Pedestal from Trà Kiệu (C. 137), 7th c. CE

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Edition

〈1〉 <siddham>

1. Āryāgīti

śaktiḥ parasya na ripuṁ kṣapayati gamitāpi daṇḍabhedabhayena
〈2〉 [ya]sya tv adaṇḍabhedā sakalam arim abhīr bhinatti śaktibhṛta iva ||

2. Āryāgīti

〈3〉 sa śrīprakāśadharmmā nṛpatiḥ kandarppadharmmaṇo dharaṇibhujaḥ
〈4〉 s[v]apitāmahīpitur idaṁ sthāpitavān arcanāya pādukayugalam· ||

Apparatus

〈4〉 s[v]apitāmahīpitur ◇ *prapitāmahīpitur* LF • Although Huber (who used the same estampage as we do) marked no uncertainty of reading, no trace is visible of the subscript *r* under the consonant that he reads as *p*. This consonant must, however,

quite certainly be read as *s*, for it shows the distinctive diagonal bridge between the two verticals. Although damage to the stone just below the *s* has removed every trace of a subscript consonant, the only contextually permissible reading seems to us to be *sva°*, so we have restored the now invisible subscript *v* in place of *r*. — 〈4〉 pāduka- ◇ *haṭaka-* LF.

Translation by Goodall & Griffiths 2013

1.

The power (*śakti*) of 〈his〉 rival destroys no enemy, even when it is brought near by the fear of (political manoeuvres such as) punishment or sowing of dissension. — But the one whose dauntless 〈spear (*śakti*)〉, like that of the spear-wielder 〈Skanda himself〉, destroys every enemy without its shaft ever breaking (*adaṇḍabhedā*), — But the one whose 〈mere〉 gesture of protection (*abhī*), without need of resorting to 〈the political manoeuvres of〉 punishment or the sowing of dissension, has brought low every enemy, as though he were in fact holding a spear (*śaktibhṛta iva*), — But the one who is like Skanda and for whom 〈the power (*śakti*) of Śiva, in initiation (cf. the term *śaktipāta*)〉, arousing no fear and resorting to neither punishment nor sowing of dissension, has broken every 〈internal〉 enemy,

2.

namely the king Śrī Prakāśadharman, has installed this pair of footprints in order to praise king Kandarpadharman, the father of his paternal great-grandmother.

Commentary

We assume three levels of punning (*śleṣa*) in the first stanza. The first two play on the possibility of taking *śaktibhṛt* either literally, or as epithet of the war-god Skanda; on the possibility of interpreting *abhī* in two different ways; and on the different possibilities of analyzing the compound *adaṇḍabhedā*. The third sense may be less obvious to most readers. But Dominic Goodall (2004, pp. p. xix, n. 17) has discussed Śaiva punning on the words *śakti* (spear or power, of king, Skanda or Śiva) and *ari* (enemies, worldly or internal) in a late-7th-century inscription of Pallava king Narasiṁha II. He has there provided textual references in support of taking *arivarga* 'group of enemies' as denoting the human senses or passions (a theme also alluded to in C. 173), and referred to a passage illustrating the (descent of) divine power (*śaktipāta*) as crucial element in Śaiva tantric initiation.

In further support of the assumption of this third sense, he has shared with us his interpretation of a stanza in a somewhat later inscription. This is K. 528 (Eastern Mebon, 953 CE, edited in Finot 1925), stanza XX, about King Rājendravarman, and it comprises three crucial elements that we also see in ours:

> āsādya **śaktiṁ** vivudhopanītāṁ māheśvarīṁ jñānamayīm amoghām
> **kumāra**bhāve vijit**āri**varggo yo dīpayām āsa mahendralakṣmīm ||
>
> After attaining the Power (or: weapon) of Maheśvara (Śiva) that consists in Knowledge, that is never failing (viz. after attaining initiation) [and that has been] transmitted by the gods, being in youth (or: as crown-prince, or: as Kumāra, i.e. Skanda) one whose enemies (or: passions) were conquered, he caused the glory of Mahendravarman to shine.

Mahendra is both the name of King Rājendravarman's father, Mahendravarman, and a name of the god Indra, whose enemies Skanda destroyed. So there must here be a reference to Skanda getting hold of (*āsādya*) his famous weapon, called Śakti (though not always clearly a spear), and destroying Indra's enemies (which was the reason for his birth being plotted by Indra in the first place). Most words can be accounted for in that layer of meaning, but the words *māheśvarīṁ jñānamayīm* defy multivalent interpretation, and *vibudhopanītāṁ* suggests that he gained his famous weapon from the gods. There is almost certainly a myth that recounts such a handover, but we have not been able to find it. What we do find is that Viśvakarman is said to have fashioned Guha's Śakti using bits of radiance of the sun (in *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 3.2.12), and that certainly suggests that some god must then have handed it to him. What is plain is that in one level of meaning the verse refers to Rājendravarman, like Prakāśadharman, having received Śiva's salvific grace (*śakti*), in other words tantric initiation.

Our new reading *s[v]apitāmahīpitur* makes Kandarpadharman the father of Prakāśadharman's paternal grandmother (rather than the father of his paternal great-grandmother).

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