Editorial Conventions

Transliteration

The transliteration system used in this book is based on the IAST convention and will be essentially familiar to all scholars who have worked with Sanskrit or related languages in a Romanised script. The main difference between IAST and the other widely used standard, ISO15919, can be summarised as follows: 1, sonant r and l are transliterated as r and l (not r and l); 2, the Sanskrit vowels corresponding to Devanagari ए and ऑ are transliterated as e and o (not ē and ṭ); and 3, the anusvāra is transliterated as m (not mī).

In addition to conventional IAST characters, I use x to transliterate the jihvāmūliya and f to represent the upadhmāniya. These are alternatives to the visarga used in some inscriptions before velars and labials respectively. The IAST standard does not cover them, but in general practice they are usually transliterated as h with some diacritic or another (most commonly ḥ and ḷ). The use of x and f to represent these characters is not unprecedented and more intuitive than the use of diacritical marks otherwise not employed in the transliteration of Sanskrit, since the jihvāmūliya represents a voiceless velar fricative (IPA x) and the upadhmāniya is a voiceless bilabial fricative (IPA f).

Throughout my editions and commentary, independent Sanskrit words are separated by spaces unless prevented by vowel samādiḥ, and compound members are hyphenated where possible, except in proper names and some closely-knit compounds such as mahārāja. I do not use the hyphen for any other purpose in my text editions; thus, contrary to common practice, I forgo hyphens at the ends of physical lines falling inside a word. The reader is advised to bear in mind that all spacing and hyphenation is editorial (the rare spaces in the original inscription are indicated in the editions with an underscore), and as such, extraneous to the epigraph and potentially incorrect.1

To reduce confusion, I have opted not to use the “double hyphen” (equal sign) employed especially in older editions of Indic epigraphs when the addition of a space to the transliterated text would split an aksara of the original. As noted above, I do not force segmentation on word boundaries obscured by vowel samādiḥ, so the only function such a sign would serve is to distinguish final (halanta) forms of consonants from consonants in ligatures. For this purpose – in diplomatic editions, but nowhere else – I use the uppercase forms of some consonants to transliterate a halanta grapheme. Similarly, uppercase vowels in my diplomatic editions represent vowel aksaras (initial vowels). All hyphens and spaces being editorial, any lowercase consonant preceding a space or hyphen is to be understood by default as part of an aksara with the consonant or vowel following that space or hyphen. Uppercase consonants – and, if applicable, vowels – clearly set apart the rare cases where an inscription employs hiatus for segmenting the text into semantic or prosodic units (e.g. yad atra might be written as यद or यदात्रा; both would be spaced in my editions, but the latter would be transcribed in the diplomatic edition as yA D Atra). This system has an added advantage over the use of the double hyphen: it comes in useful where legible text meets a lacuna (e.g. tasmāṅ [...] represents tasmāṅ, with a halanta consonant legible before the lacuna, while tamsāṅ [...] corresponds to tāṃ, where the final n is a regular aksara that may have had a now illegible vowel component; conversely, [...] Eva means that एवा starts with an initial vowel after a lacuna, while [...] eva corresponds to एवा, where an illegible consonant has a legible vowel mark and is followed by a legible va). In the former case, the use of uppercase for both final consonants and initial vowels is redundant, but still helpful when, for instance, an initial vowel is separated from a final consonant by a line break.

I use the abbreviation circle (degree symbol, °) at the beginning or end of a cited Sanskrit fragment that is merged in vowel samādiḥ with its original context, so a hypothetical “āivā” might refer to the word eva in the string caivābhavat.

When citing words or phrases from an inscription in an English sentence, I do not necessarily retain the peculiarities of the original spelling unless a non-standard feature is relevant to the discussion. Thus, for instance, kings whose name has vardhana at the end become vardhana in discussion; upadhmāniya and jihvāmūliya are consolidated into visarga; avagraha is supplied; nasal consonants may be standardised to anusvāra or vice versa; and emendations marked as such in the edition are silently adopted.

When I cite readings or miscellaneous Sanskrit terms from other editors, I standardise their transliteration as above, and where applicable, also transform their notation of uncertain readings and lacunae to the conventions of this book. I do, however, retain the original transliteration used by earlier scholars in direct quotations of passages written in English with some Sanskrit interspersed in it.

1 An excellent example of this is the possibility of construing yudhāvatīthathātām in line 12 of the Risthal inscription (A9) as either yudhā+vatīthathātām or yudhā-+avitīthathātām; see page 138.
For modern proper names such as geographical names and author names, I use the common fully Anglicised spelling, except when an author’s name appears in their publications with diacritical marks. When a modern proper name is not widely known, such as that of a village where an inscription was found, I note the Devanagari spelling at a crucial occurrence of the name, for instance in the description of the inscription.

Overview Tables

Each section about a major inscription begins with a table that presents the basic facts about that inscription and the object on which it is inscribed. The table includes the Siddham identifiers for each object and inscription. Siddham is a freely accessible online epigraphic database whose initial development took place in the framework of the ERC project Beyond Boundaries with an interface for viewing and searching inscriptions and inscribed object. A Siddham ID consists of the letters OB for object and IN for inscription, followed by a five-digit number.²

The overview table includes brief data about object and inscription dimensions, information about the item’s discovery and current location, the topic and date of the inscription, and the personal and geographical names appearing in it. These proper names are also compiled in Appendices 1 (Prosopography) and 2 (Gazetteer). The table further shows abbreviated references to the major epigraphic compendia and lists that include the inscription, and full references to other published editions of the text. All of the information extracted into these tables is also found, more verbosely, in the description and commentary of the epigraph that follows the table.

Descriptions

When discussing the layout of a surface, including surfaces with figurative carving, the terms “left” and “right” always refer to the viewer’s orientation unless explicitly designated as “proper left” and “proper right.” In palaeographic descriptions I have attempted to be clear and consistent, and to limit the details to possibly significant features. In describing individual character forms, I generally follow the terminology proposed by Ahmad Hasan Dani (1963, 273–89). Where I deviate from these terms, I hope my choice of descriptive words will be self-evident. I use the terms “character” and “akṣara” interchangeably. I refer to open-ended lines as a limb or more specifically as a foot, an arm or a tail depending on which bodily metaphor seems most apt. I employ the word “baseline” to refer to the imaginary horizontal ruler connecting the bottoms of characters without a descender, and the term “headline” for the similar imaginary ruler connecting the tops of characters without an ascender. The former term is borrowed from Western typography; the latter might be called the mean line, but “mean” is a factual description for a modern Roman script (where all uppercase characters and many lowercase ones reach the higher capline), while it would be inappropriate for a Brāhmī-type script, in which few characters have ascenders in their default form. The character sizes I report for inscriptions are the average height of normal-sized character bodies, i.e. the distance between the baseline and the headline.³ The line heights I report are the leading distance, i.e. the average vertical distance between the baseline of one line and that of the next line.

Photographs

Many of the photo illustrations provided for inscriptions are digital composites. Lacking the resources for advanced solutions such as reflectance transfer imaging, my preferred technique for taking photographs of inscriptions was to use a small linear light source held close to the inscribed surface and illuminate the inscription with grazing light. After taking a number of photos with various segments of the inscription lit in this way, I enhanced the detail and contrast of images and stitched them together, cherry-picking closeups so that each part of the text was presented in the resulting image in the best possible light. This is the reason for the uneven appearance of the photos. The individual images were cut and patched along carefully selected lines so as to minimise the disruption of characters by the stitching process. Different detail

² As this book goes to press, Siddham can be accessed at https://siddham.network/ but if the URL should change in the future, web search will locate the site. The webpage for each object or inscription may be found using the search box on the site or directly at a URI suffixed with /inscription/IN#### or /object/OB####; for instance, the Mandsaur inscription of the time of Naravarman is at http://siddham.uk/inscription/IN00017 and the stone that bears it is at http://siddham.uk/object/OB00016.

³ General practice in Indic epigraphy seems to be inconsistent in this respect. Some editors appear to use a consolidated approach similar to mine, while others prefer to report a range without making clear whether this implies a variation in character height or simply the difference between a squat character and a high or deep one.
photos needed slightly different enhancements and most required some distortion to compensate for variance in camera angle and lens distortion. In most cases, a rubbing or a photo of the entire inscription was used as a template to which I fitted the individual snippets. Aside from enhancement and distortion of each snippet as a whole, no particular details were manually retouched, altered or enhanced in any of the photos presented here.

**Editions**

The text of each major inscription is presented in two forms: a diplomatic edition and a curated edition. I trust that this will not be viewed as a waste of space, but that at least some of my readers will find it useful to be able to consult either an easy-to-read presentation of the text as text in the abstract sense, or a fairly accurate representation of the text as inscribed. Both editions include, and clearly flag, characters that are unclear in the original and those that are lost or illegible in the original and have been supplied by the editor. The diplomatic edition is segmented according to the physical lines of the original epigraph, with superscript labels indicating the beginning of each stanza where the inscription is in verse. The diplomatic text is as found in the original, without emendations (but with the loci that may require emendation flagged). This rendering uses uppercase letters to distinguish *halanta* consonants and initial vowels (see also *Romanisation* above). Conversely, the curated edition is segmented primarily into stanzas (or paragraphs, where the text is in prose), with superscript labels indicating the beginning of each line of the original. The curated text includes editorial emendations (with the pre- and post-emendation version shown one after the other), additions and deletions.

Diverging from widespread practice, I do not add verse punctuation or verse numbers unless these are also found in the original. Editorial verse numbering is always shown at the beginning, not the end, of a stanza, and always in a label that clearly sets it off from the original text. Editorial verse punctuation, always flagged as such, is only added if an inscription uses verse punctuation with some consistency but omits it now and again.

The stanza labels in the Curated Text include the name of the stanza’s metre. While the identification of metres is straightforward unless the text is very heavily damaged, the associated terminology has some ambiguities. Many earlier editors prefer to use the labels *aupacchandasika* and *vaññāliya* for stanzas composed in metres that are actually stricter, fully syllabo-quantitative instantiations of the partly mora-based metres that these names refer to. I thus prefer to name the specific metre in each case; for instance, the Risthal inscription (A9) includes several verses in *mālabhārīṇī* and *puṣpitāgṛā*, both of which were formerly tagged as *aupacchandasika*. Conversely, where a stanza or two in pure *indravajrā* or pure *upendravajrā* appears amidst a string of *upajāti* verses, I prefer to classify each as *upajāti* on the assumption that the author was composing in *upajāti*, and some of his verses fortuitously turned out to conform to one of the stricter requirements. Stanzas are only labelled as *indravajrā* or *upendravajrā* when several of the same pure metre occur together or when a single one appears in a sequence of varied metres.

**Text Notes**

The apparatus below the curated text summarises details such as unusual character forms, reading difficulties and alternative readings by other editors. Some of the notes are further elaborated in the commentary above the editions. The text notes are not intended to be a full critical apparatus of all previously published editions. Where my edition differs from what I consider to be the primary previous edition of an epigraph, I do as a rule note all such deviations including minor ones such as the use of *anusvāra* versus *m* or probable typographic mistakes in the previous edition, but I have not made it a point to highlight one hundred percent of such details. For texts that have been edited by several scholars, I always indicate differences of opinion where they may have an impact on the interpretation of the text, but usually do not do so for orthographic minutiae.

Each entry in the apparatus begins with a superscript label identifying the line of the original text to which that item refers. The label is followed by a lemma in bold face and delimited by a ⟦ sign. The note that follows is in plain English, with previous editors identified by sigla resolved at the beginning of each set of notes.

**References and Cross-references**

Citations of scholarly literature are handled as author-date references throughout the book; the full bibliographic details of each such publication are listed under References in Appendix 3. To reduce clutter and conserve space, I omit author-date references in certain particular cases. I use abbreviated titles to refer to epigraphic compendia such as the *Corpus Inscriptionum* and Sircar’s *Select Inscriptions*; these abbreviations are resolved on
page XXI. Throughout the discussion of an inscription I often refer to the opinions of previous editors simply by the name of the editor. The author-date citation for these editions is listed in the overview table at the head of each section.

Primary sources are referred to by title; for literary sources this is a widely used literary title, while for inscriptions it is a standard reference usually starting with a place name, such as “Mandsaur inscription of Kumāravarman.” Primary sources mentioned only in passing in the body of the book are accompanied by a reference to the scholarly work where they are edited or cited; primary sources that I cite directly or discuss in some detail are listed in Appendix 3 by title, with a pointer to their edition(s) and, if applicable, their Siddham IDs. For many of the inscriptions edited herein, I use a revised title rather than that by which they were published earlier. This results partly from my adoption of the present official spelling Mandsaur to replace the older Mandasor, but more importantly from my practice of naming inscriptions after the person who actually commissioned them (if the name of this person is known) in preference to the ruler during whose reign they were made. For instance, I thus refer to the Gangdhara inscription (A4) as one of Mayūrākṣaka, not as one of Viśvavarman. To facilitate looking up an inscription in this book, I include a concordance of inscription titles next to the table of contents (page XVII), listing titles under which the epigraphs edited here had been published earlier. Inscriptions compiled within this volume are referred to by their number (such as A1) and, usually, by their title which may be abbreviated.

Translations

In my translations of the epigraphs featured here, I have attempted to dance the fine line between inaccurate paraphrase and unreadable sophistry. Various scholars have drawn this line across varying points of the continuum. The primary audience of my translations, I believe, will be scholars and students of disciplines such as history, in other words people whose forte is not Sanskrit. My aim was therefore not to create a reader of Epigraphic Sanskrit for self study, but to produce reasonably palatable English prose while representing as much of the original content as possible. I thus emphatically did not attempt to replicate the syntactical details of Sanskrit, striving instead to produce syntax closer to natural English. (I did, however, try to replicate cases where a key word or phrase is placed very early or very late in a long sentence to heighten its poetic effect.) I also did not hesitate to employ loose English equivalents for some technical terms often left untranslated (such as official ranks and plant names) and to deploy multiple words to translate a single Sanskrit word; but I did avoid modern colloquial expressions unless one happened to be very similar to the original in literal meaning. Being a non-native speaker of English with a penchant for ponderous language, I am aware that some of my translations will not really look like “natural English.” The only mitigating factor I can plead is that many previously published translations are even more cumbersome to read.

The flip side of the coin is that while my translations are reasonably accurate, they inevitably alter, obfuscate and create some nuances of meaning. Caveat emptor: the translation is a modern product. Hypotheses founded on any particular word or phrase must first be verified against the original text. To facilitate this, superscript labels in the translations point to verses of the original inscription. There are, however, no pointers to line numbers, since stanzas usually comprise semantic units while inscribed lines do not, and none of the inscriptions compiled herein include long prose sections. Some inscriptions use extremely long and complex sentences, which have on occasion necessitated jumping to and fro between lines or even verses to produce intelligible English, so the stanza labels are not necessarily in a linear order. To make complex syntactic or semantic structure easier to overview and navigate, I also use indenting of varying depth.

There are a number of recurring terms in the body of inscriptions treated in this book, and where the context permitted, I have tried to use the same, or least a related, English word for each occurrence. In addition, I diverge from convention in my translation of a few recurring technical terms. My reasons for doing so are briefly explained below for some terms that recur in several inscriptions. Other choices of terminology that may not be obvious (for instance “loyalty” for anurāga) are defended in footnotes.

Siddham – Accomplished

The word siddham appears in a formulaic manner at the beginning of many inscriptions over a wide spatial and temporal range. It is my impression, which I hope to explore further and support with evidence in the future, that siddham, at least in a fair number of early inscriptions including most of those collected herein, was in

4 A presumably equivalent symbol often replaces siddham, and it may also alternate with the expression siddhir astu (Sircar 1965a, 92–94, 127), to which the reasoning presented here does not apply.
fact functional rather than formulaic. To wit, I believe that it is a factual record that the construction described in an inaugural inscription or the donation recorded in a copper plate grant was completed or executed. In many cases, often but not only on copper plates, the body text was evidently engraved at an earlier time, and siddham was added subsequently either in the margin or in a space formerly left blank in the first line. In other cases, presumably when the full inscription was engraved a posteriori, siddham is an organic part of the text, and the word (or an equivalent auspicious symbol) may subsequently have become no more than a formula to be used at the beginning of epigraphs.

Pūrvā – Preamble

The use of the word pūrvā (literally, “earlier, previous”) in some inscriptions has caused scholars many sleepless nights. Discussing verse 44 of the inscription of the silk weavers (A6), Fleet (CII3, 87–88 n. 10) suggested that it qualified the implied substantive prāsaṣṭi and hence meant “this [eulogy] that precedes.” On the basis of this, Bühler (1890, 9–10, = 1913, 138) went so far as to see the word pūrvā in the present inscription as evidence that its genre was called prāsaṣṭi at the time. In many other epigraphic settings the word seems to mean a date or to qualify one, perhaps implying that the substantive tithi should be supplied. D. R. Bhandarkar (1981, 241 n. 1) has argued at some length that pūrvā itself must be understood as a substantive in both of these contexts, and that its meaning is “detailed description or specification.”

The suggestion is worth considering, especially in view of the fact that pūrvā is very often preceded by the deictic pronoun iyam. However, there is no clear path of derivation from the core meaning of the word to Bhandarkar’s proposed translation, which he obviously worked out by seeking a sense that would be equally applicable to dates and to epigraphic compositions. I prefer to believe, with Sircar (1954b, 123, 1965b, 307 n. 2), that these two uses of pūrvā are, or at least were originally, separate. I think that in contexts not involving a date, pūrvā is a substantive meaning something like a “[description of the] precedents” of an undertaking, a sense that can be better explained by extension of the original meaning of the word. The pūrvā, I offer, would originally have meant a text (perhaps not necessarily an epigraphic one) that described a donor and his resolution to create something eternal, culminating in a grand donation or construction. The sentiment has much in common with the preamble of many a modern-day treaty and act of law, but whereas those provide an introduction to the enacting terms laid out next, the ancient pūrvā may also (when not inscribed on copper plates and followed by an enacting section) be a metaphorical preamble to the physical monument upon which it is engraved.

A possibly important detail within the Aulikara corpus seems to support my view. The poet Vāsula composed two of the inscriptions treated here and hallmarked them with an anuṣṭubh verse that is almost identical in the two texts, except that in the Risthal inscription (A9, v29) it refers to the body text as a pūrvā, while in the Sondhni pillar (A11 and A12, v9) it simply uses the word ślokāḥ, “verses.” Now the Risthal inscription is a standard example of a donative record with all the accoutrements of the genre such as an invocation, a genealogy of the ruler intertwined with the praise of his and his ancestors’ deeds, a date, a description of the donor and his pedigree, a description of the edifices constructed, and a final prayer for the endurance of the construction. Conversely, the Sondhni epigraph, though it definitely qualifies as a prāsaṣṭi (eulogy) and records a construction, is not about the establishment of a public utility. It is a victory pillar (and, probably, a dhvaja-stambha associated with a temple), inscribed with a victory inscription that lacks all these standard items. It therefore appears that Vāsula’s respective use of the terms pūrvā and ślokāḥ in these two cases was not a question of random choice between two roughly synonymous words, but a conscious employment of a technical term where it applied, and its avoidance where it did not.

Mālava-gaṇa-sthiti – Convention of the Mālava Community

A peculiarity of some inscriptions dated in the Mālava Era (q.v. page 9 below) is the use of the phrase mālava-gaṇa-sthiti or an equivalent. This was originally understood to mean that the era is reckoned from the establishment of the Mālava tribal community (Peterson 1885; Fleet CII3, 158). Kielhorn (1890b, 56–57) then suggested interpreting gaṇa in the sense

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5. Within this book these include the silk weaver inscription (A6, 123), the Chhoti Sadri (A7, 117) and Risthal (A9, 121) inscriptions, and the inscription of Kumāravarman (A15, 121). The Nagari inscription (C2, 15) is an example of pūrvā used in a date.

6. Specifically, within my present scope, mālavānāṃ gaṇa-sthityā yāte śata-catuṣṭaye tri-navaty-adhike 9bdānām in line 19 of the inscription of the silk weavers (A6) and paṇcaṣu śateṣu saradāṃ yāteṣy ekānna-SAatika-sahiteṣu mālava-gaṇa-sthiti-vaśāt kāla-jhiṃāya likhitēṣu in line 21 of the inscription of Nirdoṣa (A10).
of *gaṇā*, “counting,” and *sthiti* as the establishment of a certain number by counting. The suggestion found some support (Shembavnekar 1931), but an alternative solution proposed by D. R. Bhandarkar (1913, 162) appears to be far more likely. According to Bhandarkar, *gaṇa* must, after all, be understood to refer to the tribe or community, while *sthiti* in this context means a “settled rule or usage.” The expression thus parallels the phrase *mālava-gaṇāmnāte* in the Mandsaur inscription of the time of Naravarman (A1, l1). Although R. G. Bhandarkar (1913) continued to argue for the event of the constitution of the Mālava *gaṇa* as the starting point of the era, D. R. Bhandarkar’s new interpretation has been endorsed by Altekar (1948, 259) and Sircar (1965b, 306 n. 1), and I follow it herein by rendering *mālava-gaṇa-sthiti* as “the convention of the Mālava community.” For a more verbose overview of the topic and further references, see D. R. Bhandarkar’s astute summary in CII3rev (pp. 188–193).

**Rājasthāṇiya – Chancellor**

The office designated by the word *rājasthāṇiya* (and some closely related terms such as *rājasthāna*) is mentioned in several epigraphic sources, but not clearly understood (see IEG s.v.). The word suggests someone who acts in place of the king, a sort of royal lieutenant. According to a mediaeval definition, he is someone who “carries out the object of protecting subjects and shelters them.” It appears, mainly on the basis of the Risthal inscription (A9), that in the Aulikara court at least, one of the functions of the *rājasthāṇiya* was to manage the executive aspect of the king’s undertakings such as constructions. Translations proposed for the word include “viceroy” and “regent” (CII3 p. 157 n. 1), but both of these terms primarily imply a person representing a king in his absence, the former because he is not physically present and the latter because he is incapable of ruling. The *rājasthāṇiyas* of the Aulikaras evidently functioned side by side with a king in full possession of his faculties, so neither of these translations is appropriate. For this reason, and because the term *amātya* (minister, counsellor) is used as a synonym for this office (A9, l19), I have settled on the English word “chancellor,” intended to conjure associations of the Grand Chancellor of historical China rather than of various chancellors of modern Europe.

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7 Cited from the *Lokaprakāśa* of Kṣemendra by Bühler (1876, 207).