence permits this degree of precision. Moreover, the “reality effect” of saying “Gautamīputra Yajñaśrī Sātakaṃi (r. ca. 171–199 CE),” for example, instead of “Sātavāhana,” is not simply false precision, but an emphasis on a certain kind of history that is made up of individual human beings who are born, live, and die along a linear timeline. One of the virtues of framing the conjuncture of Nāgārjuna and Sātavāhana is that these names are allowed to do their symbolic work, and thus they open up a historical question of a different kind: what was the nature of the relationship between religion and the state in ancient India?

If, in other words, we start from the mere juxtaposition of two historical figures, each belonging to and speaking for a highly organized, institutionalized, and powerful social group – in David Seyfort Ruegg’s terms, representatives of a “temporal order” and a “spiritual order” – we can begin to ask questions about how those groups interacted with each other (Seyfort Ruegg 1995). Precisely because of the prominence of these groups within society, there is actually quite a bit of evidence that would allow us to answer these questions. But it is evidence of an extremely varied nature: inscriptions on the walls of rock-cut caves, literary texts transmitted in Tibet, accounts of Chinese pilgrims, sculptures on the walls of long-buried *stūpas*. My primary objective in this paper will be to bring these materials together and attempt to integrate them into a holistic, and historically sensitive, account of the relationship between the Sātavāhana state and Buddhist communities. Holistic, in this sense, does not mean complete – there is much that the limitations of the evidence simply do not allow us to know – but is rather a gesture towards the recognition of systematic patterns of action on the part of well-defined social groups. By speaking of the Sātavāhana political formation as a “state,” I do not

⁴ See Jamsal *et al.* 1978 and Walser 2005, who identify him with Gautamīputra Yajñaśrī Sātakaṃi (r. ca. 171–199 CE); Warder (1992: §4398) prefers to identify Nāgārjuna’s king as Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puṣumāvi (r. ca. 84–119 CE). The dates I give for Sātavāhana kings are those provided in Appendix A of Ollett 2017, which are in turn based largely on the numismatic evidence interpreted by Bhandare (1999).

mean anything more than that it was a system of domination that demonstrably wielded economic and coercive power far in excess of any other group of social actors. There are real questions as to its scale, its organization, its coherence, its degree of bureaucratization, and so on, which will determine what adjectives should precede the noun “state” when we are speaking of the Sātavāhana political formation. But I take its fundamental characterization as a state to be uncontroversial. Moreover, by speaking of “Buddhist communities” in the plural, rather than the Buddhist *saṅgha* in the singular, I express my skepticism that the *saṅgha* “of all four directions,” as it is called in inscriptions, was the agent of effective social action in the period under consideration. Rather, it seems that local communities of Buddhists, generally affiliated with one or another monastic order (*nikāya*-), were the groups that were most visible to the state and with which it generally interacted. These communities were tied into larger networks of pilgrimage and communication.

The specific kinds of social relations that are metonymically represented by the relation of Nāgārjuna and Sātavāhana are attended by certain conceptual challenges, among which I will mention *allodoxy* and *patronage*. By allodoxy I mean that the parties belong to different religious persuasions.⁵ Lévy probably had this in mind when he compared Sātavāhana to Clovis, who was not a Catholic before his baptism by Remigius. But baptized he was. The Sātavāhanas, by contrast, never converted to Buddhism. The precise nature of their religious commitments are hard to pin down, but early members of the family claimed to have conducted Vedic sacrifices, recorded in the Nāṇeghāt inscription of Nāgaṇṇikā, and later members of the family have theophoric names which include such elements as Śiva, Skanda, and Yajña.⁶ We might say that they were followers of the Vedic tradition who supported the post-Vedic cults of Śiva and Skanda. Nāgārjuna was a prominent member of a religious group that was almost defined by its opposition to the social and ritual order of the Vedic tradition. One major conceptual question, then, is how we are to think about the interactions between a religious community and an allodoxic state. What are the strategies that the groups might pursue in relation to each

⁵ Different is the usage of Scherrer-Schaub (2007: 771).

⁶ See Bühler 1883 for the Nāṇeghāt inscription.

other? What are the norms that govern those interactions, and to what degree are those norms accepted, contested, or institutionalized? Do they have a shared vocabulary of concepts, or visions of the world that overlap in certain critical areas? So far, the clearest hypothesis regarding such interactions was put forward by R.C.C. Fynes: “there was a dichotomy between the public and the personal functions of a ruler.”⁷ Precisely what might these functions might have been? “Brahmins provided the religious sanction necessary for a king to perform his public functions as ruler, but his liberation (*mokṣa*) from the endless round of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) was a private matter, for guidance on which it was quite in order for him to turn to *śramaṇa* traditions[.]”⁸ I am unsatisfied with this interpretation for several reasons. First, because the distinction between public and private, which is so fundamental to liberal political traditions, does not seem to have been very salient in contemporary sources. The distinction may be more explanatory than interpretive. But it assumes something that ought to be put into evidence, namely, the concepts through which social actors understood their own actions. I nevertheless think Fynes’ hypothesis might be strengthened by recasting the public–private distinction as a distinction between the *dharma*, or obligations, incumbent on different categories of social actors, which is amply attested in contemporary texts, and strongly thematized in Nāgārjuna’s own writings. This would address another major problem with the way that the public–private distinction is employed by Fynes’ hypothesis: for him, Brahmanism is a “public” religion, whereas striving towards liberation is a “private” matter for which Buddhism provides guidance, yet to judge from the available evidence, there was nothing private at all about Buddhism or the state’s support thereof, whereas evidence for public support of Brahmanism is extremely exiguous. However we end up revising Fynes’ hypothesis, we should avoid the crass functionalism of assuming that Brahmins provide a state with “religious sanction.” If we are going to use the Weberian language of legitimation at all, and it is not at all certain that we should, then we must explain what the coin of legitimacy was, and why one particular group should have had a monopoly

⁷ Fynes 1995: 43, although he presents it more as a fact than as a hypothesis.

⁸ Fynes 1995: 47. One might also ask: why should the ruler have desired liberation in the first place?

on its conferral. The example of Aśoka shows us that there is no universal law of Indian society by which legitimacy comes exclusively from Brahmins (see Weber 1958: 16–17).

The second major issue is patronage, the concept that is almost universally invoked to describe, and sometimes to account for, the state's support of religious communities. The most important collection of essays on patronage in Indian culture characterizes it as “a multidimensional, sometimes loosely codified network of exchanges involving not only the production of art and literature, but also its performance, reinterpretation, and preservation.”⁹ We immediately notice that the definition includes both the social actions constitutive of patronage (“network of exchanges”) and the objects of patronage (“art and literature”). As the authors themselves note, we commonly apply the category of patronage to exchanges that have nothing to do with art and literature, including most prominently the wholesale transfer of wealth in either a Vedic *yajña* or a Buddhist or Jain *dāna* (Stoler Miller and Eaton 1992: 4). But we may be able to constrain the concept by adopting a more sociological approach, focusing not on the act of exchange itself, but the social groups that are involved, their motives and strategies, and the expectations, norms, or institutions against which these exchanges occur. The examples of “collective patronage” discussed by Romila Thapar and Vidya Dehejia, which took place in the horizons of the Sātavāhana state, make it clear that we cannot simply define patronage as “giving down,” a more powerful person transferring some form of wealth to a less powerful person (Thapar 1992; Dehejia 1992). It does seem to be important, however, that the donor and recipient belong to different social groups. Another recurrent feature of patronage is that the exchange, however institutionalized or ritualized it may be, is never made under coercion, legal or otherwise. It must be voluntary in some still-to-be-defined sense.

A fundamental difficulty in speaking of the “patronage” of any group is the gap between individual instances and a pattern of behavior, and this applies all the more to the Sātavāhanas and those who ruled under them. Ideally, we would like to know the nature, scale, and regularity of gifts

⁹ Stoler Miller and Eaton 1992: 3. Unfortunately I have not been able to consult Borgolte 2014–2017, which includes contributions about patronage in medieval India by Annette Schmedchen.

that rulers made to different religious communities, but the extremely uneven availability of archaeological and textual evidence does not permit much certainty on these points. Nevertheless we can form a partial picture, and what emerges therefrom is that patterns of patronage did change over time. The southern campaigns of Uṣavadāta, in particular, appear to have had a meteoric impact on the societal expectations, as well as the legal and administrative apparatus, surrounding the state's support of religious communities. An important lesson of this investigation is that these relations were not static. Nāgārjuna and Sātavāhana could only come together after several generations in which the state, on the one hand, experimented with and refined its instruments of domination, and Buddhist communities, on the other, constantly renegotiated their place within society.

This paper will proceed in two parts, covering the actions that the state's representatives took in regard to Buddhist communities, and the actions that Buddhist communities took in regard to the state. Such complementarity can help us avoid a one-sided account of these relations, which is one of the liabilities of relying too heavily on the concept of patronage. In relations of patronage, the donor is active and the recipient is passive, and the actions that the recipient has taken to secure patronage often fall out of focus. Another liability of the concept of patronage is that it tends to narrow the relations between social groups to relations of exchange. But exchange is only one part of the picture. The state has a variety of strategies at its disposal to create conditions favorable or unfavorable to religious groups, and those groups have various ways of putting pressure on the state. Emphasizing patronage to the exclusion, for example, of royal edicts and law courts will not only distort the overall picture, but it will create the misleading impression that states in ancient India had an impoverished repertoire of strategies for managing the different elements in their society. Conversely, I think it is important to focus on intentional interventions, as opposed to indirect effects. We know, for example, that Buddhist communities throughout the Deccan benefitted enormously from the "Sātavāhana effect," in which the development of a monetized economy, regional and transregional trade, and urban centers led to unprecedented prosperity for lay worshippers who, in turn, supported monastic groups (Ray 1986). Such indirect effects fall outside of the scope of this inquiry, which concerns the patterns of deliberate engagement of the state

by Buddhist communities and *vice versa* over about three centuries, and the visions of the state's proper role with respect to Buddhist communities that emerged over the course of this engagement.

What the state did for the Buddhists

The actions that the Sātavāhana state took in regard to Buddhist communities can be placed into two categories: the extension of financial support from representatives of the state to those communities, and the formulation of laws, directives, or edicts regarding religious matters. These categories correspond to the state's economic and coercive power: its role as a mechanism of extraction and redistribution of resources, on the one hand, and its ability to impose sanctions on certain forms of behavior, on the other. At the outset I must emphasize that we have extremely limited evidence for the actions that the state took in regard to other religious communities. One notable exception is the Nāṅghāṭ inscription, a record of the royal family's performance of dozens of Vedic sacrifices, which Alice Collett discusses in this issue. Although we know that the state must have had a one-to-many relationship with different religious communities, the evidence only really allows us to reconstruct a one-to-one relationship between the state and local Buddhist communities. The policies and norms underlying the state's engagement with religious communities, therefore, must be cautiously induced from its engagement with Buddhists.

State support for Buddhist communities

One obvious place to look for state support of Buddhist communities are the many Buddhist structures that were constructed or enlarged in the Sātavāhana period. These structures include, on the one hand, complexes of caves that have been excavated into the face of hills.¹⁰ I use the word "cave" (translating *leṇa-*) to refer to these excavated structures, which were often impressive feats of engineering, and not to natural caves. They generally functioned either as spaces for living or worship for groups of

¹⁰ The still-definitive study of rock-cut architecture in the Deccan is Dehejia 1972; see also Nagaraju 1981.

Buddhist monks. The spaces for worship were often pillared halls with a *stūpa* towards the back. On the other hand, there are several large *stūpas* that were built from brick and cased in limestone. These *stūpas* were major centers of Buddhist worship. Geographically, rock-cut caves are clustered in the Western Deccan, especially near passes in the Western Ghats, while above-ground *stūpas* are found in what is now northern Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. These structures, and the hundreds of inscriptions that they host, are the most important archaeological sources for the period of Sātavāhana rule.

Our discussion of these structures must start from Akira Shimada's observation that "there exists surprisingly little evidence of direct royal support for construction work in epigraphic records in the post-Mauryan and the Sātavāhana periods [...]." Vincent Tournier has noted, in connection with both the Ikṣvākus and their Sātavāhana predecessors, that "kings were not directly involved in Buddhist foundations or devotion" (Shimada 2013: 160; Tournier 2018: 26, n. 12). Part of the difficulty lies in identifying "direct royal support." Many donors are identified by official titles, but titles alone do not tell us whether and how such donations might have differed from the donations of individuals or groups who are not associated with the state. There is also the question of how to define "association with the state." Looking for "royal support" might cause us to focus only on donations made by kings or their immediate families. In this paper I will consider a wider range of associations, extending to the households of "ruling families," a term that comprises those who held the title of "king," including the Sātavāhana kings and the Kṣatrapa king Nahapāna, as well as those who held lesser titles such as Mahārāṭṭhī, Mahābhoja, and Mahāsenāpati. The degree of independence, not to speak of sovereignty, of the rulers who held these titles is a matter of debate. In many cases they issued their own local coinage and strategically pursued alliances with translocal rulers such as the Sātavāhanas.¹¹ It is essential to count women as members of ruling families, both because they did in fact hold official titles, and because, as we will see, they are the most visible and important group of state-affiliated donors to Buddhist communities. I exclude,

¹¹ Bhandare's dissertation (1999) is the most complete collection of numismatic data regarding these local rulers.

however, individuals who are or might be described as servants (*upajīvi-*) of state actors, including scribes and physicians. If we are interested in tracing the state's relationship to Buddhist communities as a whole, moreover, we need to look beyond the construction of these structures and towards other forms of state support for the Buddhist communities who used them.

For these reasons, I will proceed by distinguishing support of construction work from two other forms of support, namely, land grants and cash endowments. The distinction is somewhat artificial, as we will see, because the latter forms of support often supplemented the donation of caves, insofar as their rents and interest paid for the food and clothing of the monks who lived there. They are, however, qualitatively different forms of donation with strikingly different histories. It will also become clear that, in the most general terms, the state's role in supporting Buddhist communities underwent a profound transformation during the decade or so (ca. 68–78 CE) in which Uṣavadāta ruled over the Western Deccan on behalf of his father-in-law, the Kṣatrapa King Nahapāna. There was not only a quantitative increase in the support that the state extended to Buddhist communities, but a qualitative change in the nature of the state's relation to these Buddhist communities. This is reflected in entirely new practices of donation, namely land grants and cash endowments, as well as the appearance of a new vocabulary of law and administration surrounding such donations.¹² We will also see, however, that the transformation ushered in by Uṣavadāta was not to last. The Sātavāhana kings themselves recognized the donations that Uṣavadāta had made, and supported the same communities that Uṣavadāta had supported, but only in the decade or so after their victory. Starting from the beginning of the second century CE, the inscriptional evidence for gifts of land or cash from representatives of the state to Buddhist communities dries up completely. It is impossible to say whether this means that the state withdrew its support, or simply supported those communities in other ways. The latter, however, seems more likely in view of the fact that Buddhists evidently continued to solicit, and indeed recognize, the support of the Sātavāhana kings.

¹² See Meera Visvanathan's contribution to this issue.

Donations of architectural elements – caves, cisterns, cells, pillars, and so on – by men whom I classify as representatives of the state are relatively rare. The earliest example is an inscription from Nāsik, dated to “the reign of the Sātavāhana king Kṛṣṇa” (ca. 70 BCE?), which simply notes that an official (*mahāmāteṇa*) had a cave excavated.¹³ Senart read the word *samaṇena* as *samaṇāna*, and argued that the donor was “the officer in charge of the Śramaṇas,” noting that the word *mahāmāta* is the same as the word that Aśoka had used for “religious officers” (*dhammamahāmātā*) in his fifth rock edict (see Hultzsich [1924] 1969: 11). The title *mahāmāta* is unique within the inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas, and may well refer to such an office. The question of whether we are dealing with a private donation from an individual who happens to be a state official, or an individual acting in accordance with his official duties, is thus closely connected to the interpretation of the inscription: in the former case, we would really expect the individual to be named, and thus we should read *samaṇena* as his name; in the latter case, the lack of a name would corroborate the official character of the donation.¹⁴

No further examples are available until the time of Uṣavadāta, whose rule, as noted above, represents the high-water mark of state support of Buddhism, or at least for the inscriptional documentation of such support. At Nāsik, in the complex known in inscriptions as Tiraṇhu, Uṣavadāta himself donated a cave (no. 10) to the Buddhist community “of the four directions,” which he significantly refers to as “my cave” (*mama leṇe*) (no. 10 in Senart 1905–1906: 78). This cave is also covered in inscriptions recording the various charitable activities of Uṣavadāta and his wife, Dakkhamitrā, presumably extending over a relatively long military career.¹⁵ The dates in Uṣavadāta’s Nāsik inscriptions range from Nahapāna’s 41st

¹³ Senart 1905–1906: 93, no. 22: *sātavāhanakule kanhe rājini nāsikakena samaṇena mahāmāteṇa leṇa kārita*.

¹⁴ Lüders ([1930] 1940: 618) adduces other examples of *samaṇa*- and related forms used as names. I thank an anonymous reviewer for the reference.

¹⁵ In general, I try to follow the form given in inscriptions, although I restore geminate consonants (which were not written in the early Brāhmī script) when they are etymologically secure. Hence the “hybrid” Sanskrit-Middle Indic form Dakkhamitrā (written *dakhamitrā*). For the “hybridity” of these inscriptions, a term I do not much like (Ollett 2017: 47), see Damsteegt 1978. Readers will have noticed, however, that I present the names of Sātavāhana rulers in a normalized Sanskrit form.

to his 45th year (ca. 71–76 CE). As will be discussed below, two of these inscriptions refer to gifts of land and money to provide food and other minor expenses.

At Kārle, at the complex known in inscriptions as Vālūraka, Uṣavadāta did not sponsor any new construction, but only a grant of land, which is recorded in the *caitya* cave. According to Vidya Dehejia’s dating, the *caitya* was probably constructed between 50 and 70 CE (Dehejia 1972: 178). It is one of the key examples of “collective patronage,” where a number of private donors contributed to the construction of the structure (Dehejia 1992). Some individuals sponsored a pillar, while others, such as the merchant Bhūtapāla, appear to have made much larger donations (no. 1 in Senart 1902–1903: 48). If one believes, as I do, that the donor of one of the pillars in the *caitya* – “Mittadevaṇṇaka, the son of Usabhadatta” – was the son of Uṣavadāta, then the *caitya* was probably not yet complete when Uṣavadāta arrived in the region.¹⁶ We might therefore consider the possibility that he did not personally sponsor any of the construction activities in order to allow the local community to generate merit through their collective patronage, as Akira Shimada argues in this issue. If, however, the *caitya* was already complete when Uṣavadāta arrived, as Dehejia maintains, then the only forms of support that Uṣavadāta could render would have been in land or cash (Dehejia 1972: 177).

There is one conspicuous example of an architectural element donated by a representative of the state at Vālūraka, however. That is the large pillar just outside of the *caitya*, which was given by the Mahāraṭṭhī Gottīputta Aggimittaṇṇaka.¹⁷ Once again, his gift of a standalone pillar, outside of the main structure of the *caitya*, might imply a considered distance from a project that the local community might have considered its own. The lion-capital of his pillar is very much like those of the pillars that Aśoka erected at Sārṇāth and Sāñcī, and I consider it unlikely that visitors to the *caitya* would fail to recognize it as a symbol of state power. Precisely what “state” this power belonged to is even more unclear in Gottīputta

¹⁶ No. 11 in Senart 1902–1903: 56. Dehejia (1972: 177) rejects the identification, but the name Usabhadatta (an ‘Indianized’ form of the Iranian Uṣavadāta, used also in inscription no. 4 at Nāsik [Senart 1905–1906: 71]) is rare.

¹⁷ I.e., Gautīputra Agnimitra; Senart 1902–1903: 49; see also Dehejia 1992: 41.

Aggimittaṇṇaka's case than is usual for Mahāraṭṭhīs: we do not know whether he was an ally of Uṣavadāta or Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi, or whether, like other Mahāraṭṭhīs, he switched allegiances throughout the conflict.

At Junnar, a minister of Nahapāna named Ayama gave a platform and cistern in Nahapāna's 46th year (ca. 78 CE) (no. 25 in Burgess and Indrajī 1881: 52). The accompanying inscriptions specifies that Ayama had done it "for merit" (*puñathaya*). This may not be incompatible with acting his official capacity as minister, but it suggests that such donations were undertaken for the same motives – namely, the generation of religious merit – in the case of state actors as in that of private individuals. The last record of a man associated with a royal family making a donation of an architectural element to a Buddhist structure is from Bhājā, where a Mahāraṭṭhī named Kosikīputta Viṇhudatta gave a cistern. Vidya Dehejia dates the inscription to 110–150 CE (no. 7 in Burgess and Indrajī 1881: 83; Dehejia 1972: 154).

We may now consider the examples of architectural elements donated by state-affiliated women, which are more numerous, and attested over a long period of time, than those donated by state-affiliated men. We can begin with the Tiraṇhu complex at Nāsik, where there is evidence for the support of construction work by women belonging to ruling families, including the Sātavāhana royal household, for roughly two centuries. The earliest example, perhaps from the third quarter of the first century BCE, is the completion of a cave by Bhaṭṭapālikā, who identifies herself in relation to several figures in the Sātavāhana state: her father, a royal minister (*rāyāmaca*); her grandfather, Mahāhacusiri, who was likely a prince; her husband, who was also a royal minister and the treasurer (*bhaṇḍākārika*); and her son Kappaṇaṇṇaka, who does not have an official title, but whom she might reasonably have expected to have a position in the state at some later point (no. 19 in Senart 1905–1906: 91). In a pattern that we will see repeated at Nāsik, the construction appears to have been initiated privately, but completed at a somewhat later stage with the support of a state-affiliated donor.¹⁸

¹⁸ As noted by Senart (1905–1906: 92).

Bhaṭṭapālikā's strategy of identifying herself by listing powerful male relatives recurs in similar inscriptions throughout the Deccan.¹⁹ Perhaps a decade or so later, at Beḍṣā, the donor of a water cistern is identified as "Sāmaḍṇinikā, the daughter of a Mahābhoja, a Mahādevī, and a Mahārāṭṭhinī, the second wife of Āpadevaṇṇaka."²⁰ Three inscriptions from Kānheri can be mentioned here, which date from the beginning, middle, and end of the second century. In the first, the donor of one cave, named Nāgamūlaṇṇikā, identifies herself as the daughter of the Great King, a Mahārāṭṭhinī, the mother of Khandanāga, and the sister of a Mahābhoja.²¹ In the second, a woman whose name is either not mentioned or not legible is somehow connected with the gift of a cistern. She is identified as the queen of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi and the daughter of Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman (no. 16 in Gokhale 1991: 62). In the third, a rather more doubtful case, a cave and cistern were donated by a woman named Dāmīlā. She is identified as *bhoigī*, and Gokhale interprets this to refer the hereditary rulers of this part of the Koṅkaṇ.²² These three donations would be indistinguishable from donations of private individuals if the accompanying inscription did not inform us of the donor's royal status.

At Kuḍā, the title of the local rulers was Mahābhoja, and several inscriptions record donations of individuals connected with the ruling family. One records the gift of a cave by Vijayaṇṇikā, described as "the daughter of the Mahābhoja Sāḍakara Sudassana."²³ The same woman is probably described as a Mahābhojī in two later inscriptions (nos. 1 and 9 in Burgess

¹⁹ For this strategy, see Shah 2001.

²⁰ No. 2 in Burgess and Indrajī 1881: 26. Dehejia (1972: 177) dates the inscription to 50–30 BCE.

²¹ No. 39 in Gokhale 1991: 95. The inscription needs to be reread. The donor's son may be the same Khandanāga who is referred to as a Mahāsenāpati in the Myākadoni inscription of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi (Sukthankar 1917–1918); the same name occurs in the so-called Dharanikota Pillar inscription (Seshadri Sastri 1937–1938), which also likely dates to the later years of the same king. If the identification is correct, then Nāgamūlaṇṇikā's son rose to high office during the reign of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi, and her own inscription at Kānheri probably dates to this period as well.

²² No. 54 in Gokhale 1991: 147. This inscription likewise needs to be reread. I am very doubtful of the reading *aparāmtikāya*, and of Gokhale's interpretation, especially given that the same cave (no. 98) is said to be donated by a woman with the same name (*dāmīlā*) in another inscription (no. 55 in Gokhale 1991: 147), where the donor is however identified as a nun (*bhikṣuṇī*).

²³ No. 19 in Burgess and Indrajī 1881: 15; the first phase of construction at Kuḍā, to which these inscriptions belong, is dated by Dehejia (1972: 178) to 90–110 CE.

and Indrajī 1881: 4, 9). While she belonged to the Sāḍakara (or Saḍageri) family, she evidently married into the Mandava family, for her son, who eventually became the Mahābhoja himself, is called Mandava Khandapālita. Another inscription records the gift of “Mandava Kumāra, son of Parasi-vama of the Mandavas,” neither of whom is given an official title, but who presumably belonged to the same family as Mandava Khandapālita (no. 14 in Burgess and Indrajī 1881: 13).

On the final spur of our survey, we return to Nāsik. The very well-known inscription of Gautamī Balaśrī dates from about 103 CE, the 19th year of the reigning king Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi (no. 2 in Senart 1905–1906: 60–65). Balaśrī was the king’s grandmother, and the mother of the previous king, Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi. In that inscription, which mostly consists of a long and poetic eulogy of her son, Balaśrī records the donation of the cave (no. 3) on the walls of which it is inscribed, “on the peak of mount Tiraṅhu, which is like the peak of mount Kailāsa.” The cave was given to “the order of the Bhaddāvanīyas.” It is, in a subsequent inscription, referred to as “the Queen’s Cave,” in a fashion similar to Uṣavadāta calling the cave that he sponsored at Nāsik “my cave.”²⁴ Later on, an inscription of around 178 CE records that a woman named Vāsū had completed (*payavasāṇa nito*) and donated a cave which, according to Senart’s reading, had remained uncompleted for many years previously (no. 24 in Senart 1905–1906: 93–94). David Eford discusses the completion of this cave in his contribution to this issue. The donor identifies herself as a Mahāsenapatinī, that is, the wife of a high-ranking military official.

The examples of support extended for construction work from individuals associated with the state are collected in the following two tables. We observe, first of all, that a greater number of women than men are donors. Romila Thapar has ventured an explanation for this pattern in the obligation of the state to provide patronage to different religious groups, and the distribution of patronage “could be more easily handled along gender lines, although it may not have originated in this form.” She claims that male members of royal families supported “brahmanical *yajñas*” while “their wives and sisters made donations to Buddhist monuments”

²⁴ *devileṇa-* (no. 3 in Senart 1905–1906: 65). See also EIAD 54 (a “sculpted stone panel from site 106 at Nagarjunakonda – reign of Siri-Ehavalacāntamūla, year 24”), which calls a cell “the Great Queen’s cell” (*[mahā]devī[par]ivēṇe*).

(Thapar 1992: 28). One reason, however, to doubt whether there really was such a gendered division of patronage are the exceptions on either side. As we have seen, men from ruling families did donate to Buddhist cave-complexes on occasion. And the Nāṇeghāt inscription is clear, albeit fragmentary, evidence that women of the royal household did support Vedic ritual on a large scale. In that inscription, dating roughly to the first half of the first century BCE, Nāgaṇṇikā, who was then likely the widow of Śrī Sātakarṇi, records her personal sponsorship of dozens of Vedic sacrifices, all of which were accompanied by large gifts for the officiating priests and other participants.²⁵ It may have been a tendency rather than a policy to apportion religious patronage on gendered lines, but this tendency would then have to be explained. Perhaps the men in ruling families had ritual or financial obligations that competed with their support of Buddhist communities. In my opinion, however, the explanation is more likely to be sought in the sociology of Buddhism in the Deccan. As Thapar herself observes, a large proportion of the donors to Buddhist complexes in the Deccan are women, many of whom were nuns or related to nuns (see Thapar 1992: 28). The pattern that we observe among royal donors is thus broadly consistent with the pattern among donors in general. Precisely how this pattern is to be accounted for remains an open question, although one possibility is that nuns were active in cultivating female donors through their familial and social connections.

Secondly, we observe that the gifts of construction work from those associated with the state, whether men or women, are largely on the same scale and recorded in more or less the same way as gifts from private individuals. The upper limit for both sets of donors was an entire cave. In two cases, that of “Uṣavadāta’s cave” (no. 10) and “the Queen’s cave” (no. 3) at Nāsik, the accompanying inscriptions are much longer than usual, and take part in the emergent discourse of *kāvya* in describing their royal sponsors (see Ollett 2017: 35–45). But if we were to judge from these donations alone, it would appear that support from the state simply meant support from individuals who happened to belong to ruling families, or in other words, that there was nothing that qualitatively distinguished donors associated with the state from other donors.

²⁵ Bühler 1883; see also Alice Collett’s contribution to this issue.

Table 1: Male donors associated with the state in Sātavāhana-period inscriptions from the Western Deccan

Name	Title or position	Approx. date	Site	Gift
Samaṇa	High officer (<i>mahāmāta</i>)	70 BCE	Nāsik	Cave 19
Gottīputta Aggimittaṇṇaka	Mahāratt̥hī	50–70 CE	Kārle	Standalone pillar
Uṣavadāta	Son-in-law of King Nahapāna	71–78 CE	Nāsik	Cave 10
Ayama	Minister (<i>amātya</i>)	78 CE	Junnar	Platform and cistern
Kosikīputta Viṇhudatta	Mahāratt̥hī	110–150 CE	Bhājā	Cistern

Table 2: Female donors associated with the state in Sātavāhana-period inscriptions from the Western Deccan

Name	Title or position	Approx. date	Site	Gift
Bhaṭṭapālikā	granddaughter of Mahāhakusiri, daughter of a minister, wife of a minister	30 BCE	Nāsik	Cave 18
Sāmaḍinnikā	daughter of a Mahābhoja, Mahādevī, Mahāratt̥thinī	50 CE	Beḍṣā	Cistern
Dakkhamitrā	wife of Uṣavadāta	71 CE	Nāsik	Cell in cave 10
Vijayaṇṇikā	daughter of a Mahābhoja (later: Mahābhōjinī)	90–110 CE	Kuḍā	Cave 13
Gautamī Balaśrī	mother of Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi	103 CE	Nāsik	Cave 3
Nāgamūlaṇṇikā	daughter of a Mahārāja, sister of a Mahābhoja, mother of a Mahāratt̥hī	115 CE	Kānheri	Cave 66

Name	Title or position	Approx. date	Site	Gift
[unknown]	wife of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi, daughter of Rudradāman	150 CE	Kānheri	Cistern
Vāsū	Mahāsenapatiṇī	178 CE	Nāsik	Cave 20
Dāmīlā	Bhojikī (?)	200 CE	Kānheri	Cave 98, cistern

A rather different pattern emerges, however, when we turn away from support for construction work to donations of land and cash to be invested with local guilds. Both kinds of donation were intended to produce a stable stream of revenue for the recipient, in the form of rents in the former case, and interest in the latter. Both types of donations were referred to as “perpetual endowments” (*akhayanīvī*), although the term is used first for cash gifts, and those are the only kind of long-term gift recognized by contemporary codes of monastic conduct (*vinaya*), as Meera Visvanathan discusses in her contribution to this issue. Because Visvanathan discusses the history of gifts of capital at length, I will focus on gifts of land.

Land grants are an especially important phenomenon for understanding the state’s interactions with the Buddhist community, because most of them follow a well-defined pattern, which will be discussed below. Some of the earliest such grants, however, are quite exceptional. These are the grants recorded in a set of inscriptions at the Mānmoḍī hill at Junnar, on the rough the surfaces of the unfinished *caitya* cave (Cave 26) of the Ambā-Ambikā group, which date to between 80 and 100 CE.²⁶ These inscriptions, it must be said, are very difficult to read and even more difficult to understand. The same cave bears three infamous inscriptions in a so-far unidentified language, if it is not simply gibberish (see Burgess and Indrajī 1881:

²⁶ According to David Eford’s analysis of this cave in this issue. See also Dehejia 1972: 180. The inscriptions are published by Burgess and Indrajī (1881: 44–49), nos. 9, 13, 14, 15, 17 and 18; Burgess only gave an eye-copy of the inscription above the doorway, which was subsequently read and translated by Bhagwanlal Indrajī and, much later, by Shobhana Gokhale (1981–1984).

45, nos. 10, 11, and 12). They were made just after the period of Śaka domination at Junnar, and one person mentioned in connection with the grants, Aḍhuṭhūma, is explicitly said to be a Śaka. Thus the very practice of giving land to Buddhist monastic communities may have been introduced to the Deccan by the Śakas. The inscriptions are very brief, mentioning only the quantity of land measured in *nivartanas* – between 2 and 32 *nivartanas* per gift – and the locality where the land is found, sometimes in reference to landmarks. A *nivartana* was somewhere around a hectare, so some of these gifts were substantial, although not quite as large as those granted by the state, which ranged between 100 and 200 *nivartanas*.²⁷ In two records, the land is further said to be agricultural land (*cheta*) belonging to a particular village (*gāma*).²⁸ Several inscriptions appear to mention the produce of the land, whether mangos, *karañja* (*Pongamia pinnata*), or barley.²⁹ The donors, if mentioned at all, are either individuals (e.g., Vāhata Vaceḍuka, probably a Śaka to judge from his name, and possibly the aforementioned Aḍhuṭhūma) or guilds (*seni*). Strangely, the recipient cannot be convincingly made out in any of these inscriptions.³⁰ Indeed the function of these brief inscriptions as a whole is unclear: though they sometimes refer to the land as a “religious gift” (*deyadhamaṃ*), they contain none of the legal or administrative details of later records. This suggests, once again, that the practice was quite new, and procedures for administering or litigating the grants were not yet in place, although it may simply be that the inscriptions are informal records of donations that were formally documented elsewhere. There is no evidence that the state or its representatives were parties to these land grants. We might speculate that these records,

²⁷ See Ray (1986: 100), who cites R. S. Sharma (1 *nivartana* = $\frac{3}{4}$ of a hectare) and Niyogi (1 *nivartana* = 1 hectare). The measure was probably not stable over the centuries of its use, however. See also Brancaccio (2011: 59), who compares these donations to the gift of 100 *nivartanas* of land recorded at Nāsik, discussed below.

²⁸ Gokhale 1981–1984: 173; Burgess and Indrajī 1881: 45, 48, nos. 13 and 18.

²⁹ See the phrases *jāba-bhati-udesena* (no. 14, p. 46), *ābikābhati* (no. 15, p. 47), and *karañja-bhati-udesena* (no. 17, p. 48).

³⁰ Some phrases have been taken to refer to recipients (*apa[rā]jitesu gane* in no. 9, and *sidhagaṇe aparājite* in no. 14), but no Buddhist group known as “the Aparājitas” is otherwise known (thanks to Vincent Tournier for confirming this). Gokhale also read the Sāṃmitīyas into the inscription she published (1981–1984), but the reading (*samitaya* and *simitayam*) and interpretation is extremely doubtful; in my view this word is more likely to identify a donor, since it comes after *deyadhama*.

written in a makeshift fashion on the roughly-hewn walls of an abandoned *caitya* cave, represent an attempt on the part of the local Buddhist community to take stock of its property in the immediate aftermath of regime change: Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi's defeat of the Kṣatrapas around 78 CE probably involved the removal of the Śakas and Yavanas who had supported the Buddhist community in Junnar and resulted in the latter's decline as a regional economic center.³¹

Moving from Junnar to Nāsik, one inscription records the donation of a field (*kheta*-), the revenue of which was supposed to provide clothing (*cīvarika*-) for the resident of one cave (Senart 1905–1906: 77, no. 9; Ray 1986: 102–103). The donor was one Dhammanandī, who is not associated with the state in any way. In all of the other remaining examples of land grants, however, the donors are representatives of the state. These records show a striking geographic and temporal distribution. All of them are from Nāsik and Kārle, and in both places, we notice a pattern. First, Uṣavadāta makes a grant of land to a local Buddhist community. Then the Sātavāhanas reinstate the donation. There is only one case of a Sātavāhana king donating land that was not previously donated by Uṣavadāta. In all cases, it seems, there were problems with the land that required the grant to be emended in various ways. Perhaps because of these problems, there is no inscriptional evidence for land grants from the Sātavāhanas after the 22nd year of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puṣumāvi (ca. 106 CE). The practice was, however, in evidence among the Ikṣvākus, who may well have taken the Sātavāhanas as their model in this respect.³² Nearly the entire history of land grants to Buddhists in the Western Deccan, then, can be considered under the heading of Uṣavadāta's gifts and their continued recognition and administration under the Sātavāhanas in the generation immediately following.

The earliest such example is Uṣavadāta's donation of the village of Karañjaka “for the material support of the *saṅgha* of all four directions of mendicants who live in the caves at Vālūraka.”³³ It is notable that the

³¹ For this hypothesis, see David Efur's contribution to this issue.

³² See the Pātaṅḍigūḍem plates of Ehavala Cāntamūla, edited in Falk 1999–2000 and reedited as EIAD 55, and discussed by Visvanathan in this issue.

³³ Senart 1902–1903: 57, no. 13: *valūrakesu leṇavāsiṇaṃ pavajitānaṃ cātudisa saḡhasa yāpaṇatha*.

donation is specified as being for the material support (*yāpana-*) of the community, which, if we read this inscription in conjunction with a similar gift at Nāsik, probably refers to food. Uṣavadāta's inscription uses very few terms that pertain to law or state administration, and in particular, does not specify how exactly the village is to support the monks. This feature becomes all the more evident when we compare his inscription to a later inscription from Kārle, in which a king – presumably Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi (r. ca. 60–84 CE), who reestablished Sātavāhana control over the area – donates the village of Karañjaka to the Buddhists of the Vālūraka caves once more. In this case, the recipients are identified not as “the *saṅgha* of all four directions,” but “the order of mendicant monks, the Mahāsāṅghikas.”³⁴ As R.C.C. Fynes noted, this does not imply that the king took the village from one group of monks and gave it to another, but rather that the monks living in the Vālūraka caves in fact belonged to the Mahāsāṅghika order.³⁵ Uṣavadāta's expansive characterization of the Buddhist community was perhaps motivated by a desire to maximize the merit that would accrue from his donation, while the specification of the Mahāsāṅghika order in the later inscription seems to have been motivated by the need to attach the donation to a legal entity. This suggests that the Buddhist communities with which the Sātavāhana state interacted in practice were the “monastic orders” (*nikāyas*), each of which had their own property and state-recognized privileges.³⁶ The inscription discussed just below, however, reverts to the *saṅgha* as the recipient of the grant. The re-donation of Karañjaka is executed with a standard set of immunities (*parihāra-*), and the land is referred to as “monk's land” (*bhikhuhala-*). This language implies that a number of legal and administrative categories had been devised for executing such donations, which, in turn, suggests that they might have been relatively common.

³⁴ Senart 1902–1903: 64–71, no. 19: *etha lenesa vālūrakesa vāthavāna pavajitāna bhikhuna nikāya mahāsagh[i]yāna*.

³⁵ Fynes 1995: 49. See David Eford's contribution to this issue for an alternative view.

³⁶ This formulation may be inaccurate. Vincent Tournier tells me (p.c.): “When inscriptions mention both the *cāturdiśasaṅgha* and a given *nikāya*, it is clear that the property goes to the former, trans-local and trans-*nikāya* entity, while the possession (*parigraha*) goes to the *nikāya*.”

A set of inscriptions from Nāsik is parallel to these two inscriptions from Kārle. As noted above, Uṣavadāta donated a cave to the local Buddhist community, which he thenceforth called “my cave.” In the same inscription wherein this gift is recorded, Uṣavadāta also notes that he has given a plot of cultivated land (*kṣetram*) that will provide the food (*mukhāhāro bhavisati*) for the monks who reside in his cave (Senart 1905–1906: 78, no. 10). The inscription records some of the details of the transaction, including Uṣavadāta’s purchase of the land from a Brahmin named Assabhūti for 4,000 *kārṣāpaṇas*. We can only speculate about the purposes these details might have served, apart from underlining Uṣavadāta’s liberality. Perhaps the mention of the land’s cash value might have been intended to allow the community to sell part of it off if necessary, although grants of land are elsewhere said to be “permanent” (*akhaya*). The gift of land is accompanied by a gift of cash, recorded in another inscription from the same cave. Elsewhere in this issue, Meera Visvanathan observes that this gift is to be invested in a guild that manufactures the very product which the interest on the gifts is used to procure, namely, clothing. The same is true, broadly speaking, of this gift of productive land, although Uṣavadāta’s Nāsik inscription, similarly to his Kārle inscription, tells us nothing about how specifically the land was to provide food for the monks.

The inscription in cave no. 3 in Nāsik is the key piece of evidence for the juncture between the rule of Uṣavadāta and that of Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi. Dating from the latter’s 18th year, it describes a plot of cultivated land “previously possessed by Uṣavadāta” (*usabhadatena bhūtam*) measuring 200 *nivartanas* as “our land” (*amhakheta*), leading scholars to date Gautamīputra’s victory over Uṣavadāta in the former’s 18th year, which, on the basis of some external evidence, should correspond to 78 CE.³⁷ This plot of land – the largest referred to in any Sātavāhana-period inscription –

³⁷ See, for example, Bhandare 1999: 268. 78 CE, the beginning of the Śaka-Śālivāhana era, probably commemorates the beginning of Caṣṭana’s rule in Ujjayinī after Nahapāna’s fall, and the reestablishment of Sātavāhana suzerainty over the Deccan. See, for example, Shastri 1996 and Falk 2001: 131–133. The Nāsik inscription was probably not long after Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi’s victory, because it refers to his “victorious camp” (*vijayakhadhāvārā*). The synchronism is complicated by the fact that the date of the Kārle inscription mentioned above, which I believe to be a grant of Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi, is illegible; Mirashi (1981: 29) dates it to the latter’s eighteenth year.

was donated to the ascetics of Tekirasi, i.e., Tiraṅhu, the cave-complex at Nāsik.³⁸ We do not know whether this plot is the same as the one donated earlier by Uṣavadāta, but it at least seems possible that the vagueness of the earlier grant, as well as the uncertainty regarding the ownership and rights of the land in the wake of Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṃi's victory, might have led the community to ask the king to reaffirm an earlier donation. Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṃi, however, would later describe this grant as “my religious donation” (*amha dhamadāne*), which suggests that he himself was responsible for the grant (Senart 1905–1906: 73, no. 5). This phrase shows that the king thought of his gift as a form of support to a particular religious community, and, as we will see below, one that might have generated merit for him, regardless of his personal inclinations towards Buddhism. Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṃi's grant, in any case, is recorded with much greater legal and administrative specificity than Uṣavadāta's. Although the land is not said to be “monks' land” (*bhikhuhala*), as it was at Kārle, it is provided with a standard set of immunities.

Six years later (ca. 84 CE), another inscription was added, according to which the land granted by Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṃi did not produce the revenue it was intended to produce, because “the land is not cultivated and the village is not inhabited.”³⁹ In exchange, another plot of land was granted, this time measuring 100 *nivartanas* – that is, half of the size of the earlier plot – which is, importantly, said to be “royal land” (*rājakaṃ kheta*). This inscription gives us a particularly clear picture of the procedures by which the grant was made. It states that the order was orally communicated (*aviyena āṇata*) to the doorkeeper Loṭā, notably a woman, who thence wrote it down.⁴⁰ The order refers to the “words of King Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṃi, as well as of the queen, the king's mother, whose son is still alive,” which suggests, following D.C. Sircar, that the order actually came from Gautamī Balaśrī while her son was gripped by a serious illness.⁴¹ This order was

³⁸ Senart (1905–1906: 73) suggests very tentatively that *tekirasi* represents a Greek calque of the Sanskrit name *triraśmi*, namely, Τρίκερας.

³⁹ Senart 1905–1906: 73, no. 5: *ta ca kheta (na) kasate so ca gāmo na vasati*.

⁴⁰ Assuming that Senart (1902–1903: 69–70) is right in interpreting *chata* as “written.” See also Ray 1986: 103.

⁴¹ Senart 1905–1906: 73: *raño gotamīputasa sātakaṃisa mahādevīya ca jīvasutāya rājamaṅtuya vacanena*. This is, indeed, the latest dateable record of Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṃi,

then conveyed to Sāmaka, a minister (*amaca*) at Govardhana, through some intermediaries. Mention is made of a registration (*nibadho nibadho = nibandho nibaddhaḥ*), and an execution of the grant, by one Sujīvin, after a space of several months.

Another inscription from Kārle, this one clearly dated to the 7th year of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi's rule (ca. 91 CE), records a donation of an unnamed village (*gāmo*) to the “*saṅgha* of Vālūraka of the Vālūraka caves.”⁴² The donor was not the king, but a Mahāraṭṭhī named Vāsiṣṭhīputra Somadeva. The inscriptions specify that the village is given “together with major and minor taxes, and together with the owner's share in cash and in kind.”⁴³ Vāsiṣṭhīputra Somadeva therefore makes over to the community that portion of the revenue of the village which would have been collected by the state in taxes or by the landlord in rents. It is difficult to say whether Mahāraṭṭhīs in general were able to dispose of land on behalf of the state.

The final example of a land grant comes once again from Nāsik, where, in his 19th year (ca. 103 CE), Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi granted a village in order to pay for the ornamentation of the “Queen's Cave,” which his grandmother, Gautamī Balaśrī, had donated (Senart 1905–1906: 60–65, no. 2). This inscription, more than any other, reveals the intertwined religious, social, and political motivations of such donations. According to Senart's interpretation, the cave is itself presented as a “religious bridge” (*dhamasetusa*) that allows its donor to make the journey to the soteriologically-appropriate destination, and the king makes over the merit of his donation of the village to his deceased father (*pitupatiyo*); moreover, he is said to make the donation “out of a desire to serve and please the noble queen.”⁴⁴ Making this donation is a way for Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi to

in his twenty-fourth year. See Sircar 1965: 200; Mirashi (1981: 34, n. 35) says that “this wild conjecture is absolutely baseless.”

⁴² Senart 1902–1903: 61, no. 14: *gāmo dato valurakasaghasa valurakalenāna*.

⁴³ Senart 1902–1903: 61: *sakarukaro sadeyameyo*. The terms are not well understood; perhaps *utkara* means the same as *udraṅga* or *uparikara* in later inscriptions (see Sircar 1966 for all of these terms).

⁴⁴ Senart 1905–1906: 60: *etasa ca leṇasa citaṇanimita mahādevīya ayakāya sevakāmo piyakāmo ca ṇat pathesaro pitupatiyo dhamasetusa dadāti gāma tiraṅhupavatasā aparadakhīnapase piṣāḍipadakaṃ savajātabhoganiraṭhi*. The destination which a non-Buddhist

satisfy several of the requirements of *dharmā* at once: honoring his grandmother by supplementing her own religious gifts; honoring his father by transferring the merit of his own gift to him; supporting the community of Bhadrāyānīya monks. The Queen's Cave, however, was as much a monument to Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi and his victories as it was a religious structure, and Puḷumāvi would have had a clear political interest in associating himself, publicly and permanently, with the memorialization of his father's deeds. As for the administration of this particular grant, the inscription ends with a brief formula indicating that the king has renounced all of his privileges over the land in question.⁴⁵

This village, like the land originally donated by Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi, appears to have been defective in some way, and hence Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi issued another order, three years later (ca. 106 CE), exchanging the original village with another.⁴⁶ This grant, once again, is registered and executed with all of the formalities and immunities that we encountered in previous grants. It differs, however, in that the village is said to be “the basis of a perpetual endowment” (*akhayanivihetu*) for the cave regarding “the distribution of perquisites” (*paṭisatharaṇa*), that is, for the monks who inhabited the cave.⁴⁷

We have no further evidence of the Sātavāhana state making gifts of land to Buddhist communities after ca. 106 CE. To review the evidence once more, the earliest appearance of such grants in the Deccan coincide with Uṣavadāta's arrival, and he himself is responsible for one donation

king might have desired to reach may have been heaven, or, following the lead of Scherrer-Schaub (2007: 784–788), a form of immortality that might have made sense to both followers of the Vedic tradition and Mahāyāna Buddhists.

⁴⁵ For *savajātabhoganirāṭhi* = *sarvajātabhoganirastyā*, see Sircar 1966: 218.

⁴⁶ Senart 1905–1906: 65–71, no. 3. There is some difficulty, however, in identifying the village Sudisaṇā or Sudasaṇā, referred to here, with the previously-granted village of Piṣāṅgipadaka.

⁴⁷ Falk (2009: 203) suggests that *paṭisatharaṇa*- in line 12 refers to the “spreading out” of coins on the floor of the cave, but the donation is clearly one of land rather than cash, and the parallel expression in an inscription from Kanaganahalli has been shown by Oskar von Hinüber (2014: 32) to refer to the “covering” of the *stūpa* drum with slabs, rather than the “spreading out” of coins. See Edgerton's entry for *pratisamstaraṇa*- in his dictionary of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit ([1953] 1993): “arranging (monkish perquisites for distribution).”

at Kārle and another at Nāsik. After defeating him, Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi made similar donations himself. One, at Kārle, merely reaffirms Uṣavadāta's earlier gift, whereas the other, at Nāsik, makes a gift of land that had previously belonged to Uṣavadāta. This land, however, was uncultivated, and had to be exchanged six years later for a different plot of land that belonged to the king. Somewhat later, another grant was made by a Mahāraṭṭhi at Kārle. Finally, a grant was made by Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi at Nāsik, but this land, too, had to be exchanged for a more productive village three years after the original gift. All eight of the grants are concentrated within the span of one generation, approximately from 71 CE to 106 CE. Uṣavadāta is connected, directly or indirectly, with five of them, and Gautamī Balaśrī with three of them. In all of these cases, the land appears to have been intended to provide Buddhist communities with rents from which they could feed monks.

Table 3: Grants of land made by state actors in Sātavāhana-era inscriptions from the Western Deccan

Name and position	Approx. date	Location of record	Gift	Purpose
Uṣavadāta, Son-in-law of King Nahapāna	71–78 CE	Kārle, <i>caitya</i> cave	The village of Karañjika	Material support of the ascetics “of the four directions” living at Vālūraka
Uṣavadāta, Son-in-law of King Nahapāna	71–78 CE	Nāsik, cave 10	A field valued at 4,000 <i>kārṣāpaṇas</i>	Food for the ascetics “of the four directions” living in Uṣavadāta's cave
King Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi	78 CE	Kārle, <i>caitya</i> cave	The village of Karañjika (= Karañjika?), specified as “monk's land” and provided with a standard set of immunities	Material support of Mahāsāṅghika monks living at Vālūraka

Name and position	Approx. date	Location of record	Gift	Purpose
King Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi	78 CE	Nāsik, cave 3	A field in the village of Aparā-kakhaḍī, “previously enjoyed by Uṣavadāta,” of 200 <i>nivartanas</i> belonging to the king, provided with a standard set of immunities	For the Tekirasi ascetics
Mahārāṭṭhī Vāsiṣṭhīputra Somadeva	91 CE	Kārle, <i>caitya</i> cave	A village with its revenue	Given “to the Vālūraka caves of the Vālūraka <i>saṅgha</i> ”
King Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puṣumāvi	103 CE	Nāsik, cave 3	The village of Pisājipadaka	Given “to the <i>saṅgha</i> of monks, the <i>nikāya</i> of the Bhadrāyanīyas”
King Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puṣumāvi	106 CE	Nāsik, cave 3	The village of Sāmalipada, given in exchange for the unproductive village of Sudisaṇa (= Pisājipadaka?), provided with a standard set of immunities	Given to the Bhadrāyanīyas as a “perpetual endowment regarding the distribution of perquisites”

This evidence shows, on the one hand, that representatives of the state, extending all the way up to the king, took a personal interest in making and maintaining gifts of land to Buddhist communities. It shows, moreover, that representatives of the state tapped into a wider cultural phenomenon of religious donation and referred to their own donations in religious terms, such as *dhammadānaṃ* and *dhammasētū*. At the same time, they

brought those donations under the legal and administrative purview of the state, as evidenced by the fact that all such donations under the Sātavāhana kings involved the formal registration of land and immunities by state officials. On the other hand, the evidence indicates that, in the wake of Uṣavadāta's incursions, the Sātavāhanas experimented with various ways of rendering long-term support to Buddhist institutions, and that their experiments with land grants did not go particularly well. About half of the land grants made under the Sātavāhanas had to be modified. For each grant, the state not only had to abandon its own claim to the taxes and rents that could be collected, but also had to ensure that those revenues were sufficient to provide whatever they were intended to provide, and otherwise had to cut further into its own holdings to make good on the original donation. Thus they probably represented a significant financial and administrative burden on the state. Himanshu Prabha Ray has argued that, among the reasons why the Sātavāhana state might have granted land to monastic institutions, such institutions might have acted as agents of the state in its long-term goal of agricultural development. "Religious institutions [...] were amply suited to the consolidation and integration of agricultural settlements, on account of their ability to forge channels of communication," which "could not only be used to popularize improved methods of agriculture and cropping patterns, but also to reinforce the authority of the state" (Ray 1986: 101). Julia Shaw and John Sutcliffe, writing about water and land use at the major Buddhist center of Sāñcī, resist granting specific roles to the monastic community in the construction and management of Sāñcī's dams, but note that "the relative configuration of dams, monasteries and settlements in the Sanchi area" suggests "that the Sanchi dams were central to the development of complex exchange networks between the Buddhist *saṅgha*, local landlords and agriculturalists" (Shaw and Sutcliffe 2005: 19). Precisely what those exchange networks were in the case of the Western Deccan, and how royal patronage might or might not have affected them in the long term, is difficult to make out from the surviving inscriptional and archaeological evidence.

When we turn from the caves that were cut into the mountains of the Western Deccan to the built *stūpas*, we encounter altogether different

patterns of state support. As R.C.C. Fynes observed, there is no evidence for direct state support of the Amarāvati *stūpa*.⁴⁸ At the time his article on the “Religious Patronage of the Sātavāhana Dynasty” was published, excavations were just commencing on the Kanaganahalli *stūpa*. Now that the dust has settled, we are in a position to reflect on the evidence, or lack thereof, concerning the state’s support of two major centers of Buddhism within the Sātavāhana empire. Both the Amarāvati and Kanaganahalli *stūpas* were designated as *mahācaityas*, called *Adhālaka* and *Dhaññakaḍaka-mahācetiyo*, likely after the names of nearby urban centers.⁴⁹ Each is associated with hundreds of inscriptions. The vast majority of them record donations, often of the architectural element on which the text is inscribed. It is clear, on the one hand, that members of the royal family are never named as donors in any specific terms, and certainly not of individual architectural elements such as slabs, cross-bars, coping-stones, and so on. This may be taken as confirmation of Fynes’ observation, with respect to Amarāvati, that “not a single inscription records the gift of a member of the Sātavāhana family,” which Shimada also corroborated in his study of the site (Fynes 1995: 48).

On the other hand, one of the most sensational discoveries from the Kanaganahalli *stūpa* is a series of reliefs that, according to the accompanying labels, depict Sātavāhana kings.⁵⁰ One of them shows a king executing a donation of silver lotuses to a pair of Buddhist monks, and, in von Hinüber’s translation, the label reads, “King Sātakarṇi donates silver lotus flowers to the Great Caitya.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Fynes 1995: 48. The short *-i* is not a mistake; “Amarāvati” is the Telugu name of the town.

⁴⁹ Adhālaka is read by von Hinüber (2014) in II.1.3 (p. 42) and VI.8 (p. 115). To date there is no evidence for Adhālaka as the name of the city (which was presumably the fortified settlement to the south of the modern village of Sannati), but Dhaññakaḍaka (= Dhānyakaḍaka) is well established as the ancient name of the town of Amarāvati. For the designation *mahācaitya*, as opposed to simply *caitya*, see Skilling 2016.

⁵⁰ This is series I (1–2, 4–7 and 9) in Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014; see also Zin 2013.

⁵¹ I.7 in Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 30: *rāyā sātakarṇ(i mahāce)[t](i)yasa r[u]pāmayāni payumāni oṇ[o]yati*.



Figure 1: “King Sātakarṇi donates silver lotus flowers to the Great Caitya.”
Kanaganahalli.



Figure 2: “King Sātakarṇi donates silver lotus flowers to the Great Caitya.”
Kanaganahalli.

These slabs, according to the reconstruction that Monika Zin presents in this issue, were added above the northern *āyāga*-platform during an expansion of the *stūpa* in the first half of the second century CE.⁵² Zin argues that the four panels depicting Sātavāhana kings – Puṣumāvi and Sundara Sātakarṇi on the western side of the platform, and Sātakarṇi and Mantalaka on the eastern side – flank a central set of panels depicting Aśoka, the only other historical king represented at the site. Aśoka is not merely a famous Buddhist king. The discovery of an inscribed slab containing portions of Aśoka’s twelfth and fourteenth edicts, as well as his first and second special edicts, in the nearby Candralāmbā temple in 1989 was one of the main reasons why the Archaeological Survey of India decided to excavate at Kanaganahalli.⁵³ It is likely that that *stūpa* itself, which has undergone several phases of expansion, was begun at the time of Aśoka, in the middle of the third century BCE.⁵⁴ If so, the *stūpa* would represent the continuity of the Buddhist community from the time of the Mauryas to that of the Sātavāhanas. The reliefs above the northern *āyāga*-platform create a visual narrative of another type of continuity: state support of the Adhālaka Mahācaitya, as it was then known, over several centuries.

In the inscriptions we have surveyed, the donor is always the party responsible for recording his, her, or their donation in an inscription. The relief at Kanaganahalli, and the accompanying inscription, apparently

⁵² For the form *āyāga* (instead of the more common *āyaka*), see Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 40. The isolation of the depiction of Chimuka from the rest of the “Sātavāhana group” is an unexpected result of Zin’s reconstruction, but I have no suggestions of my own for the original position of the panel.

⁵³ See the introduction of Sarma and Varaprasada Rao 1993.

⁵⁴ This is one of the conclusions reached by Poonacha in the official excavation report (2013), although the chronology of the *stūpa* requires much more work.

represent an exception to that pattern. It appears that during one phase of construction, the drum of the *stūpa* was expanded and *āyāga*-platforms were added at the cardinal directions. The panels on the northern *āyāga*-platform were sponsored by two nuns, named Dhammarakkhitā and Bud-dharakkhitā, who were students of the same teacher.⁵⁵ Another inscription records the donation of an architectural element associated with the upper circumambulatory path is dated to Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi's 35th year (ca. 119 CE), and it seems likely to me that the covering slabs containing images of the Sātavāhana kings were added around the same time. Their purpose can only be guessed at, but it is undeniable that they served to acknowledge, or imagine, the Sātavāhana kings' support of the *stūpa*, perhaps with a view to obtaining further support from them in the future.⁵⁶ The Sātavāhana kings were not above creating representations of themselves in key locations – the early kings had a “portrait gallery” created in the Nāṇeghāṭ cave – but there is no reason to believe they did so at the Adhālaka Mahācaitya. All the same, we can only suppose that the rulers were not particularly upset to be represented in such a way.

The five reliefs depicting Sātavāhana kings are not well understood, in part because the narratives with which they are connected, to the extent that they are narrative at all, are lost to us. Nevertheless the relief that immediately concerns us is relatively straightforward: a king, identified in the label only as Sātakarṇi, formally pours out a jug of water to execute a donation of silver lotus-flowers, depicted in a repository in the lower part of the relief, to the Mahācaitya, which is represented by two Buddhist monks.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 42. Their teacher is named Santika. Dhammarakkhitā is said to belong to a place named Koruṅkāla (*koruṅālakāna*), which seems similar to a phrase in another inscription – the donation of a casing slab by Dhammasirī, which happens to be the longest of the Kanaganahalli inscriptions (Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 31) – in which the donor is said to belong “to the family of the Korus” (*koruku[la]na*). See also Quintanilla 2017: 131.

⁵⁶ Sonya Quintanilla has argued (2017) that the label inscriptions on the covering slabs were added generations after the reliefs were executed, at a time when those responsible for the labels did not necessarily know what was depicted in the relief, but there is no paleographic or interpretive reason to accept that hypothesis in this particular case.

⁵⁷ Von Hinüber (2014: 31) very convincingly reads *oṅ[o]yeti*, corresponding to Pāli *oṅojeti* “give away as a present,” which is etymologically connected to the very act of pouring out water that is represented in the relief.

Von Hinüber plausibly identified the king as Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi.⁵⁸ We may note that, in Gautamī Balaśrī’s long inscription at Nāsik, this same king was described as being “one whose fearless hands were wet from granting the water of protection.”⁵⁹ Silver lotuses are a common religious gift, not limited to Buddhists, but we will see below that they are one of the gifts that Nāgārjuna specifically recommends making to *stūpas*.⁶⁰ As von Hinüber notes, such gifts became the “property of the *caitya*,” and they could be used – presumably by cashing them out for their exchange value – to pay for the *caitya*’s maintenance (von Hinüber 2014: 31). If the relief does indeed reflect a historical event, Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi’s gift might have been partly responsible for a major renovation of the *caitya* that appears to have been completed about thirty-five years after his death. The fact that such donations are not attested by inscriptions does not mean they did not occur. Given the fact that the state had procedures in place for the registration (*nibandha-*) of large gifts to religious institutions, there would have been no need for either the donor or the recipient to document the gift in an inscription *in situ*.

To conclude this discussion of state support for Buddhist communities, we may take a leap from archaeological to literary sources, and examine a story related by Xuanzang in his *Great Tang Records of the Western Regions* (646 CE). He did not personally visit the region that he identifies as Southern Kosala, which roughly corresponds to the modern state of Chhattisgarh, but he relates a number of stories that locate Nāgārjuna, the famed Buddhist teacher with which this investigation began, in that area.⁶¹ Xuanzang states that, in the middle of the jungle, Sātavāhana (娑多婆訶) had a monastic complex excavated into a mountain called Bhramaragiri

⁵⁸ See also the brief discussion of this label in Tournier 2018: 26, n. 12.

⁵⁹ Senart 1905–1906: 60: *abhayodakadānakilinanibhayakarasa*.

⁶⁰ See *Precious Garland* 3.34, discussed below.

⁶¹ *Great Tang Records of the Western Regions*, pp. 209–217. Walser (2005: 78) considers it likely that Nāgārjuna was from either Vidarbha or Dhānyakāṭaka. I see no reason to reject Xuanzang’s account – the most specific of the various legends that circulated about the monk – according to which Nāgārjuna’s monastery was located in Southern Kosala. The state government of Chhattisgarh has evidently sought to capitalize on the association with Nāgārjuna, since it has promoted a cave called Chand Dai, near Sirpur, as “Nāgārjuna’s cave,” during a visit by the Dalai Lama in 2014.

(跋邏末羅耆釐).⁶² The complex was approached by a kind of tunnel. The description of the monastic complex matches one provided earlier by Faxian, who, however, does not associate it with Nāgārjuna (*Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, pp. 96–98). It had five stories, each with a rectilinear plan. The stories were joined by staircases at the corners. Each of the cells were provided with many windows to let in light, and there was a spring on top that flowed through channels in each of the stories. In Xuanzang's account, the structure was actually used by both Buddhists and Brahmins, the former occupying the upper stories, and the latter the bottom. It was destroyed, however, in a conflict between the two groups, and the Brahmins barricaded it up and kept its location secret to prevent the Buddhists from returning.

Xuanzang relates an interesting legend about the financing of the monastery. The project went over budget, and Sātavāhana had to admit to Nāgārjuna that, his resources being depleted, he could not finish it. The monk told him to return the next day after having roamed through the jungle. In the meantime, Nāgārjuna used his alchemical knowledge to transform a number of large rocks into pieces of gold. This turned out to provide more than enough money to finish the project. So Sātavāhana provided each of the five stories with a life-size statue of the Buddha, cast in gold and adorned with various jewels. Xuanzang also notes that total cost of the construction of the complex, according to “the old records,” was 90,000,000 gold coins.

This story clearly reflects another aspect of Nāgārjuna's legendary biography, his mastery of medicinal and alchemical techniques, which some scholars attribute to a completely different Nāgārjuna who lived in the seventh century (White 1996: 75, 164). It does, however, provide us with a picture of the state's relationship to Buddhist communities which differs in several respects from the relationship that has so far emerged from the archaeological evidence, although Xuanzang is likely to have his own

⁶² The name of the mountain was translated by Xuanzang as “black bee peak” (黑蜂). Faxian (Taishō 2085, 864b6–7) gives the name as Pārāva[ta] (波羅越) or “dove” (鳩), which Beal thinks is probably a mistake for Pārvaṭī, although it is interesting to note that a mountain named Cakora (“partridge”) was well-known enough to be included in the list of Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṛṇi's dominions at Nāsik (Senart 1905–1906: 60).

motives and interests in painting such a picture. First is the scale of the expenditure: whereas the largest gift of support in the materials surveyed above was either a cave, or a large plot of cultivated land, or a maximum of 2,000 gold coins in cash, Sātavāhana pays for the excavation of an entire monastic complex at an astoundingly large cost. Royal support on this scale, however, should not be ruled out, since Kanīṣka, ruling in the middle of the second century CE, is said to have constructed entire *stūpas*, such as the one that bore his name near Peshawar. Second is the donation of golden statues that go far beyond creating a space for the monks and meeting their basic needs of food and clothing. Yet here, too, Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puṣumāvi's land grant at Nāsik was intended to provide "decoration" (*citāṇa*) for the Queen's Cave, and as we will see shortly, the historical Nāgārjuna did in fact ask for the king to donate elaborately-decorated images of the Buddha. Finally, the beneficiary of the gift is not a community so much as a single charismatic monk. We do not, however, have any detailed information on precisely how Buddhist communities approached the state to ask for support, and in all likelihood, prominent monks and nuns cultivated donors in the state through their personal connections. For these reasons it is difficult to say whether the story is an exaggeration or a wholesale fabrication.

Regulation of religious practices

Two inscriptions recovered from the vicinity of the Kanaganahalli *stūpa* provide unique evidence for the state's regulation of religious practices. Both inscriptions are quite fragmentary, but Oskar von Hinüber has identified a number of key phrases.⁶³ Both represent royal edicts – or perhaps copies of a single edict – of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puṣumāvi (r. ca. 148–156 CE). In one case, two invocations to Skanda, as Mahāśena and Kanakaśakti, are legible before the main text of the edict. Then follows the phrase "King Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puṣumāvi orders," followed by the word *dhamāraṇṇe*, which suggests that the topic of the edict is a

⁶³ Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 20–21. One of the inscriptions was published previously by J. Varaprada Rao, who published dozens of inscriptions from the area around Kanaganahalli, mostly from memorial stones, before the excavation of the main *stūpa* there (see Sarma and Varaprada Rao 1993).

particular “religious wilderness,” a piece of uncultivated land set aside for ascetics to live in.⁶⁴ And indeed both edicts mention “ascetics” (*tāpasa-*) multiple times. Both edicts refer to “bulbs, roots, and fruits,” which are the means of subsistence for such ascetics. Just possibly, the edicts reserve the exclusive right to consume the natural produce of the “religious wilderness” to the ascetics who live there.⁶⁵ In one of them a prohibition can be read: “... or a non-ascetic is not to stay” (presumably “in the religious wilderness”).⁶⁶ The other contains a fascinating phrase that refers to something, presumably the decisions or policies presented in the inscription, as “settled” (*daḍho*) and qualified by two further adjectives, one of which ends in *-pamāno* (very likely “based on the authority of ...”), and the other of which is *vavahāranidi[th]o*, “indicated in the legal proceeding.”⁶⁷ We can therefore make out, despite the fragmentation of both inscriptions, that they represented a set of rules and restrictions concerning ascetic practice which were settled in legal proceedings and then promulgated on the authority of the king himself. A similar kind of regulation of, or at least interest in, ascetic practices on the part of the state is attested by Kālidāsa’s *Recognition of Śakuntalā*. Recall that, in the first act, Duṣyanta conceals his identity by claiming to be “someone appointed by the king to supervise religious affairs” who has “come to this religious wilderness in order to make sure that the ascetic practices are proceeding without interruption,” using precisely the same word (*dharmāraṇyam*) that is used in Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi’s edict.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ As noted by von Hinüber (2014: 21). The *dharmāraṇyam* might be considered an “outside space” in the terms of Shimada (2009).

⁶⁵ The second inscription (Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 20) says *ka[m]damulaphaḷanivār[o] ca gahetavo*, plausibly translated by von Hinüber as “a restriction concerning fruit in the form of *kanda*-roots (‘bulbs, roots, and fruits’ – AO) must be observed.”

⁶⁶ *atāpasena vā na vasitava* (Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014: 20).

⁶⁷ ...*pamāno vavahāranidi[th]o ca daḍho yo pi tāpasasa*[...], translated by von Hinüber (2014: 20) as “and the decision, which is indicated in the law suit, is firmly established. And who of/to an ascetic ...” Because the word for “authority” (*pramāṇam*) is neuter, it seems likely that *pamāno*, if it represents the same lexical element, is the final word of an exocentric compound.

⁶⁸ *Recognition of Śakuntalā*, act 1 (p. 38 in Kale’s edition): *bhavati, yaḥ pauraveṇa rājñā dharmādhikāre niyuktaḥ so ’ham avighnakriyopalambhāya dharmāraṇyam idam āyātaḥ*.

Nothing in the legible portion of either inscription specifically mentions Buddhist ascetics. The ascetics in this particular “religious wilderness” may well have been Brahmins, as in Kaṇva’s hermitage. An inscription from Beḍṣā, however, which probably dates to the first century BCE, refers to a Buddhist monk as “wilderness-dwelling” (*āraṇaka-*).⁶⁹ And the *Gift of a Lotus* by Śūdraka, a one-act play of uncertain date but probably not later than the fifth century, refers to a Buddhist monk named Saṅkhalaka who “lives in the religious wilderness.”⁷⁰ Thus either Buddhist or Brahmin ascetics might have lived in the place connected with the inscription. A circumstance, however, which makes it likely that the edicts were addressed to Buddhists, although probably not exclusively to them, is their very close proximity to the Kanaganahalli *stūpa*. I am not aware of any other “mixed-use” religious structures or establishments from the period in question. One possible example is Nāgārjuna’s monastery, which, if we believe Xuanzang’s account, was populated by both Buddhist monks and Brahmins.

We have already seen that the sculptural program of the Kanaganahalli *stūpa* literally puts the Sātavāhana kings alongside Aśoka to depict a continuous tradition of state support for the monument. Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi’s edict represents a different type of continuity with Aśoka: the issuing of edicts, on the personal authority of the king, that concerned the religious lives of the state’s subjects. In all likelihood, the edicts that Aśoka had set up at Kanaganahalli were still standing, perhaps within the *stūpa* complex, and continued to be read until the eventual destruction of the site in the middle of the third century CE. Aśoka’s use of the economic and coercive power of the state to support religious groups according to publicly announced policies set an example for all those, like the Sātavāhanas, who ruled in the monumental and textual shadows of the Mauryas.

What Buddhists expected of the state

The inscriptions discussed above allow us to reconstruct a pattern of actions undertaken by the state and its representatives. They do not, however, give

⁶⁹ See the inscription on the funerary *stūpa* of Gobhūti at Beḍṣā, donated by his student Āsāḍhamitta (Burgess and Indraji 1881: 89).

⁷⁰ *sa eṣa dharmāraṇyanivāsī saṅkhalako nāma duṣṭaśākyabhikṣuḥ* (*Gift of a Lotus*, p. 15).

us direct access to the motivations for those actions. We might suppose that donations and proclamations were issued in consequence of requests from, and perhaps negotiations with, particular groups, but we don't know what these requests were or how they might have been made.

Fortunately, a new kind of textual genre appears around the second century CE wherein a representative of the Buddhist community speaks directly to a representative of the state. This the genre of the "letter" (*lekhaḥ* or *parikathā*).⁷¹ The two earliest examples are Mātṛceṭa's *Letter to King Kaniṣka* (*Mahārājakaniṣkalekhaḥ*) and Nāgārjuna's *Precious Garland* (*Ratnāvalī*). A *Letter to a Friend* (*Suḥṛllekhaḥ*) is also ascribed to Nāgārjuna. These texts were written in Sanskrit, which may have gone without saying at a later period, but in the second century the use of Sanskrit was still limited to certain purposes within certain Buddhist communities.⁷² In all three of these texts, the "sender" is a well-known Buddhist teacher, and the "addressee" is a king.

Even before considering what these letters say, let us think about what they represent. A teacher takes it upon himself to speak, as a representative of a religious community, to the head of the state. The enormous distance between these two roles is foregrounded in the texts themselves. "It's hard enough for anyone to say what needs to be said if it is unpleasant," writes Nāgārjuna in the *Precious Garland* (4.2), "so how much more, king, is it for me, a monk, to tell it to you, a great sovereign?"⁷³ Now it may be argued that these are not "really" letters to kings, but written for Buddhist practitioners as a whole. We know, in fact, that these letters continued to be read – and indeed widely taught and memorized – by practitioners for many centuries.⁷⁴ And indeed Nāgārjuna, in his *Precious Garland*, acknowledges that the teaching is "not exclusively for the king" (5.98).⁷⁵ What, then, would the literary device of addressing a king accomplish?

⁷¹ For more information on the letter genre, see Dietz 1984 and Hahn 1992, 1998.

⁷² One recent contribution to the large literature on the "Sanskritization" of Indian Buddhism is Eltschinger 2017.

⁷³ *anyo 'pi tāvad yaḥ kaścid durvacaḥ kṣamam apriyam / kim u rāja mahābhaumas tvaṃ mayā bhikṣuṇā satā //*

⁷⁴ Yijing says that all monks at Nālandā memorized Nāgārjuna's *Letter to a Friend* (Griffiths 1999: 121).

⁷⁵ *na kevalam ayaṃ dharmo rājña evopadiśyate.*

In the first place, the king could be a metonym for other segments of society that the authors wished to instruct about the essentials of Buddhist doctrine and practice: above all, powerful people outside of the community whose good will, influence, and wealth the Buddhists wanted or needed. Secondly, the device allowed authors to address issues of broader social significance, such as criminal justice and public works, thereby giving them the opportunity to cast these issues in terms of familiar ethical concepts such as compassion and liberality.⁷⁶ In so doing, I would argue, the authors implicitly claim that the actions of other social groups are subject to evaluation under the ethical concepts provided by Buddhism, and, crucially, that the norms of the state are subsumed under broader ethical norms. It is precisely these ethical norms, collectively designated by the term *dharma*, that the new type of Buddhist public intellectual, represented by Mātr̥ceṭa and Nāgārjuna, takes it upon himself to explain. Cristina Scherrer-Schaub has noted the subsumption of a political program under ethical ideals – and indeed, under Mahāyāna ethical ideals – in her careful study of the politics of Nāgārjuna’s *Precious Garland*, and noted that “Nāgārjuna gradually enlarges the ethical program contemplated in the secular tradition” (Scherrer-Schaub 2007: 779).

We should read these texts, then, not as a form of correspondence, that is, as communication between two individuals, but as statements of a particular vision of the world that the authors had good reasons to formulate and propagate. This vision extends, in some cases quite specifically, to the role of the state. It is not primarily a utopian vision, according to which the state is administered by a Buddhist king in accordance with Buddhist principles. Rather, it was a slightly idealized version of their reality, in which the state was administered by a king who was not necessarily a Buddhist, but tolerant and beneficent towards Buddhists, and whose actions were directed by normative principles that were, once again, not specifically Buddhist, but nevertheless overlapped to a large degree with Buddhist principles.

⁷⁶ If I may be permitted a reference to popular culture, this is manifestly the case, for example, in Tupac Shakur’s “Letter to the President,” where the address to Bill Clinton is ironic. The issues of segregation, poverty, violence, and police brutality raised in the song are exacerbated by the very fact that those in high office do not listen.

Within this genre, Nāgārjuna's *Precious Garland* is the only one about which we can say, with some certainty, that it was addressed to a Sātavāhana king. Mātṛceṭa's letter is addressed to the Kuṣāṇa king Kaniṣka (ca. 127–150 CE), who ruled further to the north over a state that was, in many respects, quite different from that of the Sātavāhanas. The *Letter to a Friend* was, according to its colophon, addressed to a king named Sātavāhana (*bDe spyod*), and Yijing relates, in his discussion of the *Letter*, that Nāgārjuna's "patron" (檀越) was a king named Sātavāhana (娑多婆漢那) (Taishō 2125 227c13). Its attribution to Nāgārjuna, however, is not entirely secure.⁷⁷ Both of these texts, moreover, speak in relatively general terms about the duties of a king. By contrast, there is no reason to doubt *Precious Garland*'s attribution to Nāgārjuna, the philosopher who, as we have seen several times previously, was generally considered to be a contemporary, if not a close associate, of a Sātavāhana king. The Tibetan commentator Ajitamitra identified the addressee of the *Precious Garland* as Sātavāhana (*bDe spyod*), and the Chinese translator Paramārtha identified him as "Righteous" (正), which is likely also a translation of Sātavāhana.⁷⁸ Moreover, in the *Precious Garland*, Nāgārjuna does not merely summarize Buddhist doctrine and dispense advice, but shares detailed recommendations for precisely how his addressee should use the wealth and power of the state.⁷⁹

These recommendations occur primarily in the third and fourth chapters, which are organized around the generation of merit by the ruler, and the ways for him to ensure that his rule will be successful, respectively. There is some repetition across these chapters, as if one of Nāgārjuna's implicit lessons is that meritorious action tends to coincide with politically effective action. The first major topic he addresses in each chapter is the disposal of wealth. Nāgārjuna recommends establishing ambitious programs for social welfare, including facilities for travellers and merchants

⁷⁷ See Walleser 1924/1925: 97–98 for the convincing argument that *bDe spyod* (or *bDe byed*) represents *sad-vāhana* and thus Sātavāhana (= "one who does what is pleasurable"). This identification is followed by Dietz (1983) and Mabbett (1998). Dietz claims (p. 61) that "only general, honorific, polite formulas are used"; the addressee is called *mi mchog* in v. 58 (rendered by Wenzel as "Männerfürst").

⁷⁸ See Mabbett 1998: 343. Xuanzang (Taishō 2087 929a26–27) also translated the name Sātavāhana as "leading to righteousness" (引正).

⁷⁹ See Hopkins' translation of the *Precious Garland*, which gathers Nāgārjuna's "public policy" (Hopkins' phrase) in an introductory chapter (pp. 74–83).

(3.41–42), provisions for public health (3.45–47), agricultural aid (3.51–52), and animal care (3.49–50). I say “establishing” rather than “maintaining” because Nāgārjuna speaks of most of these programs as if they don’t already exist. Some of the suggestions, like providing food for ants (3.49), seem self-consciously utopian. Others, like providing courtesans to those who want them (3.59–60), seem like a tongue-in-cheek instantiation of his principle that poison should be administered to those whom it will help (3.63), given the long critiques of sexual desire contained within the *Garland* itself. On the topic of education, Nāgārjuna recommends making donations of Buddhist texts – not just the words of the Buddha, but also “the treatises they give rise to” (tr. Hopkins) – as well as of writing materials (3.38). Most intriguingly, given the history of land grants discussed above, Nāgārjuna asks for land to be granted to support teachers (3.39).

Nāgārjuna’s first piece of advice for generating merit, however, specifically concerns the support of Buddhist constructions projects (3.31–34, tr. Hopkins):⁸⁰

You should respectfully and extensively construct
 Images (*sku gzugs*) of Buddha, monuments (i.e., *stūpas*, *mchod rten*),
 and temples (i.e., monasteries, *gtsug lag khang*)
 And provide residences,
 Abundant riches, and so forth. (31)
 Please construct from all precious substances
 Images of Buddha with fine proportions,
 Well designed (i.e., “drawn,” *bris pa*) and sitting on lotuses,
 Adorned with all precious substances. (32)
 You should sustain with all endeavor
 The excellent doctrine and the communities
 Of monastics, and decorate monuments
 With gold and jeweled friezes. (33)

⁸⁰ The text in Hahn’s edition (transliterated into the Wylie conventions) reads: *sangs rgyas sku gzugs mchod rten dang / gtsug lag khang dag gus tshul du / shin tu rgya chen gnas mal sogs / rgya chen phyug pa bsgrub par mdzod / (31) rin chen kun las bgyis pa yi / sangs rgyas sku gzugs dbyibs mdzes shing / legs par bris pa padma la / bzhugs pa dag kyang bgyid du stsol / (32) dam chos dge slong dge ’dun dag / nan tan kun gyis bskyang bar mdzod / gser dang rin chen dra ba dag / nyid kyis chod rten rnams la thogs / (33) gser dang dngul gyi me tog dang / rdo rje byi ru mu tig dang / anda rnyil dang baiḍūrya / mthon ka chen pos mchod rten mchod / (34).*

Revere the monuments
 With gold and silver flowers,
 Diamonds, corals, pearls,
 Emeralds, cat's eye gems, and sapphires. (34)

At first sight, these verses seem to be no more than a generic wish list of what a representative of a Buddhist community might hope, in his wildest dreams, to obtain from any powerful king. In fact, they refer to a relatively specific configuration of devotional practices and architectural forms that locates his *Garland* within the temporal and geographic horizons of the Sātavāhana state. Joseph Walser ingeniously looked for the kinds of images that are mentioned in the text – namely, anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha seated on a lotus – among sculptures from Buddhist sites in the Krishna river valley, and found that such images do not appear until the end of the second and beginning of the third century CE.⁸¹ Recall, too, that Xuanzang related how there once were statues of the Buddha, cast in gold and adorned with precious stones, in the monastic complex that a Sātavāhana king gave to Nāgārjuna. And just as striking is the sculpture from Kanaganahalli, discussed above, that depicts Sātakarṇi donating silver flowers, thus performing exactly the act of reverence that is described in verse 3.34 of the *Precious Garland*.⁸²

Whereas Nāgārjuna's advice regarding the generation of merit in chapter three is not necessarily out of turn for a Buddhist monk, his

⁸¹ Walser 2005: 79–85. The evidence, however, is not as clear as we might like it to be: Walser says “only during this phase [i.e., the fourth phase of Amarāvati sculpture] is the motif of Buddha standing and sitting on lotus flowers” (p. 85), but it is not clear from his discussion whether the Buddhas are standing or sitting, and all of the examples (four in total) seem to be of standing Buddhas. Nevertheless, since Nāgārjuna gives the impression that the devotional practices he recommends are not very well established (see below for his defensiveness), we might not expect to see many examples, at least until several generations afterwards.

⁸² Perhaps worthy of mention in this connection is verse 308 of Hāla's *Seven Centuries*, which compares the flowers of the Palāśa tree, “red as the beaks of parrots,” to “masses of monks fallen in worship before the feet of the Buddha” (*kīramuhasacchahehiṃ rehaṃ vasuhā palāsakusumehiṃ / buddhassa calaṇavandaṇapaḍiēhi va bhikkhusaṅghehiṃ //*). The verse has often been taken to mean that anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha were present in the western Deccan at the time of the composition of *Seven Centuries* (see, e.g., Chapekar 1981–1984), but it seems more likely that the footprints of the Buddha are meant here.

recommendations for state policy contained in chapter four might raise suspicion. He justifies his condescension to the king by his personal affection for him, as well as his compassion for the world, which would presumably be affected by the king's policies, and claims that, perhaps due to their friendship and his role as a spiritual preceptor, he is in a unique position to offer the kind of advice that is beneficial but unpleasant (4.3).⁸³ He begins by exhorting the king to create "a glorious basis for *dharma*, a renowned basis for the three jewels, which weak kings cannot even come close to in their wildest dreams" (4.10).⁸⁴ The "basis for *dharma*" seems to refer to the societal conditions under which the Buddhist *dharma*, and by extension Buddhist communities, will thrive. This is the most important function of the state according to Nāgārjuna, and he explains at length why it is in fact prudent for the king to use the entirety of his wealth (*sarvasva-*) to create such a "basis for *dharma*." It is *dharma*, rather than fame or the satisfaction of desire, that is both the only legitimate purpose of kingship and the only purpose that guarantees success (4.27).⁸⁵ Yet despite apparently disavowing fame, he appeals repeatedly to the renown that support for the *dharma* will generate. He likely understood that distinguishing oneself from other rulers, both in the past in the present, was one of the king's principal concerns. "It would be better, king, to have never attempted to create a basis for *dharma* in the first place, than to create one which doesn't raise the hair of neighboring kings, since you will not be commended for it after your death" (4.11).⁸⁶ The possibility of making such comparisons across time is afforded by the particular conception of time that Cristine Scherrer-Schaub has identified in the *Precious Garland*, one that is linear and continuous and extends infinitely into the future (Scherrer-Schaub 2007: 764). This is a kind of temporality we can see in epigraphical practices, where inscriptions were

⁸³ *tvaktṛtād eva tu snehāj jagatām anukampayā | aham eko vadāmi tvām pathyam api apriyaṃ bhṛṣam ||*

⁸⁴ *manorathair api klībair anālīḍhaṃ narādhipaiḥ | kuru dharmāspadaṃ śrīmat khyātaṃ ratnatrayāspadam ||* The usage of *ālīḍha-* here is similar to that of *ālīddha-* in Prakrit ("touched").

⁸⁵ *dharmārthaṃ yadi te rājyaṃ na kīrtyarthaṃ na kāmataḥ | tataḥ saphalam atyarthaṃ anarthārthaṃ ato 'nyathā ||*

⁸⁶ *sāmantarājaroṃāṅcakaraṃ dharmāspadaṃ na yat | mṛtasyāpy apraśasyatvād rājyaṃ tad akṛtaṃ varam ||*

added to surfaces as the generations and centuries rolled by, as well as in the novel use of continuous eras, rather than regnal years, for reckoning time.

The “basis for *dharmā*” is sometimes explained in specifically Buddhist terms, such as the three jewels, but what is striking about the discussion of state policy in this chapter is how generic it actually is. The *dharmā* towards which all policy should be oriented is thus not the Buddhist *dharmā*, but a more universal set of ethical norms to which non-Buddhists would in principle assent. We must recall at this point that there is no evidence for any of the Sātavāhana kings having been practicing Buddhists. Nāgārjuna presumes, or perhaps implies, that what he means by *dharmā*, and what the king means by *dharmā*, essentially agree in their content, at least as far as its implications for state policy are concerned. As an example, Nāgārjuna counsels “showing appropriate kinds of favor to religious people (*dhārmika-*), even when they don’t ask for it first, and even if they belong to other kingdoms” (4.21).⁸⁷ He does not explicitly limit such favors to members of one or another religious community. In fact, the extremely broad semantic range of *dharmā* raises certain interpretive problems. The word *dharmādhikāra-*, which is used twice, could refer to what we would call religious or legal entitlements, although perhaps no hard-and-fast distinction between the two can be drawn. In the first instance, Nāgārjuna asks the king to maintain “the other *dharmādhikāras* that earlier kings had initiated” (4.18).⁸⁸ The fact that he cites tax-free land given to temples (*devadronī-*) tells us that religious privileges are intended here. It also tells us that those privileges extend beyond Buddhist communities. In this connection, it is worth noting that the *Letter to a Friend* recommends donating one’s wealth to both monks and Brahmins.⁸⁹ In the second instance, Nāgārjuna advises the king on making appointments to state office, including the administration (*saciva-*) and the judiciary (*daṇḍanāyaka-*). The first

⁸⁷ *anarthinām api satām dhārmikāṇām anugrahān | apy anyarājyasamsthānām anurūpān pravartaya ||*

⁸⁸ *dharmādhikāra ye cānye pūrvarājapravartitāḥ | devadronīyādayas te 'pi pravartyantām yathā sthitāḥ ||* For *devadronī* see Sircar 1966: 88.

⁸⁹ “Possessions are ephemeral and essenceless – know this and give them generously to monks, to brahmins, to the poor, and to your friends: beyond there is no greater friend than gift” (v. 6, translation by The Padmakara Translation Group, 2005).

office mentioned (4.22) is the *dharmādhikṛta*-, which could either refer to a judge, or an officer in charge of religious affairs, as in the passage from Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* quoted above. The context of the verse, as well as the subsequent mention of an official, simply called *adhikṛta*-, who more closely matches the profile of a judge, makes it likely that Nāgārjuna is indeed speaking of an "officer of religious affairs."⁹⁰

Nāgārjuna's attempt to find "common ground" in the domain of general ethical principles resonates with his selective deployment of a very limited kind of liberalism in the *Precious Garland*. As a general policy, the state should work to promote the interests of religious groups. But when it becomes impossible to promote the interest of one group without harming another, Nāgārjuna advises "abstention" (*upekṣā*). In some cases, abstention is required by intellectual modesty, when the issue under debate is genuinely difficult to understand. In any case, however, abstention is ethically neutral, whereas acting out of "hatred" (*dveṣaḥ*) for a group is not (4.88–89). This discussion occurs after a relatively long defense of the validity of the Mahāyāna teachings and their reconciliation with certain aspects Śrāvakayāna teachings. Nāgārjuna's defensiveness accords with what we know about the religious landscape of the Sātavāhana realms, where archaeological and epigraphic evidence for Mahāyāna ideas and practices is essentially nonexistent.⁹¹ Gregory Schopen has interpreted Nāgārjuna's defensiveness to mean that "it was widely known by its intended audience [...] that the Mahāyāna was not taken seriously and was in general an object of scorn" (Schopen [2000] 2005: 9). At a time when more powerful Buddhist communities were likely criticizing Nāgārjuna's community for its alleged departures from what the Buddha actually taught, Nāgārjuna went out of his way to explain, in a chapter devoted to "advice for the conduct of kings" (*rājavṛttopadeśaḥ*), that the teachings

⁹⁰ *sarvadharmādhikāreṣu dharmādhikṛtam utthitam | alubdhañ pañḍitañ dharmyañ kuru teṣāṃ abādhakam ||*, where *teṣāṃ* appears to refer to the "religious people" (*dhārmikāṇāṃ*) mentioned in the previous verse. Scherrer-Schaub (2007: 776, n. 63) also mentions the scene in *Śakuntalā*, and claims "the office of the inspector in religious affairs and that of the judge were closely related, rather than representing two completely independent offices."

⁹¹ See Tournier 2018: 27: "The absence of echoes of these scriptures in the rich archaeological record available [...] at least suggests that its relevance in the public sphere was, as far as we can ascertain, limited at least until the 4th century."

of those different communities were mutually compatible and that the state should not privilege one over the other.

The limitations of Nāgārjuna's "liberalism" are evident when he tells the king not to "respect, revere or do homage to others, the Forders" (3.27, tr. Hopkins). We may or may not be surprised that Nāgārjuna would, in effect, ask for the king to withdraw his support for his hereditary religion. But a lot hangs on Nāgārjuna's choice of words here. Elsewhere (1.61), Nāgārjuna identifies some of his philosophical opponents as Jains and followers of the Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika schools. Here, the "others" are identified only as "Forders" (*tīrthika-*), a term that Buddhists used for non-Buddhists. But consider his rejection (1.60) of the label "denialist" (*nāstika-*): this is a word that was used by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, and its referent changed depending on what the person in question was said to deny (see Nicholson 2010: 168–172). In the same way, "Forders" might have been a studiously vague expression, referring simply to someone who has incorrect religious views. By contrast, he does not refer to Brahmins, sacrifice, or any aspect of Vedic tradition in the *Precious Garland*.

Conclusion

In his important study of the Sātavāhanas' religious patronage, Fynes suggested that there was a functional differentiation between rulers' support for Brahmins and their support for Buddhists: the public functions of the king depended on Brahmins, whereas he was free to seek the advice and support of Buddhists in his own private efforts towards liberation (Fynes 1995: 47). Both the nature of the state's support for Brahmins, as well as the political and social implications thereof, remain quite obscure. It should be said that Vedic tradition did provide a certain kind of sanction and legitimacy to the king, since we know that Śrī Sātakarṇi, in the early first century CE, performed Vedic kingship rituals such as the *aśvamedha* and *rājasūya*. In fact, however, there was nothing "private" about either the king's support of Buddhist communities, or the claims and requests that Buddhist intellectuals made of the king. As Shimada has noted, monastic complexes in the Sātavāhana world are "outside" of major cities in a largely symbolic sense, as they were often just outside the main

fortification walls (Shimada 2009). Buddhist structures were a major and conspicuous presence in almost all of the major Sātavāhana towns: Pauni, Sannati, Dharanikota, Nasik, Kalyan, and so on. Patronage of these structures and the communities that used them, to the extent that it was recorded in and on the structures themselves, was a public act, and it permitted the dissemination of discursive and visual representations of the Sātavāhana rulers. Thus, while Buddhism was clearly not a state religion under the Sātavāhanas, it could be characterized as a public religion: precisely because it was not the religion of the state, it took on some of the roles that are associated with civil society. Monasteries were perhaps the only institutions in which networks of religious practice, agriculture, and commerce crossed, apart from the state itself. The cultural and intellectual roles played by Buddhist communities are especially important. Through their monuments and teaching, especially that of the new kind of intellectual represented by Nāgārjuna, these communities could formulate and propagate ideas about the social and political fabric into which they were woven. Their ability, in principle, to organize this kind of cultural hegemony might have been one of the main reasons why rulers, even those who might have been personally hostile to Buddhism, supported them.

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ABSTRACT

Among the most important institutions in the Deccan between the 1st c. BCE and the early 3rd c. CE, and certainly the most visible in the archaeological and epigraphic record, was the kingdom of the Sātavāhanas and the community of Buddhist monks. The relationship between the state and the Buddhist community was represented in legends by the friendship between the king Sātakaṃi and the monk Nāgārjuna. If we assess the material and literary evidence carefully, we see that these institutions remained independent from each other: there is no evidence that members of the Sātavāhana royal family were themselves Buddhist, and no evidence that monks took on official roles in the Sātavāhana state. At the same time, they were closely interlinked, and each used the other to promote a certain vision of society and their respective roles within it. Their relations with each other, although not constant over the course of three and a half centuries, were mediated by relatively stable economic, administrative, juridical, and cultural forms.