

DEDICATION

शाहान्वयसमुद्भूतः प्रेमानन्दात्मजः सुश्रीः
उमाकान्ताभिधो विद्वान्पूर्वापरकृतश्रमः ।
जैनमूर्तिविधानज्ञः कलामर्मपरीक्षकः
जयत्यतितरां श्रीमान् दिवौकाः विश्वविश्रुतः ॥

He, of refined intellect, erudite, born in the Shah family, son of Premananda, namely, Umakanta, proficient in both Oriental and Occidental learning, expert in Jaina Iconography and Art-History, opulent, abiding in the heavenly world with his renown spread the world over, excels.

शिल्पसंवित्

CONSCIOUSNESS MANIFEST

**Studies in Jaina Art and Iconography
and Allied Subjects in Honour of Dr. U.P. Shah**

**Chief Editor
Dr. R.T. Vyas**



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4. For sentence-initial *bhū*, compare also examples like भवेद् द्रव्येष्वेतदेवं स्यात् । (Bh. on 1.1.23 [I.82.7]).
5. Cf. 2.2.24 vtts. 21-22 with Bhāṣya (I.425.7-13): सुबधिकारेऽस्तिक्षीरादिवचनम् ।।२१।। सुबधिकारेऽस्तिक्षीरादीनामुपसङ्ख्यानं कर्तव्यम् । अस्तिक्षीरा ब्राह्मणी । तत्तर्हि वक्तव्यम् । न वाव्ययत्वात् ।।२२।। न वा वक्तव्यम् । किं कारणम् । अव्ययत्वात् । अव्ययमेषोऽस्तिशब्दः नैषास्तेर्लट् । कथमव्ययत्वम् । उपसर्गविभक्तिस्वरप्रतिरूपकाश्च निपातसंज्ञा भवन्तीति निपातसंज्ञा निपातोऽव्ययमित्यव्ययसंज्ञा ।
6. Cf. Bhāṣya I.256.27-28 (on 1.3.1): का तर्हीयं वाचोयुक्तिः भवति पचति भवति पश्यति भवत्यपाक्षीदिति । एषैषा वाचोयुक्तिः । पचादयः क्रिया भवतिक्रियायाः कर्त्र्यो भवन्तीति ।
7. Uddyota (Rohatak edition) I.192: तत्र वृत्तिक्रियास्तिक्रियायाः कर्त्री । शालासमुदायादी ग्रामशब्दस्य वृत्तिरस्तीत्यर्थः । Cf. The note on a comparable Bhāṣya passage (Bh. 1.1.21) in the Nirṇayasāgara Press edition (I.276n.5): ...शालासमुदाय वृत्तिरस्तीत्येवेत्यन्वयः । एवञ्च अस्तिक्रियाया वर्तनक्रिया कर्त्री...पचति भवतीतिवत् प्रयोगः ।
8. *karote*, *Shahbazgarhi*, *Mansehra karoti*, *Kalsi*, *Dhauri kaleti* ('does, carries out') construed with the nominative singular *jano*, *jane*.
9. For example, Bloch, J., *Les inscriptions d'Asoka* (Paris, 1950), who remarks (p. 91 n. 12), 'Noter l'emploi avec sujet au pluriel.'
10. Just how this usage relates to the common fronting of *asti* and other verb forms and to the use of *asti* as an invariable particle I leave for subsequent discussion.

RĀMĀYAṆA AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

SHELDON POLLOCK

I. Introduction

There is a long history to the relationship between *Rāmāyaṇa* and political symbology. From its very origins the theme seems to have supplied, continuously and readily, if in a highly differentiated way, a cognitive instrumentarium—an *imaginary*—for articulating a wide range of political discourses. Indeed, no other text in South Asia has ever supplied ideological resources remotely comparable in their effectivity. This is a history, however, that remains largely, and surprisingly, unwritten.

About the earlier course of the political life of the *Rāmāyaṇa* theme (especially its "genetic history", in contrast to its "receptive history") we know little at present, in part because our sources are so few, but also because what sources we do have remain underthematized. Just as little thought has been given to the political life of the text in the following 1000-year period from the putative origins of the Sanskrit version to the flowering of the "vernacular" language treatments of the tale (Kamban, Kṛttivāsa, Tulsī Das, etc.) and the specific historical location of this "vernacular" language production. We know, for example, that a large number of dramas and other forms of narrative based on the Rāma theme in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and regional languages were commissioned by, performed before, or indeed composed by kings—from the court of the Vākātaka king Pravarasena in the fifth century (the *Setubandha*) or Yaśovarman in Kanauj in the seventh (the *Rāmābhyudaya*) to that of Śivājī in the 17th (the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Rāmadāsa)—but of the social and political ontologies of these texts we understand to date little beyond the facts that seem to occupy a dominant position in elite forms of cultural activity.¹

The vast gaps in our present knowledge about the political life of the *Rāmāyaṇa* theme make it risky to claim that this life was ever marked by a sudden and utterly discontinuous reevaluation. Yet it can be argued that at a particular historical juncture the *Rāmāyaṇa* imaginary was introduced more centrally and dramatically onto the stage of a public, as opposed to simply literary, discourse than it ever had been before, while at the same time the social and political valences of its thematics were established more univocally than ever before. If we trace the trajectory of the historical effectivity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* mytheme—by the measure of its penetration of the realms of public discourse—through following its workings in the cultural materials of "post-epic" India, in temple remains, for instance, or inscriptions, or even those historical narratives that are available, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the *Rāmāyaṇa*—the specific narrative of this tale—achieved actual, demonstrable significance in the political imagination of India under very particular historical circumstances.

Unquestionably the ideology of the epic had already intersected with, reprocessed or suggested, the ideology of the early Indian imperial polity, especially that of Aśoka, as I myself have tried to argue out elsewhere.² But it is extraordinary to find that whereas the *literary* imagination of India had received undiminishing stimulation from the Rāma legend for a thousand years, from the early fourth century (if not earlier) onward—from Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Kumāradāsa (another prince), to Bhavabhūti, Bhaṭṭi, Murāri, Rājaśekhara, the list seems endless—the *political* imaginary apparently did not; it may have been inflected, embellished, ennobled by the Rāma theme but it was never before constituted by it until the end of this millennium; until that period, however much the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative may have supplied a standard, a paradigm, a typology of and argument for royal sovereignty and indeed, divinity, the tale was never before relived—kings never before actually became Rāma.³

II. Rāma and Temple Cult

The cult of Rāma, its role in the ideology of kingship, and the expression of this doctrine in temple worship have not, I am surprised to discover, been traced in any historical detail. What I present here, consequently, will no doubt bear supplementation, but I think it's unlikely that my main conclusion will be seriously affected—namely, there appears to be an almost total absence of Rāma from temple worship in South Asia until at the earliest the eleventh, or more likely the twelfth century, and this worship seems to develop almost *pari passu* with a set of particular historical events.

It is many years since R.G. Bhandarkar first made this point, that while the divinity of Rāma was known from quite early on, the temple cult of Rāma was very slow to develop.⁴ Yet just how limited this development is prior to the twelfth century, and what is more significant, the conditions under which it was initiated after that date, have hardly been explored.

Early evidence for any cultic practice devoted to Rāma is sparse in the extreme. There is inscriptional testimony for Skandagupta's founding of a Śāringadhārin temple and were this in Ayodhyā it might suggest a royal cult of Rāma in the late fifth century, but I see little reason to believe that it was, despite what appears to have been the relocation of the Gupta court to Ayodhyā and the symbolic effects to be achieved by this relocation.⁵ This dubious instance aside, prior to the twelfth century the only evidence that Rāma may have been the object of a cult is offered by the well-known fifth century charter issued by the Vākāṭaka queen Prabhāvatigupta from "*Rāmagirīsvāmīpādamūlāt* (recalling Kālidāsa's *raghupatipāda*, *Meghadūta* 9). But even if this is unproblematically accepted as a Rāma shrine (and there are problems, see below), this remains a single instance, in a very limited geographical area (around "Nandivardhana" in northern Maharashtra) and a brief historical episode (ca. 400-65).⁶ From that point on for the next 700 years we hear nothing anywhere of Rāma sanctuaries.

This is of course not to say that we do not encounter scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and occasional sculptural representations of Rāma throughout this period. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, reliefs bearing *Rāmāyaṇa* themes are found in the rock-cut caves at Undavalli (10 kms from Vijayawada in coastal Andhra) that may reach back to Viṣṇukuṇḍin times (4th-5th cent. AD).⁷ Yet no epigraphical testimony attesting to any temple explicitly dedicated to Rāma is found in Andhra until far later. Throughout the Deccan, the same situation presents itself. From the seventh century on, substantial interest in the *Rāmāyaṇa* tale is attested, beginning with the Cālukya dominion from the seventh century—most substantially at the Virūpākṣa and Pāpanāth temples at Pattadakal, which are among the first to attempt any kind of systematic narration (the Pāpanāth depiction is even

provided with identifying labels in Prakrit)—to the monument that represents the apex of artistry in this style, the great frieze on the *vimāna* of the Kailāsanātha temple at Ellora (AD 757-72).⁸ (It is from around this period on that individual scenes begin to appear also in the east and south of the subcontinent—in the Paraśurāma Temple at Bhubaneswar, late 7th cen.; the 8th cen. Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñci, and Olakkaneśvara temple at Mahabalipuram).⁹ All of these temples are Śaiva, a good number of the scenes selected for representation seem to be Śaiva in character (Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa and the like), and in any case there is nothing anywhere here to indicate dedication to or cultic significance of Rāma.

In the north, so far as I can tell, the situation is no different; again we find *Rāmāyaṇa* representations from an early period, but nothing to suggest a Rāma cult. For example, in a recently discovered Viṣṇu Temple at Aphṣaḍ (18 miles northeast of Nawadah in the Nawadah District, Bihar), which was apparently erected by the Gupta king Ādityasena in the seventh century, at least eight *Rāmāyaṇa* panels are available.¹⁰ But in view of the fact that a large Varāha image was also found here, it is more than likely that this was a standard Viṣṇu temple with *daśavatāra* motifs, like the well-known earlier Gupta monument at Deogarh (ca. AD 500). The same, finally, is the case in Western India. For instance, throughout the vast Gurjara-Pratihāra empire (ca. 800-1000), which at its height extended out from Rajasthan beyond Kanauj in the east and south to the Vindhya, there are no Rāma temples to be found (an absence paralleled in their inscriptional record, see below).

By the mid-twelfth century, however, the situation begins to change, with a sudden onset of activity of building new or rededicating old temples to Rāma, which would intensify over the next 200 years.

Among the early examples of Rāma temples are two built (or rebuilt) under the Kalachuris of Ratnapur (Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh), a first one at Rājim in AD 1145 by a minister of King Pṛthivīdeva II, and a second (in Rewa near Makundpur) in 1193, by a feudatory of Vijayasimha of the later Kalachuri dynasty ruling at Tripuri. The first bears an inscription that, though obscure in places, helps us begin to situate the politics of the Rāma cult as it develops in this period: "Through fear of [this King Jagapāla], the formidable foes—the Māyūrikas and the valiant Sāvantas—the lords of *maṇḍalas*, completely submitted to him. Just as the *kṣatriya* Rāma, (best of) warriors, destroyed the families [sc., of the demons] [or: families of bowmen], even so did this [King Jagapāla] kill the forces of his enemies with multitudes of arrows (vs. 9-10)...Reciting all [works] such as the *Rāmāyaṇa*, [being] the support of living beings, self-respecting, conferring gifts on Brāhman families for their learning—such is Jagapāla. He has caused this beautiful temple to be constructed for manifesting the splendour of Rāma" (vs. 21-22).¹¹ Though the identification of the enemy is unclear here, what is important to register is the explicit comparison of the king with Rāma and the establishment of a cult to celebrate this homomorphism.

It is around this same time—between the mid-11th and the end of the 12th—that the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty begins to develop Ayodhyā as a major Vaiṣṇava centre by way of a substantial temple building program. Unfortunately the inscriptional record here is not what one would hope for, but it is almost certain that Rāma temples were constructed at the Svargadvāra ghat probably built by Candradeva and one, possibly a *rāmājanmāsthāna* temple (of recent notoriety), built by the last Gāhaḍavāla king Jayacandra.¹²

At the end of the thirteenth, and the beginning of the fourteenth century, several major cultic centres devoted to Rāma are created or re-invigorated. I'll only look at two of these, rather different in character the one from the other, the Rāma complex at Rāmtēk (Rāmatekdi, "Rāma's Hill", 28 miles northeast of Nagpur), and that at Vijayanagar.

According to "local legend" recorded by Cousens, Rāmtek is the place where Rāma slew Śambūka. "Afterwards one Hemādpant (some say a Rākṣasa, and others a Brāhman) built the following five temples on the Rāmtek hill: one dedicated to Rāma, and containing images of Rāma and Sītā; one dedicated to Lakṣmaṇasvāmī; one to Hanumān; one temple dedicated to the goddess 'Ekādaśī'; and a temple of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa..." (what is known as a *pañcāyatana* complex).¹³ The site has recently been studied in much greater detail by Jamkhedkar and by Bakker.¹⁴ There are perhaps as many as five structures dating from Vākāṭaka times on Rāmtek, and a Chalukyan era temple, in addition to the several Yādava structures. None of these Vākāṭaka temples, though Vaiṣṇava, give any evidence, iconographic or inscriptional, of dedication to Rāma (they instead are dedicated to Narasiṃha, Varāha, Bhagavān); those associated with Rāma are of the Hemādpant style, and there is little reason to believe these replace any earlier Rāma structures.¹⁵

Since Cousens's time, an undated inscription, unfortunately in sorry state of decomposition, found on the *garbhagrha* of the Lakṣmaṇasvāmī temple has been published (*EI*, 25, pp. 7ff).¹⁶ The identity of the ruling house hinted at by the mention of *yādavo vaṃśaḥ*, and further on, of the name *siṃhana*, is made clear in line 17, where we read, "King Śrī Rāmacandra, who made (the subordinate official in question) the repository of a royalty brilliant with the prosperity of empire." The record thus refers to the Yādava king of Devagiri, Rāmacandra (great-grandson of Siṃhana), who ascended the throne ca. AD 1271. Of him it is elsewhere said, "How is this Rāma to be described...who freed Vārānasi from the *mleccha* horde, and built there a golden temple of Śārṅgadhara."¹⁷ Although he is said to be a *mahāmāheśvara* or "great devotee of Śiva", who "anoints eight icons of Śambhu with the milk of his fame", he is also called *rāyanārāyaṇa*, "a very Nārāyaṇa among kings", while his minister is described as a descendant of Vasiṣṭha.¹⁸

Now, while there is no contemporary archaeological evidence, the textual evidence cited above—Rāmtek and Rāmagiri (of the Vākāṭaka grant) being identical—could suggest that Rāmtek was a site of Rāma worship prior to the time of this grant. What is in any case clear from this large and complex *praśasti* is that King Rāmacandra empowered his viceroy to embellish the Rāma cult there substantially. And the fact that some major investment (or re-investment) in the site took place near the end of the Yādava dynasty is a historical conjuncture that we shall see is anything but coincidental.

I will come back to this Yādava king in due course, but before leaving the question of the Rāmtek centre, I want to tie up the loose end in Cousens's report of the figure named Hemādpant. There is no doubt that this name—associated with other temple projects dating from the Yādava period¹⁹—refers to the illustrious Hemādri Pandit, the *mantrin* of the Yādava king Rāmacandra and his father. It is to him (in his encyclopedia of *dharma* that I discuss below) that we owe one of the earliest texts extant for ritual prescriptions relating to Rāma, which provides liturgical instructions for worshipping Rāma as an incarnation, and describes a ceremony connected with his birth, the *Rāghavadvādaśivrata*. Hemādri also reproduces part of the *Agastyasaṃhitā*, the first text to treat of the most important festival associated with Rāma (the Rāmanavamī), a text that itself cannot be dated before the twelfth century.²⁰

I will explore below the specific historical conjuncture that makes coincidence an improbable explanation for the institution of the Rāma cult in late Yādava times. Let me just suggest for now that the same conjuncture will obtain also in what seems to be the earliest evidence for the worship of this god in Andhra Pradesh. This is in the Kākatīya period in a record dated śaka 1245 (= A D 1323) from Guntur district which states that "the inhabitants...agreed to give to the temple of Varada Gopinātha and Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa a portion of their incomes for the merit of Pratāpa Rudradeva."²¹

The apogee of the growth of a royal cult of Rāma suggested by the foregoing material

is reached in the middle (or end) of the fourteenth century with the founding of the Vijayanagar empire. Here a temple devoted to Rāma is incorporated into the very structure of the imperial city; it becomes the central focus of spatially articulated political theology, occupying the centre of the royal quarter of Vijayanagar.²² First noticed by Longhurst, this feature of the city has recently been theorized by John Fritz:

Urban form...established the homology of the king and the divine hero-king Rāma...King and god were the focus of the city....(The) urban elements assert the congruence of the terrestrial realm of the king with the realm of the god....The king was empowered by the god...the king's actions were a manifestation of Rama's and he participated in the sanctity of the deity. (He cites an inscription of AD 1379: "In that same city (Vijayanagar) did (King) Harihara dwell as in former times Rāma dwelled in the city of Ayodhyā.") These relations were conveyed by urban structure, by movement in the city, and by the mythological associations of the site.²³

And of course in the Vijayanagar/Nāyaka period separate temples whose main deity is Rāma become common, and include such notable examples as the Rāmasvāmī temple at Kumbhakonam and the Varadarāja temple at Kāñcī.

What may constitute the sole, and still a minor, exception to a twelfth century date for the origin of the temple cult of Rāma is the early Coḷa realm. Nagasvamy refers to several Coḷa bronzes of Kodaṇḍa Rāma, but these seem to have been highly restricted in both time and place—to early tenth century Thanjavur district, and the reign of Āditya, who assumed the title "Kodaṇḍa Rāma". Whether these figures were "made under the influence of Kamban's *Rāma-Kathā*" or not depends of course on the notoriously difficult dating of that text (anywhere from the late 9th to the late 12th century has been suggested), but that there is prefiguration of the political instrumentation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* under Āditya remains arguable.²⁴ Sanford's detailed study of Coḷa temples bearing Rāma reliefs argues for a close relationship between these representations and Coḷa kingship in the 9th and 10th centuries. But the positive evidence remains exiguous for the Coḷa domain, and is vitiated by negative evidence: We find, for example, nothing whatever in the epigraphical record of the Bādāmi Cālukyas to substantiate a political valorization of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, yet the same area, as already noted, produced some of the earliest plastic representations of the epic; we find, furthermore, the *Rāmāyaṇa* competing with a variety of other epic friezes—the *Mahābhārata*, the Kṛṣṇa-cycle—in places like Ellora and indeed in the Coḷa country itself, which certainly seems to diminish the centrality Sanford strives to establish.²⁵ The epigraphical remains, too, as I show below, contain little beyond the standard rhetorical ornamentation.²⁶

I am not asserting, then, that Rāma was *never* the object of cultic worship prior to the period with which I am concerned here.²⁷ What I don't think is in doubt, however, is that this cult is at first extraordinarily restricted in time and space; that it shows a striking efflorescence, and takes up a special place within the context of a political theology, from the end of the 12th cen. onward, achieving in some instances a centrality by the middle of the 14th (and—though I won't pursue the matter here—seems to cease to grow at all after that point, in north India at least, until perhaps the 17th cen.).²⁸ This development is paralleled in other areas of cultural production as well.

III. Rāma and Inscriptions

If the architectural remains associated with Rāma have hardly been systematically worked

through and synthetically analysed, this is even more so the case with the inscriptional materials that refer to or invoke Rāma or in one way or the other process *Rāmāyana* themes.²⁹ Here too my findings have to be regarded as provisional, but again I would be surprised if further work would require fundamental revision of my conclusion: The *Rāmāyana* provides serious material to the political imagination of premodern India as we can recover it from the inscriptional record only from the later medieval period on; references in the first millennium remain very sparse indeed, and gain in frequency and complexity only after the 12th cen. I first want to glance at the quality of this earlier material, and then go on to examine in more depth a few examples of the sort of thing we encounter later.

Rāma to be sure furnishes an *upamāna* or standard of comparison in hyperbolic inscriptional discourse from an early period, but these are static and altogether formulaic allusions. This quality may be illustrated in what is perhaps the earliest instance, the Sālivāhana *praśasti* at Nasik (ca. AD 150), where Rāma is simply one among a series of heroes: *nābhāganahuṣa-janamejaya-sagara-yayāti-rāma-abariṣa-samatejasa*. Hardly an exception to such uninteresting formulae in the early period is the comparison of Skandagupta with Rāma ("equal to Rāma in his great offensive power"), which is, in fact the only time Rāma son of Daśaratha is mentioned in the entire corpus of Gupta inscriptions; if we knew nothing about the putative move of the Gupta capital to Ayodhyā, such a reference would hardly attract our attention at all (note that Skandagupta is likened to Yudhiṣṭhira in the same line).³⁰ The public discourses of major dynasties for centuries often make virtually no appropriation of the Rāma theme. In the records of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire (ca. 800-1000), for example, reference to Rāma is completely absent, as it is in the contemporary Śilāhāras to the west.³¹ Among the Bādāmi Cālukyas (ca. 500-750) I can recall no mention of Rāma in their charters, despite their well-attested knowledge of and respect for the Sanskrit epic; among the Gaṅgas, their neighbours to the southwest, a single, pedestrian allusion to Rāma is found, whereas he seems to be mentioned only once in the entire extant corpus of inscriptions of the north-central Paramāras.³² Outside of these cases, the most common reference to Rāma in early inscriptions beyond these simple similes is the minatory verse appearing at the end of land-grants: "Common to (all) kings is the dam of *dharma*; you should abide it moment by moment. Again and again Rāmacandra implores all future kings to do this."³³ Still, all this latter presents us with, in the end, is an image of Rāma as superordinate king, one that the literary texts had already been promulgating for centuries.

More complex in their referentiality are inscriptions that exploit the narrative of the poem with a historicist turn. A record of the Pallava king Nandivarman (undated; ca. 8th cen.) describes Narasiṃhavarman as surpassing "the glory of the valour of Rāma by (his) conquest of Laṅkā", the same boast Rājendra Coḷa I was to make two hundred years later (ca. 1018), taunting the Sinhalese with the mytheme when referring to his general's defeat of the king of Laṅkā: Rāma needed the help of monkeys to build his *setu*, and only with great effort could he slay the lord of Laṅkā; but my general crossed the ocean in ships and easily destroyed the lord of Laṅkā: *atas tena rāmo 'bhibhutaḥ'*.³⁴ Considerably more informed by the Rāma tale is the Kanyākumārī Inscription of Virarājendradeva (ca. 1030), which contains a fascinating Coḷavaṃśapraśasti. After praising Rāma in several lovely verses, the account goes on to provide a history of the first Coḷa king: While out hunting he is led astray by a magical deer-*rākṣasa*, to the banks of the Kāverī river. He finds the region to be devoid of Brahmins, relocates many from Āryāvarta southward (and thus establishes the Coḷamaṇḍalam).³⁵ Not unrelated is the *vaṃśapraśasti* of the reconstituted Cālukyan dynasty of Kalyāṇi, under Vikramāditya V: For the first time the dynastic history seeks to establish a connection with the solar kings of Rāma's lineage, describing how after 59 kings of the Cālukya *vaṃśa* had ruled

in Ayodhyā, there was an emigration southward to their present location.³⁶ Vikramāditya VI of the same dynasty comes to be referred to as "Cālukyarāma", and as in the Coḷa records *Rāmāyana* narrative elements are used to frame historical events: In the Yewur Plates of the second year of Cālukya Vikrama *varṣa* (AD 1077), the first political-historical moment of the narrative of Vikramāditya VI is made by means of an interesting punning verse on the Rāma story: "He went to seek Lakṣmī (Sītā) produced by his (her) father (Janaka); along with his brother, the son of Sumitrā, and with a force of monkeys; to the banks of the ocean came the vast royalty of Vibhiṣaṇa (the lord of Draviḍa) out of fear of the Many-headed, and the Chālukya-Rāma bowed to him (in compliance with his supplication?)." (The verse is so buried in *śleṣa* it is hard to get the historical reference here beyond the obvious allusion to an alliance with a southern power, against presumably the Coḷas.)³⁷

Yet again, the situation presented to us in virtually all these inscriptional materials is, semiotically if you will, analogous to what we find in respect of the development of temple representations: Rāma and *Rāmāyana* mythemes function largely as rhetorical embellishments, inflecting and texturing a given discourse but not constituting it. Very different, I find, are the materials we encounter in the succeeding period. I want to examine here only a couple of examples, where we can see how the political world comes to be read through—identified with, cognised by—the narrative provided by the epic tale.³⁸

The so-called Dabhoi stone inscription (ca. *saṃvat* 1311 = AD 1253) describes among other members of the Vāghela dynasty of Gujarat Lavaṇaprasāda, a feudatory and minister of the Solanki king, Bhīma II (1178-1242 AD), and who later established the Vāghelas as an independent ruling house.³⁹

He (sc., Arjorāja) placed upon his son, Lavaṇaprasāda, the burden of the land of the Gūrjjaras...While he was ruling this land...was not the Gurjara-rāja even greater than *rāmarājya*?⁴⁰...So many the immortal kings on earth, yet virtually all of them were beside themselves with fear even to hear mention made of the king of the Turuṣkas. When he came for battle in a rage (Lavaṇaprasāda) alone (lacuna). (The Turk who) dyed the earth with blood dripping from the severed heads of many kings, even he, when he came before this (king Lavaṇaprasāda), went dry-mouthed in fear. And (Lavaṇaprasāda) defeated him (...) with his pillar-like arm terrible for the sword it held (...) how could he be a mere mortal who defeated the king of the *mlecchas* whom no other mortal could defeat.

A more elaborate variation on this theme is contained in an inscription published by Bhandarkar in 1912, though never translated and never discussed in later literature with reference to its specific discourse.⁴¹ The inscription, dated *saṃvat* 1224 (= ca. AD 1168), was originally found near Hānsi (appearing as Āsi or Āsika in the inscription), a town in Haryānā of strategic importance for controlling the western approach to Delhi, and which had been the object of struggle since at least the middle of the eleventh century.⁴² The record is *praśasti* of the Cāhamāna king Pṛthvirāja II (thus a generation prior to the defeat of Pṛthvirāja III at the battle of Tarain). It recounts how Pṛthvirāja put his maternal uncle in command of the fort at Hānsi, concerned as he was about an attack of the Turks ("in his belief that the mighty Hammira Warrior was a thorn in the side of all the world", *Matvā hammiraviraṃ nikhilavasumatīśalyabhūtam prabhūtam*). Kilhaṇa fortifies the stronghold, and checks the advance of the invaders ("You there! Hammira! Where is your greatness now!" *re re hammira vira kva sa tava mahimā*, exclaims the poet of the *praśasti*, line 7). We are then told how Kilhaṇa was sent a letter by one Vibhiṣaṇa, who reminds him how once the two of them had aided Rāma in the building of the *setu*. Then he declares,

*prthvirājo mahārājo rāmo 'sau saṃśayaṃ vinā/
hanūmān niścitaṃ vira bhavān adbhutavikramaḥ//* (line 14)

"And that Rāma has without doubt become Pṛthvirāja the great king, and certainly Hanūmān has become you, great hero, a man of miraculous deeds."⁴³

As in the case of the previous record, and the distinguishing feature of both, we have an explicit identification⁴⁴ of a historical ruler with the divine king Rāma, and what will become an increasingly explicit demonization—rākṣasization—of the enemy, the agents of the most significant historical processes unleashed at this period, the in-migrants from Central Asia.

IV. Rāma and "Historiography"

I want to adduce one last genre of evidence, the historiographical (or perhaps "textualized" is preferable, to distinguish it from the inscriptions), in support of the argument I have been making here, that the period of some two hundred years from around the mid-12th cen. on witnessed a re-coding of political reality via *Rāmāyaṇa* themes such as did not exist—or at least not to anywhere near the same degree—in any previous era. I'll cite only two documents, the one a brief episode from the first Jain *prabandhakośa*, the other a full-scale historical poem.

In the *Dvyāśrayakāvya* of Hemacandra, a poem that narrates the history of the first patron of Hemacandra, the illustrious Cālukya/Solanki king Jayasīṃha Siddharāja of Gujarat (1004-1143 AD), the king is identified as an incarnation of Rāmacandra (1556-57), as Majumdar and others have already noticed.⁴⁵ (In his actual inscriptions, e.g., the just published Bilpank *praśasti*, he is called an incarnation of Viṣṇu.⁴⁶) What fills out this brief allusion (and seems to have escaped notice so far) is a passage in Chapter 3, the *Siddharāja* section, of the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, called the "Narrative of the Prevention of the Invasion of the Mlecchas",⁴⁷ which fleshes out Hemcandra's allusion:

At the same time when the chiefs of the lord of the *mlecchas* were assembling as a host, the king summoned some spies⁴⁸ who had come from Madhyadeśa, gave them secret instructions and dismissed them. On the following day at twilight, when a wind as wild as the wind at the end of time blew up, the king went off to his assembly hall—like Sudharmā it was—and as he looked on, a pair of Palādas carrying each a gold brick on his head descended from the sky. The gathering of people was overcome with fear when they saw them. The two presented their gift at the footstool of the king, and prostrating themselves at his feet, they told him, "Today while paying worship to the gods, the great king of Lankā, Śrī Vibhīṣaṇa called to mind the one who put him on the throne, the crest-jewel of the Raghu clan, the glorious Śrī Rāma. And with his eye of wisdom Vibhīṣaṇa at that moment realized that his own master Rāma had descended into the avatār of Śrī Siddharāja, crest-jewel of the Cālukya clan. His first thought was how profoundly his heart desired to come and pay you homage, but then he sent us with the message that perhaps the lord himself would favour him with a visit. May your Highness indicate your decision through your royal mouth (?)." At their words, the king thought to himself a moment, and then addressed them: "Impelled by vast waves of impatience we ourselves, at our own good time, will go to meet with Vibhīṣaṇa." With this he presented the beautiful single-strand chain on his own neck as a return gift, and when they

asked leave to go he gave them a special message, to the effect that he shouldn't be forgotten by their lord on any other occasion when help was needed (? *preṣyapreṣaṇāvasāra*). The two *rākṣasas* disappeared into the air. From then on, the *mleccha* chiefs were filled with fear, they lost their courage, and summoned before the king they spoke words laden with devotion for him. They presented to the king appropriate tribute, and then Śrī Siddharāja dismissed them.⁴⁹

This strange intermixture of fantasy and local particularity—a sort of proto-magical realism that we find elsewhere in Merutuṅga's fascinating work—resists easy historical interpretation. But several elements of the new code are there: the historical king as an incarnation of Rāma, the threat of the *mleccha*, the reading of the historical event through the narrative of the epic poem.

Even more fully developed is this code in what I am inclined to regard as the single most important literary text of its epoch—and of which virtually nothing has been translated or analyzed to date—the *Pṛthvirājaviṣṇaya*.⁵⁰ This is a historical *kāvya* by a late twelfth cen. Kashmiri poet (probably named Jayānaka or less likely Vināyaka Paṇḍita),⁵¹ which deals with the life of the last independent "Hindu" king of Ajmer. It was written at his court between 1178-93, the dates of the defeat of Mu'izz ad-Dīn Muhammad Ghūrī at the hands of the king of Gujarat, Bhīmadeva (mentioned in ch. 2 of the poem) and Pṛthvirāja's own defeat by Muhammad Ghūrī in 1193, perhaps more precisely between the years 1191-93. Admittedly this was the first literary text to imagine the career of a king from within a *Rāmāyaṇa* framework; one important predecessor is the *śleṣakāvya* of Sandhyākaranandin, the *Rāma(pāla)carita*, which concerns events in 11th-12th cen. Bengal.⁵² But there the epic narrative provides only a rhetorical vehicle, if even that, for the exposition of the life of the Pāla king;⁵³ in the political imagination informing Jayānaka's history, by contrast, Pṛthvirāja III (like his ancestor Pṛthvirāja II, whom we have encountered earlier) is Rāma.⁵⁴

The mytho-political equivalence that informs the entire poem is made clear at the very start, when the poet asserts that the only audience he truly cares about is the king himself: "Let him alone who resides in my heart hear me, he who entered a body consisting of Rāma" (i.e., who is Rāma reborn, *jaḡāma yo rāmamayaṃ śarīraṃ śrotā sa evāstu hṛdi sthito me//* 1.33, p. 14). The actual *avatāra* of Viṣṇu/Rāma as Pṛthvirāja is preceded by a lengthy description of the pollution of the region of Ajayameru—and especially the *tirtha* Puṣkara—by the *mlecchas*. Brahmā, for example, is represented as exclaiming in the presence of Viṣṇu, as he begs him to descend to earth,

"The place where I myself performed the final ablutions after completing the great sacrifice of world creation, the *mleccha* army now uses to relieve their fatigue from their violent destruction of temples and *āgrahāras*" (1.50, p. 19).

"The place Śacī would prohibit to the hosts of heavenly courtesans for bathing—and they would laugh secretly, since it was reserved for the highest god [and hence prohibited to Śacī, too]—there now bathe the menstruating wives of these lowest of men" (1.53, p. 20).⁵⁵

Much of the poem is taken up with an account of Pṛthvirāja's ancestors; in Chapter 6, the immediate genealogy of Pṛthvirāja is given. King Arjorāja had two wives, one of whom was the daughter of the celebrated king of the Gujarat Solanki dynasty (whom we have already met), Siddharāja Jayasīṃha. This wife gave birth to Someśvara, of whom the astrologers foretell that *his* first son will be an incarnation of Rāma, his second an incarnation of Lakṣmaṇa, and

his wife an incarnation of Kausalyā:⁵⁶ “[Your] son will be Rāma himself, born [again] in his desire to complete the task he had started” (*utpatsyate kaṁcana kāryaśeṣaṁ nirmātukāmas tanayo 'sya rāmaḥ* [6.35, p. 157]); the son is “the enemy of Rāvaṇa becoming an earthly king in the Kali age” (*upayāsyati bhūmipālabhāvaṁ kalikāle daśakandharātātāyī* [7.6, p. 180]), “a form of Viṣṇu become a man” (*...viṣṇumayaṁ mūrtibhedaṁ mānuṣatāṁ gatam* [8.10, p. 192]), “an avatar of Rāma” (*...rāmāvatārasyaiva pṛthvirājasya* [8.62, p. 203]). [In the eighth chapter, Pṛthvirāja and his brother Harirāja are born, as incarnations of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Pṛthvirāja's minister, Kadambavāsa, is [like] Hanumān.] In Ch. 10, after consolidating his power by the defeat of his enemies, Pṛthvirāja returns to his capital and first hears of Muhammad Ghūrī (pp. 252ff):

The victorious king entered the town, and a wreath about the tower of the city of Ajmer—a terrible wreath made with the heads of his enemies—prevented the Goddess of Royalty from leaving it even for a moment. (38)

Every king in the northwest region is as powerful as the wind; but the Lord of horses in addition had true virility, and so surpassed all the others. (39)

But even such a king was robbed of the rule of Garjani [Ghazni], and rendered empty and light as an autumn cloud by the evil Gori [sic; Mu'izz ad-Dīn Muhammad Ghūrī]—he who was given to eating foul foods, the enemy of cows, from whence he got his very name. (40)⁵⁷

He sought, they say, to become Eclipse itself, to occlude the royal fortune of the entire circle of kings.... [what follows is obscure to me]. (41)

What more to say? Taking no heed that the king [Pṛthvirāja] had consecrated himself for the purpose of exterminating all demon-men, he sent an ambassador into the presence of this lion in his den—the king in Ajayameru. (42)⁵⁸

The ambassador is then described, in what I think may be the first representation of a Central Asian in Sanskrit literature:⁵⁹

His head was so bald and his forehead so broad it was as if God had intentionally made them thus to inscribe [as on a copper plate] the vast number of cows he had slain. The colour of his beard, eyebrows and lashes was yellower than the grapes that grew in his native place [of Ghazni]—it was almost as if the colour black itself had shunned him fearing to share his bad reputation. Horrible was his speech, like the cry of wild birds—there were no cerebrals; indeed, all his phonemes were impure, impure as his complexion [pun: and the hair of his head was as it were mowed off never to grow again]: He had what appeared to be an unspeakable skin disease [i.e., white leprosy] for he was whiter than bleached cloth, whiter than the snow of the Himalayan region where he was born. (43-46)

(There is a lacuna in the next verse, and according to the copyist cited p. 255n, several leaves are missing after v. 47.)

Then the terrible frown on Pṛthvirāja's face told it was the moment for the call to arms, when [it became known] that the fort of the Gūrjaras at Naḍvala [Naḍḍala

in Marwad] had been overrun by these demons with the bodies of men (*nṛtanubhṛ asuraiḥ*), who made the very God of Death anxious about superintending his crowded prisons.

Thereafter, in the penultimate chapter of the extant poem, Pṛthvirāja enters his picture gallery where, recapitulating Bhavabhūti's figuration, he beholds the scenes of his earlier life as Rāmacandra (11.28-104).

Whereas the *Rāmāyaṇa* may certainly have played a substantial, in some instances a central role in the political imagination of premodern India, it is a role endowed with a fuller and more referentially direct expression—in royal cultic, inscriptional, and historiographical representations—from the twelfth century onward. The temporal trajectory of this development, especially plotted against the spatial, suggests quite forcefully—as readers will already have inferred—that it was in reaction, almost exclusively in reaction, to the world-historical encounter with the politics of Central Asia—with Ghaznavids, Ghurids, Khaljis—and the new social and political realities issuing in the establishment of the Sultanate to which this encounter ultimately led that the *Rāmāyaṇa* was lived anew in royal discourse. A minimal correlation of the reasonably secure (and generally well-known) historical record of the invasions with the half-dozen or so important materials adduced above suffices to show this.

During the years 1009-1018 Mahmud of Ghazni made repeated raids over the Punjab as far as (but not into) Kashmir and eastern Rajasthan; by September, 1018 he penetrated east of Delhi, and destroyed Mathurā; in December, 1018, he seized Kanauj; thereafter he targeted Kālañjara, capital of the Candellas of Bundelkhand, but was repulsed;⁶⁰ in 1025, he destroyed the great temple at Somnath in Gujarat. Though Mahmud died in 1030, Ghaznavid military adventures continued. It is within half a century or so of the death of Mahmud that the Gāhaḍavālas begin to transform Ayodhyā into a major Vaiṣṇava centre (1093ff, a building program that was to continue for a century), and within three generations, the first dedicated Rāma sanctuaries are attested just to the south of Kālañjara among the Tripurī Kalachuris, whose own king Jayasiṁha boasts in 1167 that by his doing “the king of Gurjjara has vanished, and the Turuṣka has lost the power of his arms.”⁶¹

Turkish raids continue throughout the period from the death of Mahmud to the rise of the Ghurids in the last third of the 12th cen. We have no direct evidence of any invasion of the realm of Jayasiṁha Siddharāja of Gujarat, but Persian sources suggest that the general of the Ghaznavid Bahram Shah may have assembled an army to attack him, and this the *prabandha* material cited above would corroborate.⁶² His near contemporary Vīgraharāja IV of the Cāhamāna dynasty of Śākambharī (reigned ca. 1152-1167) fought frequently with the Turks. On a pillar that bears an Aśokan inscription from 2000 years earlier (seeking thus, as is the case with other such records, by a decided historicism to participate in the imperial charisma of the stone, a project perpetuated by Firoz Shah, who had the pillar transported to Delhi in the mid-fourteenth cen.), Vīgraharāja is described as “the god who made Āryāvarta once again true to its name by extirpating the *mlecchas*” and one “of whom no doubt can be entertained that he is the Primal Person.”⁶³ It was his successor Pṛthvirāja II who in 1168 took the Hansi fort over which Ghaznavids (and Tomaras and Cāhamānas) had fought for some generations. Within a decade, the new power of the Ghurids irrupted into Gujarat, when Bhīma II (or his brother Mūlarāja II, according to other sources) met in battle and defeated Mu'izz ad-Dīn Muhammad Ghūrī in 1178, and was himself defeated by Muhammad's viceroy Qutbuddin Aibak in 1195-6. Bhīma II was the nominal sovereign of Lavaṇaprasāda, and it is likely to Lavaṇaprasāda's

expulsion of Albak from Gujarat that the inscription noticed above refers.⁶⁴ Further to the east, Muhammad suffered another defeat in 1191 at the hands of Pṛthvirāja III at Tarain (80 miles w. of Delhi), only to return to crush him and 150 chieftains in his alliance the following year. Within two years the last king of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty, Jayacandra, was slain in battle with the Turks, Banaras was looted, and two years later, Kanauj, Malwa and Bundelkhand continued to be targets, and in 1202, Muhammad bin Bakhtyar Khalji raided Bihar and established himself in Bengal, continuing to push further east (an inscription found at Kanaibarshi (Gauhati, Assam) reads, with annalistic simplicity: "On the thirteenth day of Chaitra of the Śāka (*sic*) year 1127, the Turuṣkas came to Kāmarūpa, and went down to defeat").⁶⁵ By 1206, almost all of north India from the Ravi river to Assam had come under Turkish military domination.

The last phase of these political events pertinent to this discussion begins near the end of the 13th century, when Jalaluddin Firoz became the first Khalji Sultan of Delhi, soon followed by his nephew Alauddin. Within a few years (1296-1309), and with spectacular success, Alauddin fought against and finally subjugated the kings of Aṇahilavāḍa (the Solanki Karṇa II), those of present-day Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, and, notably, the Yādavas of Devagiri, who as we saw had commenced around this time, under the patronage of Rāmacandra, the last Yādava king of Devagiri, the enhancement of the Rāma sanctuary on Rāmtek. Alauddin's general Malik Kafur began his campaign against the Kākatiyas of Warangal in 1302, and in 1309 finally defeated King Pratāparudra, with whom one of the few, and even fewer dated, Rāma sanctuaries in Andhra is associated, as I indicate above. Governors of the Delhi Sultanate were appointed throughout the Deccan, and soon thereafter the Vijayanagar kingdom was established (1346).

We have encountered—it bears repeating—a number of cases where Rāmāyaṇa mythemes in inscription and possibly in temple cult had something of a role to play in inflecting the political imagination prior to or outside of the Turkish in-migration and the founding of the Sultanate (such is the case in some Coḷa inscriptions, for instance); conversely, this political narrative apparently failed to play any role in a number of places where these events had equally profound consequences (Bengal is such a case; note that here, too, we find no evidence of a vernacular Rāmāyaṇa tradition until Kṛttivāsa's version of perhaps the later part of the 15th cen.). Nevertheless, there is a striking concomitance between the activation of the political imaginary of the Rāmāyaṇa and the historical events of the 11th-14th centuries.

The explanation of such a concomitance invites can only be highly nuanced, and must await another occasion. For to do justice to the importance and complexity of the problem it would be necessary to explore, among other things, the nature of historical imitation and the functional and psychosocial role of the "political imaginary"; to try to identify the peculiar imaginative resources the Rāmāyaṇa offers that made it the narrative of choice for processing the political events of the period; to explore the question of premodern communal relations, and relatedly and not least, to query the very value of contemporary critical historiography.

References

1. The number of works on Rāmāyaṇa themes ascribed to kings in this period is large, including the *Campūrāmāyaṇa* of Bhoja; *Rāmābhyudaya* of Yaśovarman (lost); *Udāttarāghava* of Anaṅgahaṛṣa Mayūrarāja, a Kalachuri prince; "King Bhimata of Kālāñjara is eulogised by Rājaśekhara as author of five plays of which the one on the Rāmāyaṇa story, the *Swapnadaśānana*, which is also lost, was the best"; *Kundamālā* of Dhiranāga, King of Anūpa (cf. V. Raghavan, *Some Old Lost Rāma Plays* [Annamalai University, 1961]); and "The Rāmāyaṇa in Sanskrit Literature", in *The Rāmāyaṇa Tradition in Asia* (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1985). Worth considering

- in this light is also Kulacēkarālvāra (ca. 800), a king of the Kongu-Chera line and author of some of the most notable devotional poetry to Rāma (and to whom Zvelebil is prepared to ascribe the founding of Rāma worship in Tamil country [*Tamil Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), p. 102].
2. See my *Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki and Epic of Ancient India, Vol. II: Ayodhyākāṇḍa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), Introduction, pp. 9-24.
3. The logic of the argument presented below might seem to require that the political-cultural processes I describe as specific to western India in the 12th and 13th centuries should themselves recuperate, indeed imitate, earlier ones. Yet the data I have been able to gather suggests that—with perhaps one exception, Gupta India, which may itself not have had any historical effectivity—this is not the case; the tradition of invention, so to put it, begins in the 12th cen.
4. Bhandarkar, R.G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Minor Religious Systems* (repr. ed. Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1965), p. 47 (first published 1913).
5. Bakker, Hans, *Ayodhyā* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1986), pp. 24ff. As Bakker points out, it is likely that only at this moment is Ayodhyā in fact turned into "Ayodhyā", emerging momentarily from the mists of legend only to sink back into them for the next half-millennium.
6. Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, p. 62. See further below on Rāmtek.
7. Krishna Sastry, V.V., "The Narrative Panels of the Rāmāyaṇa in Andhra Sculpture" (ms.), referring to B. Rajendra Prasad, *Art of South India—Andhra Pradesh* (Delhi, 1980), p. 72.
8. For the dating see Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History, Religion and Art of Classical and Mediaeval Art of India*, ed. Hermann Kulke (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974), p. 106; for the Badami Cālukyas' remains, Nagarajarao, M.S., ed., *Cālukyas of Badami* (Bangalore: Mythic Society, 1978), p. 306, and Sivaramamurti, C., "The Rāmāyaṇa in Indian Sculpture", in *Rāmāyaṇa Traditions in Asia* (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1980), p. 638.
9. Nagaswamy, R., "Sri Rāmāyaṇa in Tamilnadu in Art, Thought and Literature" (in *Rāmāyaṇa Traditions in Asia*), pp. 409ff.
10. Simha, B.P., "Representation of Rāmāyaṇic Scenes in An Old Temple Wall at Aphṣaḍ", *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, 54 (1968), pp. 216ff, provides photos of the panels so far unearthed. Cf. CII, III, pp. 202ff, ed. Fleet.
11. Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, pp. 450ff; cf. p. clxiii. (For "Māyūrikas" the text actually reads *mayūtikā*. The Sāvantas are, according to Mirashi, "the aboriginal tribe of the Sāontas in the Bilaspur District", p. 452.) As Mirashi notes, in the same temple there is found an eighth century inscription recording that this was (originally) built as a temple to Viṣṇu (p. 451, n. 2). "The Rewa Stone Inscription of Vijayasimha, Kalachuri year 944" (= AD 1193), *ibid.*, pp. 346ff. Malayasimha, a feudatory of Vijayasimhadēva of the later Kalachuri dynasty, built a Rāma temple (v. 27, *rāmadvēlāya*). Cf. also Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, pp. 64-65.
12. Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, pp. 51ff.
13. Cousens, Henry, *List of Antiquarian Remains in the Central Provinces and Berār*, Archaeological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1897, pp. 7ff.
14. Jamkhedkar, A.P., "Ancient Structures", *Marg*, 37.1 (1985-86), pp. 25-36; Hans Bakker, "The Antiquities of Rāmtek Hill, Maharashtra", *South Asian Studies*, 5 (1989), pp. 79-102.
15. Given the fact that all the other Vākāṭaka structures remain intact, there seems to be little force in Bakker's statement that "Although I did not find remains of pre-Yādava constructions within these (Rāma) precincts, it can safely be assumed that, since these temples occupy the most prominent spot on Rāmtek Hill, they replace earlier buildings...." (p. 97). Even if this were true, there is no reason to believe these earlier structures included a Rāma temple.
16. This records among other things that the hill, Tapamgiri (line 22.1), was the place where long ago Nṛsimha slew (Hiraṇyakaśipu) (23); 34ff, there follows a long encomium of tīrthas, followed by the special powers of this one (41.3ff, esp. 44ff; better than Kāśī, Ujjayinī, Mathurā, Dvārakā, Purī). Ganeṣa dwells there; 45ff. "Here on this mountain of Rāma Dharmeśvara ever dwells, in compassion safeguarding *dharma* that is oppressed by the Kali age. (Next follows the verse that substantiates Cousens's local legend). Here on this king of mountains (dwells) under the name of Dhūmrākṣa the sage among sūdras, Śambūka, who attained the abode of Purāri (when slain) at the hand of Śrīrāma with the (sword) Candrahāsa"

- (and many other forms of gods well here, etc.); it ends with a long *stotra* to Rāma, sadly much damaged. I now find that Bakker has contributed an article on this and other records on the hill ("The Rāntek Inscriptions", *BSOAS* 52 (1989), pp. 467-96).
17. To what degree Śārngadhara Viṣṇu becomes an allomorph of Rāma in this period merits further analysis.
 18. In the Purushottamapuri Plates (Śaka 1232 = AD 1310) (*EI*, 25 (1939-40), pp. 199ff) is to be found the claim that Rāma defeated the Mlecchas, v. 18, and identifies his minister as a descendant of Vasiṣṭha, vs. 19ff (this record also contains the very odd account of Rāma's coup d'état), while in the Paithan Plates (Śaka 1193 = AD 1271-2) (*IA*, 14 (1885), pp. 314ff) are found the sectarian identification (line 47) and his identification with Nārāyaṇa (line 58).
 19. Verma, Onkar Prasad, *A Survey of Hemadpanti Temples in Maharashtra* (Nagpur: Nagpur University, 1973). The temple at Rāntek, it should be noted, seems to be the only Rāma temple associated with him (and in fact the only Rāma temple in the Deccan; none at all, for instance, is mentioned in Henry Cousens, *Medieval Temples of the Dakhan* (Archaeological Survey of India, 1931)).
 20. The *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*, Vratākāṇḍa, pp. 1034-35 of the BI ed. (cf. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 47). The section in Vratākāṇḍa Part I, pp. 941-46 is borrowed from *Agastyasamhitā* 26. The latter is the earliest northern text to prescribe the Rāmanavami; some southern Pāñcarātra texts, where Rāma never supplants Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa as the object of a cult, are earlier. See P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra* (Poona: BORI, 1962-75), Vol. 5, pp. 84-88, and Bakker, 153ff.
 21. *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. 10.533, p. 288. I also find an undated but possibly rather early record of the construction of a temple of god Virarāghava in Chittore district (no. 226, p. 11). Dagens's detailed work in western Andhra—an admittedly strongly Śaivite region—attests to this differential development of decorative and cultic centrality of Rāma: Rāmāyaṇa episodes play a very considerable role on the pillars of temples throughout the region between Alampur and Śrīśailam from the 10th cen. on, but cultic images of Rāma are found only far later: "Rāma...seems not have gained full autonomy as a major god until very recently, perhaps as late as the 18th cen." In fact, independent temples dedicated to Viṣṇu in general are exceedingly rare until the adoption of Vaiṣṇavism by the Vijayanagar kings. Dagens, Bruno, *Entre Alampur et Śrīśailam: Recherches archéologiques en Andhra Pradesh*, Vol. I (Pondicherry: Institut français d'Indologie, 1984), pp. 614-15, and cf. pp. 63 and 174-75.
 22. The temple "was dedicated to Ramachandra according to epigraphs on the principal shrine and northeast columned hall (*South Indian Inscriptions* IV, nos. 151 and 253). No foundation date is known for the temple, but an inscription on the basement of the east wall of the principal shrine (*South Indian Inscriptions* IV, no. 252) mentions the ruler Devaraya I, 1406-1422, or II, 1424-1446?). Thus the establishment of the temple can be no later than the first half of the fifteenth century" (Fritz, John et al., *The Royal Centre at Vijayanagara: Preliminary Report* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, Vijayanagara Research Centre, 1984), p. 62).
 23. Fritz, John, "Vijayanagar: Authority and Meaning of a South Indian Imperial Capital", *American Anthropologist* 88.1 (1986), p. 53; "Was Vijayanagar a 'Cosmic City?'" in A.-L. Dallapiccola and S. Zingel-Avé Lallement, eds., *Vijayanagar—City and Empire* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1985), p. 266.
 24. Nagaswamy, R., *Masterpieces of Early South Indian Bronzes* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1983), pp. 7, 154-59.
 25. He remarks, in pondering why Rāma representations are found only in Śaiva temples, that "Rāma and the Rāma theme, in the context dealt with here, pertain primarily to an association with the kingship", rather than being intended, say, to stimulate moral reflection. "If the main function of the cycles was to suggest and underline aspects of the character and achievements of the kings with whom the temples bearing them were associated, then the role of Rāma as an object of devotion need not have been the main emphasis. However, the divine aspect of Rāma could well have been used to suggest the same aspect of kingship....If the reliefs refer primarily to the kingship, used in a position subordinate to the major iconographic program, no conflict with the Śaiva focus of the temple as a whole would

- have been involved" (Sanford, David Theron, "Early Temples Bearing Rāmāyaṇa Relief Cycles in the Chola Area: A Comparative Study" (Unpublished diss., UCLA, 1974), p. 264. What certainly should be emphasized with respect to western India in the 12th cen. is that a Rāma cult almost certainly did not displace other forms of sectarian worship. On the contrary, many of the instances of kings identifying themselves with Rāma through inscriptions, or temple cult, are thoroughly Śaiva; a good example is Jayasiṃha Siddharāja, whose most famous architectural achievement is the Sahasraliṅga tank at Aṇahilavaḍa.
26. What I also have not yet had the time to explore in detail, but what is likely to be a development parallel to the rise of Rāma-dedicated temples is the incidence of Rāma sculptural remains (beyond those associated with temple narrative panels). These are extremely rare prior to the 12th cen.; I find one fifth-century terracotta figure of Rāma (bearing a verse of Vālmiki's), which Pratapaditya Pal has recently discussed (*Indian Sculpture* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986-87), Vol. 1, p. 232). There appears to be virtually nothing of the sort in Coḷa territory. By the 12th cen. in the Deccan, however, a change seems to have set in. On a recent visit to Bhāsavakalyāṇī, the former capital of the Western Calukyas, I noticed a large number of substantial Rāmāyaṇa pieces in the courtyard of the *durga*.
 27. Not often noticed, for instance, is the passage in the (ninth cen.?) *Viṣṇudharmottara* that prescribes the *svarūpa* of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa for worship (cited *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* Vratākāṇḍa, pp. 1035).
 28. It is striking, for instance, that not a single Rāma temple is documented—Rāmacandra is scarcely even mentioned—in any Sanskrit record in UP from the end of the twelfth to the middle of the sixteenth century (cf. Pushpa Prasad in *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate 1191-1526* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).
 29. The only articles I know of are those of D.C. Sircar, "Rāmāyaṇa in Inscriptions", in *Rāmāyaṇa Traditions*, pp. 322ff, and an earlier more general piece by D.B. Diskelkar (sic), "Qualifications and Subjects of Study of Inscriptional Poets", *Journal of Indian History* 38.2 (1960), p. 553. Neither presents substantial data.
 30. "The Supiā Pillar Inscription of the Time of Skandagupta, Year 141", *CII*, Vol. 3, p. 318.5. Pratapaditya Pal, *loc. cit.*, asserts that the bowman motif on the gold coins of Skandagupta alludes to Rāma, but this is really just an assumption.
 31. Puri, B.N., *The History of the Gurjara-Pratihāras* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1986, second revised edition), p. 221. *Inscriptions of the Śilāhāras*, *CII*, Vol. 6, ed. V.V. Mirashi, 1977.
 32. For the early Calukyan knowledge of the Rāmāyaṇa, see the copper-plate record of Maṅgaleṣa, *IA* 7, p. 161, line 3. The Gaṅga reference is found in the Maṅge Plates of Mārasimha, Śaka 719 (AD 798), ed. Ramesh, K., *Inscriptions of the Western Gaṅgas* (Delhi: Agam Prakasham, 1984), p. 196: "[King Mārasimha] disports himself [*rāmāyate*] at the front of battle, and behaves like Rāma [*rāmāyate*] with respect to the wives of others." The one Paramāra reference is in the Nagpur *praśasti*, *EI* 2 (1894), v. 15.
 33. *Sāmānyo 'yaṃ dharmasetur nṛpānām kāle kāle pālaniyo bhavadbhiḥ/ sarvān etān bhāvinaḥ pāṛthivendrān bhūyo bhūyo yācate rāmacandraḥ//* (v.1. *rāmabhadraḥ*). This comes to be appended to the traditional minatory verses of Vyāsa from about the beginning of the ninth century, and first in Rāṣṭrakūta domains. Among the earliest instances I have located are the Sisavai Grant of Govinda III (AD 807) (Rāṣṭrakūtas of Gujarat) *EI*, 23.212 (Rāmabhadra), and the Nilgund Inscription of Amoghavarṣa I (AD 815-75), *EI*, 6.105 (Rāmabhadra).
 34. The first record is found in *SII*, Vol. 2.348, v. 22, the second in Vol. 3.421, v. 80, #205. Rāma is otherwise utterly absent from the corpus of Pallava inscriptions save for a mention of his name in a list of avatars that is found in the fragment of a Mahabalipura temple inscription, T.V. Mahalingam, *Inscriptions of the Pallavas* (Delhi: Agam Prakasham, 1988), p. 624. Prthivīpati, a feudatory of Parāntaka I, is awarded the sobriquet *saṃgrāmarāghava*, "Battle-Rāma", for his defeat (again) of a Sinhalese king, *SII*, Vol. 2.383, v. 10.
 35. *EI*, 18, pp. 21ff, esp. p. 37, lines 139ff.
 36. "Kauthem Plates of Vikramāditya V, Śaka 930" (AD 1008), *IA*, 1887, pp. 15ff, especially p. 21, lines 11-12. The impulse to establish such a connection is ancient, possibly going back as far as the Andhra Ikṣvākus. Cf. Sircar, D.C., *The Successors of the Sātavāhanas in Lower Deccan* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1939), pp. 10ff. It is found in middle-

- period India among the Pratihāras (who figure themselves as descendants of Lakṣmaṇa in the Sāgartaḷ inscription of Bhoja I, and among the Paramāras, who invoke a Rāmāyaṇa mytheme in their origin myth. But note that their political discourses, like their ritual practices, are otherwise devoid of Rāma.
37. *EI*, 12.269ff, lines 88ff contains the narrative of the king, Vikramāditya VI is referred to as "Cālukyarāma" in the Kannada portion, v. 20, of the Gadag grant of his twenty-third year (*EI*, 15, pp. 348ff). In the *Vikramaṅkadevacarita* Bilhaṇa writes thus of the father of Vikramāditya VI: "Then came *Āhavamalladeva*, also known as Trailokyamalla (i.e., Someśvara I). The goddess of Royalty has never left his swordblade. Because of his purifying history (*pavitracāritratā*) he has been represented by poets as a second Rāma in stories, tales, poems, and plays" (1.87-88).
 38. I forego here detailed consideration of all those inscriptions asserting the identity of the king and Viṣṇu, though I believe, as in the case of the Gāhaḍavālas, these are almost certainly intended as references to Rāma. Cf. *EI*, 9, pp. 319ff, v. 16: *vārānaśim bhuvanarakṣaṇadakṣa eko duṣṭāt turuṣkasubhaṭāt avitum hareṇa/ ukto harih sa punar atra babbhūva tasmād govindacandra iti sa prathitābhīdhānaḥ*, "Asked by Hara to protect Varanasi from the foul Turk warrior—for he alone was able to guard the earth—Hari came into being here, with the well known name of 'Govindacandra'; and the copper-plate inscription of his grandson Jayacandra cited in Bakker, p. 53 n. 4: *tasmād adbhutavikramād atha jayacandrābhīdhānaḥ patir bhūpānām avatirṇa eṣa bhuvanoddhārāya nārāyaṇaḥ*, "From him of miraculous power there arose Jayacandra, lord of kings, who was (in fact) Nārāyaṇa descended to save the earth."
 39. This was first published in *EI* 1 (1892), pp. 20ff; I have used here the record as edited in *Historical Inscriptions of Gujarat*, Part III, p. 46, lines 6ff.
 40. The history of the historization of this term in Indian politics has not been traced; as for Gujarat, this is not the first instance. In the Brāhmaṇavāḍā copperplate grant of Mūlarāja II, dated VS 1232 (c. AD 1176), we find, in reference to his father Ajayapāla that "he caused Rāmrajya to descend to earth" (*-avatāritarāmarājya-*, line 9) (A.S. Gadre, ed. *Important Inscriptions from the Baroda State*, Vol. I (Baroda: n.p., n.d. (ca. 1943)), p.73). There is no record of Ajayapāla's having fought with the Central Asians. It may be, however, to his notorious (and according to legend brutal) re-assertion of Śaiva Brahmanism (as against Kumārapāla's Jainism) that the epithet refers; in the Devapattana *praśasti* he is said to have "planted once more the trees of vedic dharma" (*...bhūvaṃ babbhārājayadeva bhūpaḥ/ ucchārayan bhūpa ? taruprakāṇḍān uvāpa yo naigamadharmavṛkṣān*, *EI* 2.442, v. 21).
 41. Sircar, "Rāmāyaṇa in Inscriptions", merely alludes to the inscription; the most substantial recent work on the Cāhamānas. Sharma, Dasharatha, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, 2nd rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), has no light to shed on it.
 42. Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, p. 67. Cf. also the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, p. 32 (Mahipāla of Delhi recaptures Thanesar, Hansi, and Kangra in 1044).
 43. Kilhaṇa is mentioned (spelled Kelhaṇa) in the Sundhā Hill *praśasti* of the Chauhans of Naddula: "Having defeated soundly the mighty Turuṣka, he built a tower of gold, like a crown of the dwelling of Someśa" (*nīrbhīdyocchaitḥ prabalakalitaṃ yas (sc., nṛpaḥ Kelhaṇaḥ) turuṣkaṃ vyadhatta śrisomeśāspadamukūṭavat toraṇaṃ kāñcanasya*), *EI* 9 (1907-8), pp. 70ff, p. 77, v. 34.
 44. *Pace* Bhandarkar, p. 17.
 45. Majumdar, Asoke Kumar, *Chaulukyās of Gujarat* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1956).
 46. *EI* 40, Part 1, 1973, pp. 27ff, v. 15 "The Supreme Person himself has come as avatar to earth." ...So men of wisdom spoke at the hour of his birth."
 47. Muni Jinavijaya (Ed.) (Śāntiniketan: Singhi Jaina Jnanapitha, 1933), Singhi Jain Series, pp. 72-73.
 48. Uncertain; I read hesitantly *veṣākāraka* ("men in disguise"), for *veṣakāraka*.
 49. Cf. also the traditional verse appended to the cycle of Siddharāja: "Just as Rāma, a treasure of virtues, was born of Daśaratha, so the world-conquering Jayasimha is born of him (i.e., Karṇa)", *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, p. 55, v. 88.
 50. The first eight of the 12 extant chapters were edited first by Belvalkar in the *BI* (Calcutta, 1914ff); the only edition of the entire work is that of Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha and Chandradhar Sharma Guleri (Ajmer: Vedic Yantralaya, 1941; my thanks to James Nye

- of the University of Chicago Library for procuring this rare work for me). Serious analytical work on this text is non-existent, and in fact almost nothing has been written on it beyond brief notices (e.g., Sarda, Har Bilas, "The Prithvirāja Vijaya, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1913, pp. 259ff; Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, pp. 112, 220, 378; Chandra Prabha, *Historical Mahākāvya in Sanskrit* (New Delhi: Shri Bharat Bharati, 1976), pp. 145-78. The work is quoted by Jayaratha in his commentary on Rūyyaka's *Alaṅkārasarvasva* ca. AD 1200 (Dasgupta, S.N. and De, S.K., *History of Sanskrit Literature Classical Period*, Vol. I (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1962), p. 360n; cf. also *JRAS*, 1913, p. 261).
51. "Jayānaka" is the name of a Kashmiri poet introduced in the poem itself (12.63, 68), and usually taken as the name of the author. Note, however, that to one Vināyaka Paṇḍita is attributed a striking verse in praise of Prthvirāja found in the *Śāringadharaḥpaddhati* (#1254): "I have little relish for paying homage to Śiva, no desire to worship Krishna; I am stiff when it comes to bowing down to Śiva's consort, indifferent to temple of Brahmā. It was through King Prthvirāja, by his sacred sign upon our face (?), that we were protected from enemy destruction (*asmākaṃ paramardano 'sti vadane nyastena samrakṣitaḥ prthvirājanareśvarāt*), and so I worship the very grass in his capital."
 52. Revised ed. by Radhagovinda Basak (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1969); cf. *EI* 9, pp. 321-22. The story has nothing to do with Central Asians, but rather concerns political developments interior to Bengal. The slot of Rāvaṇa, though with no demonization, is taken by the Kaivarta king Bhīma, cf. 1.12 and com. ad loc. (The work of Gauḍa Abhinanda, the *Rāmācarita* (another Pāla work of the mid-ninth century), has no recoverable connection with any historical king.)
 53. Indeed, the very form of *śleṣa* serves rather to establish difference of reference rather than identity. Moreover, the lives of Rāmapāla and Rāmacandra are not even really presented as parallel, let alone identical.
 54. Such total identification seems not to have been made without some resistance. In both the *Prabandhakośa* of Rajaśekhara (Śāntiniketan: Singhi Jain Jnanapitha, 1935), pp. 81-82, and in the *Purātanaprabandhasamgraha* (Calcutta: Singhi Jain Jnanapitha, 1936), pp. 8-9, the story is told of "Vikramāditya", who sought to arrogate to himself the title "Abhinava Rāma". He is disabused of his arrogance by an encounter with the power of the real Rāma.
 55. *cakre jagatsargamahādharānte mayāpi yatrāvabhṛthābhṛtṣekaḥ/ tatrādhunā devagrāhāgraharāhimsākramaṃ melcchacamūś cchinatti// tāṃ yatra tattatridiveśaveśyāṃ snātiṃ śaciṃ svargaṇikāgaṇaḥ prak/ snānān nīśiddho nibhṛtaṃ jahāsa majjanti tatrādhamapuṣpavatyaḥ//*
 56. An intriguing connection is that Prthvirāja's father Someśvara married the daughter of the Kalachuri king of Tripurī, in whose realm some of the earliest Rāma cultic activities have been traced; perhaps pursue this, since there seems to have been earlier marriage alliances: note that the queen of the Kalachuri king Jayasimhadeva of Rewa AD 1167 is named Kelhaṇadevī (*EI* 21.92), perhaps linking her with the Ki(e)lhaṇa who was minister to Prthvirāja II).
 57. *kadaśanakuśalo gavām aritvāt samuditogoripadāpadeśamudaḥ*. Does Jonarāja with his gloss *samudite* (or *-taḥ*)...*vyapadeśo mudrā yasya*, miss the *schema etymologicon* here (*gavām ariḥ = gorīḥ*)? According to Bosworth's careful reconsideration, the first major success against Ghazna of the Ghūrids, a local family of central Afghanistan (which was in fact Islamized first by Mahmud of Ghazna) was in late 1148, when Saif ad-Din Sūrī captured the town; 'Alā ad-Din Husain attacked it in 1152 and 1157. For some 12-15 years (perhaps 1160-1173, the dates are difficult to establish precisely), Ghazna was then occupied by Oghuz "military adventures", until it was captured by Mu'izz ad-Din Muhammad Ghūri, who used the town as a springboard to the Panjab first in 1178 (cf. Bosworth, Clifford Edmund, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1977), pp. 5, 68-9, 111-29). Is it possible that these Oghuz horsemen are the referent of *hayapati* in verse 39? The accession of Prthvirāja III seems to have taken place by 1178 (cf. D.C. Sircar in *EI* 32 (1957-58), pp. 299ff, esp. p. 302), not in 1180 (Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasty*, p. 81).
 58. "demon-men", *nararakṣasām* (*mlecchānām*, Jonarāja).

59. Though not necessarily their first appearance. In the drama *Lalitavigraharāja* of Somadeva (ca. 1153), composed in honour of Vigraharāja IV and preserved in monumentally inscribed form, there are introduced two Turuṣka prisoners at the beginning of the fourth act (they speak Māgadhi but are not described), and later an ambassador from Hammīra, who speaks Sanskrit and indeed, cites the *purāṇas* ("no king is not (in part) Viṣṇu" (reading *nāviṣṇuḥ pṛthvipatir ity eva*); ed. Kielhorn, "Bruchstücke indischer Schauspiele in Inschriften zu Ajmere" *Festschrift zur Feier des hundertfünfzigjährigen Bestehens der Königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Abhandlungen der phil.-hist. Klasse*, Berlin, 1901, esp. pp. 10-15 = *Kleine Schriften I* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1969), esp. pp. 106-11).
60. As his father had earlier been; see the Candella inscription from Mahoba: "There appeared (in the Candella dynasty) a blessing for the earth called the illustrious Dhaṅga, who...by the strength of his arms equalled even the powerful Hamvira, who had proved a heavy burden for the earth." Hultsch argues that this refers to Subuktagin, cf. *EI* 1 (1892), pp. 217ff.
61. *naṣṭam gurjjarabhūbhujā, bhujabalaṃ muktaṃ turuṣkeṇa ca* (*E.* 21, p. 95 = *CII*, IV, p. 327). Jayasiṃha's son Vijayasīṃha repeats the claim in a record dated AD 1180, where the reading *kubalaṃ* is likely a corruption; cf. *CII*, IV, p. 649 and n. 3.
62. Majumdar, *Chaulukyas of Gujarat*, pp. 495-96. It remains uncertain whether the mysterious *rākṣasa* named Barbaraka, whom Jayasiṃha defeated and with whom he is ever associated in legend, is in fact to be identified with Bahalim, the viceroy of the Ghaznavid Bahram Shah, AD 1116-1157, pp. 495-96, and 408-9.
63. *āryāvarttaṃ yathārthaṃ punar api kṛtavān mleccavicchedanābhiḥ devaḥ, and śaṅkā vā puruṣottamasya bhavato nāsty eva*. The text is found in "Delhi-Siwāli Pillar Inscription of Visaladeva" ed. by Kielhorn, *IA* 19, p. 218 (the inscription is dated VS 1220 = AD 1164). The pillar text is reproduced in the 14th cen. anthology of Sanskrit poetry from Śākambhari itself, the *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara #1255-56; see also Kielhorn's note on p. 216.
64. Bühler in *EI* 1 (1892), pp. 22-23.
65. *IHO*, 3.843; cf. *JIH*, 15.175.

THE CULT OF PARASURĀMA AND ITS POPULARITY IN ORISSA

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Parasurāma, i.e., Rāma with the *paraśu* (axe), the sixth *avatāra* in the conventional list of *Daśāvatāras* of Viṣṇu, is generally considered to be a historical figure who eventually became deified.¹ In the *Śāradā-tilaka Tantra* (17.155), for example, he is referred to as "the first brave man".² There is disagreement, however, as to whether he was a brahmin or a *kṣatriya* (warrior). Although he is called a brahmin in all versions of the myth, his martial actions are those befitting a *kṣatriya*.³ Traditionally the Parasurāma period is ascribed to *circa* 2550-2350 B.C., thus comprising twelve generations till the rise of king Sagara of Ayodhyā and the Solar dynasty, and is dominated by the Haihayas and the Bhṛgu in turn.⁴ In the fully developed Parasurāma myth there are five separate yet interrelated themes: 1) the historical background and the birth of Parasurāma; 2) the death of his mother, Reṇukā; 3) the abduction of the celestial cow, the death of his father Jamadagni and Parasurāma's revenge against Kārtavīrya and the *kṣatriya* race; 4) Parasurāma's penance on mount Mahendra; and 5) the reclamation of land from the ocean.

1. Historical Background and Birth of Parasurāma

The Bhṛgu (Bhārgavas) dwelt in Gujarat and were the priests of Kṛtavīrya, a Haihaya king who is said to have bestowed great wealth on the Bhṛgu. On the refusal of the Bhṛgu to return this wealth, Kṛtavīrya's descendants ill-treated them, eventually slaughtering them and even cutting asunder the foetus in the womb of their wives. The Bhṛgu fled to Kānyakubja for safety. In order to wreak vengeance on the wicked Haihayas, the Bhṛgu engaged in collecting arms and sought marital alliances with the *kṣatriya* ruling families. Ṛcika, son of Urva and a famous *ṛṣi* skilled in archery, sought in marriage Satyavatī, the daughter of king Gādhi of Kānyakubja. The king did not approve of the match and attempted to evade it by demanding an almost impossible price in the form of a thousand black-eared horses. Ṛcika, however, fulfilled the condition, acquiring the horses from Varuṇa, and married Satyavatī.⁵ From this union was born Jamadagni. He became skilled in archery and arms and made an alliance with the ruling family of Ayodhyā by marrying Reṇukā, daughter of Reṇu, a junior king in the line. Reṇukā gave birth to five sons, the youngest being Parasurāma. In the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (VI.16-17) version, the Bhṛgu wives, pursued by the Haihayas, fled to the Himālayas where they paid homage to the Devī Jagadambikā who promised that a son, born from a thigh of one of the wives, would redress their wants for the propagation of the family. The lustrous light of this boy, upon birth, blinded the pursuing *kṣatriyas* and they, realizing how they had greatly oppressed the Bhṛgu women, bowed down and took refuge in them.