A STUDY OF PĀLA PATRONAGE

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

by
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Gopāla I
  └── Dharmapāla (Vākpaśa)
      ├── Devapāla (Jayapāla)
      │     └── Śūrapāla I
      │           └── Vigrahapāla I
      │                     └── Nārāyaṇapāla
      │                               └── Rājyapāla
      │                                               └── Gopāla II
      │                                                                 │
      │                                                                 └── Vigrahapāla II
      │                                                                 │
      │                                                                 └── Mahipāla I
      │                                                                            └── Nayapāla
      │                                                                                   └── Vigrahapāla III
      │                                                                                                             │
      │                                                                                                                └── Mahipāla II
      │                                                                                                            └── Śūrapāla II
      │                                                                                                           └── Rāmapāla
      │                                                                                                     └── Kumārapāla
      │                                                                                                                └── Madanapāla
      │                                                                                                                         └── Gopāla III
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>KING</th>
<th>KNOWN</th>
<th>REIGN PERIOD</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE REIGN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gopāla I</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td>750-770 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmapāla</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>770-805</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devapāla</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>805-845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śūrapāla I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>845-855</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vigrahapāla I</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nārāyapāla</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>855-910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rājyapāla</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>910-945</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopāla II</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>945-965</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigrahapāla II</td>
<td>(26?)</td>
<td>965-985</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahipāla I</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>985-1035</td>
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<td>Nāyaṇapāla</td>
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<td>Vigrahapāla III</td>
<td>17 (26?)</td>
<td>1055-1085</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahipāla II</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1085-1090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śūrapāla II</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Rāmapāla</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1090-1135</td>
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<td>Kūmārapāla</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1135-1140</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gopāla III</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1140-1144</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madanapāla</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1144-1163</td>
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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

The Pāla dynasty was a continuous lineage of kings, each of whose personal names bore the suffix "-pāla," who ruled from the eighth to the twelfth century A.D. in northeastern India. During this period, though their fortunes rose and fell several times, they generally dominated the area of the modern provinces of Bihar and Bengal.

Since 1780, when the Pālas first became known to modern scholars through the discovery of the Monghyr copper plate of Devapāla, the main theme emphasized by writers who dealt with the dynasty has been political. Pāla chronology, conquests of territory, and contacts with other Indian dynasties have been examined and discussed in great detail. In contrast, the general cultural side of Pāla history has undergone a less critical examination. Secular and religious writings and works of art have been dated to the period of Pāla rule by reputable scholars, but far too often these have been only carelessly linked to dynastic history. The most glaring example of this tendency is in relation to Buddhist culture, where the hypothesis presented was that the Pāla kings were the last great patrons of Buddhist religion, literature, and art in India, whose devotion enabled Buddhism to survive in their domains for centuries after
it had become extinct elsewhere. Many "proofs" have been advanced for this hypothesis, but the whole of the available evidence seems never to have been brought together for critical analysis. The aim of the present paper is to investigate this hypothesis in detail, in order to determine to what extent each of the Pāla kings actually patronized Buddhist culture. This study indicates that, while all the kings of the dynasty were nominally Buddhist, only a few were active contributors who might have positively affected the general state of Buddhist culture in eastern India.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

The first few known inscriptions relating to the Pāla kings were translated and published in the early volumes of the periodical *Asiatic Researches*, from which the authors of the first general histories of India in English drew their scanty notices of the dynasty. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the pioneer efforts of Alexander Cunningham of the Archaeological Survey of India inspired the discovery and translation of an ever increasing number of Pāla inscriptions, which were published in such periodicals as the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, *Indian Antiquary*, and *Epigraphia Indica*. Thus, a collection of primary source material gradually became available, and, in 1915, R.D. Banerji published his mono-
graph The Pālas of Bengal, which summarized and analyzed the accumulated data.  


The results of these two decades of Pāla scholarship were placed in a broader context by such works as P.L. Paul's The Early History of Bengal, two volumes, Calcutta, 1939-1940; B.C. Sen's Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal, Calcutta, 1942; and R.C. Majumdar's History of Bengal, I, Dacca, 1943. It was in these volumes that the hypothesis of Pāla Buddhist patronage received its fully developed formulation. R.C. Majumdar's book, which has become the standard work on the Pāla dynasty, states that "the successors of Gopāla were all ardent followers of Buddhism, and for nearly four
hundred years their court proved to be the last stronghold of that dying faith in India."3 The present paper is an attempt to challenge such assertions in the light of recent discoveries and a re-examination of the more familiar data.

SOURCES

The primary sources of information about the history and culture of the Pāla period vary significantly in original purpose, type of content, and date. As their reliability is closely related to these considerations, the major different categories of sources used for this study will be discussed individually.

The copper plate grants issued by the Pāla kings themselves constitute the first group of sources. Each is a Sanskrit inscription which records an official, royal gift of land to some individual, group of individuals, or institution. According to the Yājñavalkyasāmṛti, a Hindu law book of the first or second century A.D., such grants should be inscribed upon a copper plate marked with the royal seal.4 Widespread discoveries of actual plates reveal that, not only the Pālas, but kings all over medieval India followed this injunction. More specifically, the general textual format used in the Pāla grants is common to all known royal copper plates issued in the Bengal area between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries
A.D. This standard format included an invocation to a deity, a eulogy of the donor and his ancestors, the donor's official titles, a description of the grant, a description of the donee, injunctions to officials, and verses which praised any who would comply with the grant and cursed any who would interfere with it. Finally, among the twelve published grants of the Pāla dynasty itself, there is a strong tendency toward repetition of large portions of the text used by one's ancestors. The weight of such anti-individualizing traditions must certainly be considered in evaluating the contents of Pāla copper plates. Nevertheless, each such plate was personally issued for public display by a living Pāla king, and, more than any other source, would be expected to give reliable, if invariably favorable, information about him. The copper plate grants of contemporaneous kings of other dynasties, though less directly pertinent, are equally reliable and occasionally useful sources.

A second important group of primary sources consists of inscriptions on stone or metal (other than copper plates) which date from the time of the Pāla dynasty. These usually were intended as permanent records of the commendable deeds or religious gifts of individuals. None can be attributed to the Pāla kings themselves, though two were issued by their ministers. Some of these inscriptions give important information about various Pāla
rulers, but others simply mention a king's name as a means of dating. The contents of these inscriptions may generally be considered reliable, due to their contemporary and public nature.

A third group of sources consists of manuscript colophons. These are notations appended to a manuscript copy of a text for the purpose of giving information about the author, place, date, and patron of the original composition and/or the scribe, place, date, and patron of the copy. Frequently, copies or original works are dated to the reigns of Pāla kings, but only rarely is other information about the rulers provided. The colophon of any particular manuscript copy probably contains reliable data about the circumstances of its production, but would be expected to be less reliable about the circumstances of the original, often considerably earlier, composition.

A final major category of sources for this study includes texts of various kinds and various, often uncertain, dates. These describe the state of Buddhism during the Pāla period, mention Pāla kings in passing, or purport to give positive data about individual Pāla rulers.

The earliest such text is the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, probably written in Bengal about 770 A.D. Its historical section is written with a Buddhist bias, but presents a contemporary view of King Gopāla. Second is the record of the travels of Ou-K'ong, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who
visited India between 751 and 790 A.D.

This account seems definitely reliable, but is unfortunately brief and undetailed. Third is the *Vimala-ratna-lekha-nāma*, a letter supposedly written from the great Buddhist scholar Atiśa to King Nayapāla. Whether or not this letter is genuine is unclear. A fourth textual source is the collection of Sanskrit poetry entitled *Subhāṣitaratnakosa*, compiled by the Buddhist monk Vidyākara who lived in the latter half of the eleventh century in Bengal. The works in this anthology seem to have been genuinely drawn from the Bihar and Bengal region between 700 and 1050 A.D., but some of the attributions may be doubted. Next in time is the *Rāmacarita*, an epic written by Sandhyākaranandin, court poet in the reign of Madanapāla. This poem was designed to recount the exploits of both the legendary Hindu hero Rāma and the Pāla king Rāmapāla, and probably is a reliable if eulogistic source. Its commentary, which usefully explains many obscure verses, may be somewhat later in date. Sixth is a Tibetan account of the life of Atiśa, printed in about 1250 A.D. and written by Mkhan-po Mchim Thams chad mkhyen-pa, who based it on fragments of the work of Kalyāṇa Mitra Phyag-sorpa, who had spoken at length to Atiśa's disciple Nag-tsho. The core of this work would, therefore, have consisted of accurate information, but the final version probably incorporated many later legends.

From the following centuries there exist several
Tibetan compilations of Buddhist history. Of these I have examined the History of Buddhism (Chos-hbung) by Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub-pa (1290-1364);\textsuperscript{12} the Blue Annals (Deb-ther sngon-po) by 'Gos lo-tsā-ba gZon-nu-dpal, written between 1476 and 1478 and dealing chiefly with Tibetan Buddhist history;\textsuperscript{13} an abridged version of the Mine of Precious Stones (bKa'-babs-bdun-lDan) by Lama Tāranātha, written in 1600;\textsuperscript{14} the History of Buddhism in India (rgya-gar-chos-hbyung), also by Tāranātha, completed in 1608;\textsuperscript{15} and the Religious History of Tibet (Dpag-bsam lion-bzang) by Sum-pa mkhan-po Ye-shes dpal-hbyor, completed in 1747;\textsuperscript{16}

The Caturāśīti-siddha-pravṛttī, a Tibetan account of a series of Buddhist preceptors, of uncertain but probably recent date, may also be added to this group.\textsuperscript{17} With respect to the reliability of this important series of Tibetan texts, those nearest in date to the events they discuss seem most accurate. Later works made use of earlier ones, but also incorporated additional legends current at the time of their writing. Thus, for example, Tāranātha and Sum-pa give more "information" about the Pala kings than does Bu-ston, who wrote several hundred years earlier.

Also, it should be noted that these Tibetan Buddhist historians, while not uncritical of their sources, wrote with a strong Buddhist bias and a world view that did not distinguish the miraculous from the historical.

Finally, later Indian texts which refer to the
Pāla period in passing are the Sekhīsubhodavya, a fifteenth or sixteenth century account of the life of Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī, which purports to date from the twelfth or thirteenth century and contains numerous factual errors;¹⁸ Ghanarāma's Dharmaṃgaṇḍa, a religious text of the Dharma cult, written in 1713;¹⁹ and the Kulaśāstras, relatively modern genealogies of Bengal Brahmins.²⁰ These last two works, though recent in composition, may have drawn upon far more ancient sources for their information.

In this paper, each Pāla king will be considered individually and each piece of available data will be analyzed with respect to the reliability of its source before it is admitted as evidence. The essentially false hypothesis that all the Pāla kings were strong supporters of Buddhism was chiefly based on an uncritical acceptance of the statements of Tibetan historians and a misplaced emphasis on the conventional form rather than the specific content of the Pāla copper plates.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


7. S. Lévi and É. Chavannes, "L'itinéraire d'ou-K'ong (751-790)," *Journal Asiatique*, CXLVII, 1895, 342.


15 Ibid., xi.


20 Ibid., II, 48.
CHAPTER II:

THE FIRST FOUR PĀLA KINGS

The first ruling member of the Pāla dynasty was Gopāla, whose name, meaning "protector of cows," was a familiar epithet of the Kṛṣṇa incarnation of the Hindu god Viṣṇu. From his own reign there is no inscriptional evidence available, but the Khalimpur copper plate of his son and successor, Dharmapāla, mentions Gopāla's father Vapyaṭa and grandfather Dayitaviṣṇu. The latter, whose name means "beloved of Viṣṇu," is vaguely described as a learned man; the former was apparently a warrior.¹

Neither of these men is mentioned in any other surviving sources, including later Pāla copperplates, in which it is likely that any pretentions to high ancestral status would have been noted. From the names of these individuals, there is some reason to believe that the family was traditionally Vaiṣṇavite, but no other certain conclusions may be drawn about the first ruler's background.

The Khalimpur plate states that Gopāla was made king by his subjects in order to remove the country's state of mātsyanāya, a term which literally means "fish practice" and implies a lawless situation in which the strong devour the weak.² The historicity of this episode is placed in some doubt by the fact that the description seems to have been derived from the Arthaśāstra, a traditional Hindu treatise on statecraft, in which the legendary
figure Manu was also said to have been made king by people suffering from "fish practice." However, various other sources dealing with Gopāla indicate that he did gain his position with the aid of popular support in a period of anarchy.

The Maṇjuśrīmūlakalpa describes a period in which several successive kings ruled for only a few days each, and then introduces Gopāla:

Then, there will be (a) king, from everyone, Gopālaka. That king (will be) sweet in speech, considerate, and a power. Formerly he will, in youth, be in the hands of women, miserable, foolish, having been subdued by enemies; but coming in contact with a good (religious) friend he will become very charitable. He (will) become the maker of vihāras, chaityas, gardens, reservoirs, beautiful free hotels, bridges, Deva temples, and caves. He will be ready in matters praiseworthy. The land will become surrounded by many heretics—orthodox Hindus up to the sea. The king will be kind, a materialist but (a) lover of justice or religion. He having ruled for twenty-seven years died (sic) on the Ganges at the age of eighty......Then the Gopālas will be king(s) who will be of the menial caste, and the people will be miserable with Brahmmins. The Buddha's doctrine having been lost, the time will be irreligious.

These extracts, from a contemporary source favoring Buddhism, indicate that Gopāla owed his position to popular support, admit that he built deva temples (temples to Hindu gods) as well as vihāras (Buddhist monasteries), and do not seem optimistic about the future of Buddhism under his descendents.

The later Tibetan Buddhist writers maintain the tradition that Gopāla came to the throne with the help of
others, but usually this help is represented as supernatural, as is Gopāla's birth. Such accounts probably arose to enhance the status of a ruler who was considered to have been an ardent Buddhist, all indications of his Hindu tendencies having been forgotten or expunged in the intervening centuries.

Bu-ston and Sum-pa in their histories quote slightly different versions of a passage from the Nātha-abhyudaya-tantra, which must pre-date Bu-ston. This passage states that either a nāga (a supernatural, half-serpent, water-dwelling being) or a magician named Nāgārjuna would bestow royal power on Gopāla in a city known as Ajārayoginī. ⁵

Bu-ston himself states that Gopāla was the son of a shepherdess and a tree deity. "His father put him in possession of precious jewels, and, by the force of his virtues, he obtained the royal power over the whole country."⁶ Bu-ston also states that Gopāla built the Nālandā vihāra.⁷ This last assertion is literally inaccurate, since Nālandā was flourishing in the first half of the seventh century A.D. when the Chinese pilgrim Hsūan Tsang visited it, but perhaps Bu-ston's statement may be interpreted to mean that Gopāla built an addition to the Nālandā monastic complex.

In his History of Buddhism in India, Tāranātha states that Gopāla was the son of a girl of the noble
Kṣatriya class and a tree deity, thus awarding him a higher status than did Bu-ston. Tāranātha further narrates that "at that time there was no king in Bhamgala for many years. As a result, the people were passing through a disturbed and unhappy period. The chiefs of the country met in an assembly, discussed among themselves and elected a king to rule the country properly." However, an evil nāginī killed every king who was elected, so one nominee paid Gopāla to take his place on the throne. With the help of his Buddhist tutelary deity, Cundā, Gopāla succeeded in killing the nāginī. Then he was appointed the permanent king. During the course of his forty-five year reign, he built the Nālandā vihāra and established many monasteries. Sum-pa's history repeats Tāranātha's statements about Gopala's propitiation of Cundā and his building of Nālandā.

From this evidence it seems clear that, the later the textual source, the more Gopāla is associated with Buddhism. As to the pertinent inscriptional evidence, Dharmapāla's Khalimpur plate hints at Gopāla's religious preferences by comparing his wife to the wives of such Hindu gods as Śiva, Indra, and Viṣṇu. Devapāla's copper plates merely refer conventionally to Gopāla's military prowess. Thus, a probable conclusion is that Gopāla was not in his own time, but only much later, considered to have been an active Buddhist patron. Indeed, it seems
likely that most of his time and resources would have been devoted to the consolidation of his authority. It is probable that, if he did patronize religious institutions, the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa is correct in stating that his donations were impartial; a king chosen by the people would presumably have attempted to please all his constituents.

The next Pāla king was Dharmapāla, son of Gopāla. His name means "protector of the dharma" where the term dharma refers to Buddhist teachings. He is the first Pāla king whose own inscriptions are known—the Nālandā and the Khalîmpur copper plates. Both of these plates bear a seal decorated with the king’s name and an emblem commonly known as the dharma-cakra, "wheel of the Buddhist teachings," which features a wheel flanked by two deer and is an allusion to the Buddha’s first sermon in the Deer Park at Sarnath. (Plate 1). The choice of such an emblem for the royal seal could have been made purely to show Dharmapāla’s personal profession of the Buddhist faith, it may have been a reference to the fact that his kingdom included the site of Sarnath, but, probably, the decision was at least partly based on the history of the appearance of this emblem on official seals. The emblem was used, first of all, on the seals of Buddhist monasteries such as those in the famous complex at Nālandā (Plate 2), but also it had appeared on the royal seal of the kings of the Deva dynasty which ruled
Plate 1: Seal of Dharmapāla's Khalimpur copper plate

Plate 2: Official seal of Nālandā vihāra

eastern Bengal in the late seventh and early eighth centuries A.D. 14—the last known ruling dynasty before the ascent of the Pālas (Plate 3). Three Deva copper plates are known, but only one has been published. 15 In the single published plate, 16 King Bhavadeva granted land to a Buddhist vihāra at the request of one of his officials, and also called himself a parama-saugata, "supreme follower of Sugata," where the epithet Sugata (well-gone one) refers to the Buddha. Excavations at the Buddhist monastery site Salban Vihāra, where two of the three Deva plates were found, have revealed a terracotta sealing with the dharma-cakra emblem and the legend "śri bhavadeva mahā vihāra ārya bhikṣu saṅghasya," 17 which indicates that this monastery was founded by King Bhavadeva. Thus, the Devas were active Buddhists, and that they were also powerful is indicated by the fact that they issued gold and silver coinage, 18 a rare phenomenon in Bengal in the period between the fall of the Guptas and the Muslim invasions. Therefore, it seems likely that, as one means of legitimizing his own authority, Dharmapāla adopted a seal which already had authoritative connotations. That he also adopted the Buddhist religion is shown by his use of the title parama-saugata in copper plates, his personal name, and the examples of his patronage which will be discussed below. All later Pāla rulers used this seal and this title, but their acceptance of the Buddhist religion was
Plate 3: Seal of Bhavadeva's Devaparvata Copper plate

far less thorough-going.

Dharmapāla's Nālandā copper plate, discovered in the course of excavations at the Nālandā monastery complex, has been badly burned and so is largely illegible. It is notable for containing no invocation or genealogical verses, perhaps indicating that it was one of the very earliest Pāla plates issued, dating before the elaborate literary conventions of other Indian rulers began to be imitated. It is clear from the plate that Dharmapāla's titles include parama-saugata, but the name of his donee is unknown. Nevertheless, fragmentary names such as "teacher (ācārva) Dharma..." and "the son of Dharmadatta" may indicate that the grant was an example of the king's Buddhist patronage. The fact that the plate was found in a Buddhist monastery, however, does not guarantee that its donee was a Buddhist. For example, a plate discovered in the course of excavations at the Buddhist monastery at Paharpur granted land to a Jain establishment.

Dharmapāla's other copper plate, issued in his thirty-second regnal year and found at Khalimpur, granted land for the maintenance of the temple of the Hindu god Nanna-Nārāyaṇa and his attendants, at the request of a high official who had built the temple. That the official and not Dharmapāla was the instigator of this gift in support of Hinduism is revealed by the fact that Dharmapāla does not claim the merit of the grant for himself and his
parents, as is usual for a donor. Nevertheless, he clearly gave the gift his official sanction. The text of the copper plate itself begins with an invocation to Vajrāsana, "the diamond throne," which is a reference to the Buddha. It then refers to Dharmapāla's ancestors, recounts his own substantial military achievements, and describes his capital, Pāṭaliputra, from which the grant was issued, with an elaborate imagery involving fleets of boats on the Bhāgirathī River and innumerable elephants, horses and submissive kings. Dharmapāla's official titles again include the designation parama-saugata, but he addresses his officials "after offering respect to the Brahmins." The text of the copper plate ends with a series of imprecatory verses (curses and blessings), but their religious content is non-specific; identical verses had been used on grants to both Buddhists and Hindus in Bengal as early as the sixth century A.D.

The copper plates of Dharmapāla's son Devapāla offer additional relatively contemporary information about Dharmapāla. He is called a parama-saugata, but he is also described as "scrupulously following śāstiric injunctions and engaging the differing castes in their respective duties by commands." It is further stated that the employees in the train of Dharmapāla "duly employed the waters in Kedāra and the confluence of the Ganges and the ocean and performed religious observances in such places
of pilgrimage as Gokarna and the like, and (thus) they derived success in the next world as a secondary benefit." The three Hindu holy sites named here are included in several medieval lists, but there are at least two different possibilities as to the identification of Gokarna. If the Gokarna near Bombay was intended, then it is possible that this reference to a journey is merely the eulogistic attribution to Dharmapāla of a dig-vijaya or "conquest of the quarters," with Gokarna representing the western or southern quarter, Kedāra the north, and the mouth of the Ganges the east. On the other hand, if the Gokarna meant was that one located in Nepal, then the list of sites would not be geographically suitable for a dig-vijaya, and the verse would seem to document actual visits made by Dharmapāla to Hindu holy places. Later Pāla copperplates describe Dharma pāla's victories in less controversial terms, and metaphorically compare his qualities to those of the ocean.

Thus, the Pāla copperplates indicate that Dharmapāla professed Buddhism, but show no definite Buddhist patronage by him. On the contrary, he is publically represented in them in terms appropriate to a Hindu ksatriya ruler. Medieval Indian upper class society by this time seems to have become so pervaded with Hindu religious and social assumptions that the concept of the good health of the state automatically required any ruler to maintain
orthodox class divisions and to patronize learned Brahmins and their religious rites. Two other pieces of inscriptive evidence, however, prove that Dharmapāla did patronize Buddhism. The first of these is a terracotta seal impression found at Nālandā vihāra (Plate 4), which bears the dharmacakra emblem and is inscribed "śrī-nā dharmapālandevasa-gandha-kuti-vāsikabhiksūnām." This inscription refers to the monks residing at the gandha-kuti (usually translated "temple") of Dharmapāla at Nā (Nālandā), and presumably indicates that Dharmapāla founded a Buddhist temple at Nālandā. A similar terracotta sealing was found during excavations at the monastic site at Paharpur (Plate 5). The inscription of this seal is "śrī-somapura śrī-dharmapāla-deva-mahā-vihārīvārva-bhiksura-śāṅghasya," which refers to the monks of the monastery of Dharmapāla at Somapura. This inscription presumably indicates that Dharmapāla founded a Buddhist monastery at Somapura. The importance of these two sealings as token authentications of substantial Buddhist patronage by Dharmapāla cannot be overemphasized.

Other inscriptions relating to Dharmapāla shed little light on his religious activities. Two, simply referring to his reign, were found at Nālandā and Valgudar; a third, dated to his twenty-sixth year, was found at Bodh Gayā; a fourth, dedicated by Nārāyaṇapaśa's Brahmin minister Guravamīśra, notes that Gurava-
Plate 4: Seal of Dharmapāla's gandhakuti at Nālandā


Plate 5: Seal of Dharmapāla's vihāra at Somapura

Source: K.N. Dikshit, Excavations at Paharpur, Bengal (Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, LV), Delhi, 1938, pl. LIXh.
mīra's ancestor, Garga, served similarly as a minister of Dharmapāla. 38

Four manuscript colophons relating to Dharmapāla are currently known. One is appended to a commentary on the Astasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā written by Haribhadra, and states that this Buddhist work was composed under the patronage of Dharmapāla. 39 Two others, inscribed on two different copies of Vīryaśrīdatta's commentary on the Arthavinīcayā-sūtra, one dating to 1190 A.D., indicate that this Buddhist text also was composed under Dharmapāla's patronage. 40 Another colophon, however, attached to Caturbhujā's Haricarita, states that a village in Varendrī was granted by Dharmapāla to the Brahmin Svarṇarekha, one of Caturbhujā's ancestors. 41 Further possible indications of Dharmapāla's pro-Hindu activities are the attribution to him by the eleventh century anthologist Vidyākara of a poem invoking Śiva's protection of the universe, 42 and a notation in one of the Kulaśāstras that Dharmapāla gave a village to the Brahmin Adīgāni Ojha. 43 The factual accuracy of these references may be called into question, but they do indicate that Dharmapāla's reputation was neither exclusively Hindu nor Buddhist.

An examination of the Tibetan Buddhist textual sources reveals that their authors were convinced of King Dharmapāla's strong support of Buddhism, but that there was not a general agreement about its details. The
earliest of these sources, Mkhan-po's biography of Atīśa, states that Dharmapāla founded the monastery of Vikramasīla and endowed it with rich grants to provide for one hundred and eight monks, for pilgrims, and for students — a sober and believable assertion, especially since Atīśa and Nag-tsho had long resided at this monastery. Bu-ston, however, relates that Dharmapāla built the monastery of Odantapurī in the bed of a magically dried up lake, and Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India* states that the king founded Vikramasīla with a total of one hundred and eight temples, and also built fifty other centers for the Buddhist doctrine, including thirty-five for the study of the Mahāyāna text *Prajñāpāramitā*. Tāranātha also asserts that Dharmapāla accepted as his preceptors the Buddhist monks Haribhadra and Buddhajñānapāda, highly honored scholars versed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* and the Guhyasamāja, and paid for expensive Buddhist sacrificial rites. Tāranātha's *Mine of Precious Stones* states that Dharmapāla once went to Vajrāsana (the site of the Buddha's enlightenment) to give alms and there was converted to tantric Buddhism by Buddhajñānapāda. The king received initiation, gave himself and his wife to be servants of Buddhajñānapāda, and then ransomed them with a pile of gold as high as his stature. He ordered the consecration of the newly built Vikramasīla, the restored Somapuri, and other temple buildings. Sum-pa's history merely repeats some of Tāranātha's state-
ments about Dharmapāla's preceptors and his founding of Vikramaśila. 48

These various Tibetan accounts of Dharmapāla's religious endeavors must be analyzed by comparison with the inscriptive evidence and by comparison with each other—an index of their literal unreliability being their confusion about Pāla lineage. For example, Pāla copper plates reveal that Gopāla was the father of Dharmapāla and Dharma-
pāla the father of Devapāla, yet Bu-ston states that Dharmapāla was the son of Gopāla's wife and a nāga king, and that Devapāla was Dharmapāla's grandson. Tāranātha and Sum-pa, on the other hand, state that Devapāla was either the son of Gopāla or the son of Gopāla's wife and a nāga king, and that Dharmapāla was Devapāla's grandson. 49 It seems thus that the characters of Dharmapāla and Devapāla were to some extent exchanged by the two later writers, and that all three mistakenly added another generation to the family. The consistent reference to a nāga king, however, may not be so easily dismissed as a late accretion or error. The comparison of Dharmapāla to the ocean in all Pāla copper plates after the mid-ninth century, the reference in Sandhyākaranāndin's Rāmacarita to Dharmapāla as the light of the race of the ocean, 50 the statement in the Nātha-abhyudaya-tantra that Gopāla received royal power from a nāga, and the Dharmamaṅgala's assertion that Dharmapāla's heir was the son of his wife and the ocean god 51 all
represent a similar theme. Evidently, by the time of
Nārāyanapāla, a tradition had developed tracing Pāla
lineage back to the personified ocean, a respectable
mythological ancestor of the type commonly claimed by
other medieval Hindu dynasties. The Tibetans thus may
have derived the nāga king episode, as well as other
material, from relatively early Indian sources.

Returning to an examination of the Tibetan
accounts of Dharmapāla's religious patronage, it seems
appropriate to discard as unprovable the various tales of
his honoring preceptors and making non-specific donations,
but the references to the foundation of certain large
monastic establishments must be analyzed in comparison with
other evidence. First of all, it seems probable that
Vikramaśīla vihāra actually was founded by Dharmapāla. No
archaeological evidence is available to dispute this
assumption, and the unanimity of the Tibetan sources is
a strong argument. The only possibly contrary evidence
available is a colophon of the Ratna-karaṇḍodghata-nāma-
madhyamaka-upadesa, which states that this text was written
by Atīśa at the Vikramaśīla temple connected with the vow
of Devapāla. Further information relevant to this topic
is provided by the colophons of that Rāmacarita written by
Abhinanda, which variously refer to the author's patron as
a member of the Pāla family, a member of the lineage of
Dharmapāla, and an offspring of the lord of the earth,
Vikramaśīla. Presumably, whichever Pāla king was known by the epithet "Vikramaśīla," probably, but not necessarily Dharmapaṇḍa, was the founder of the monastery.

As to the Odantapurī vihāra, Bu-ston attributes its founding to Dharmapaṇḍa, but the histories by Tāranātha and Sum-pa record that it was built magically by a tantric Buddhist layman and then entrusted to Devapāla. The discovery at Nālandā of a terracotta sealing of the Uddandapura vihāra (Plate 6), which does not bear the name of any king, supports the view that its founder was not a famous personage. Since this monastery was taken as the model for bSam-yas, built in Tibet for King Khri-srong-lde-btsan, who died in 797 A.D., it was certainly flourishing at the time of Dharmapāla's reign. Thus, it is possible that Dharmapāla made some type of contribution to Odantapurī, since such an explanation would provide a basis for Bu-ston's assertion.

The terracotta sealing mentioned above seems to prove that Dharmapāla founded a monastery at Somapura, and the re-use of numerous sculpted plaques of an earlier date in the main eighth or ninth century temple construction supports the vague reference in Tāranātha's Mine of Precious Stones to the effect that Dharmapāla "restored" this establishment. However, Tāranātha's and Sum-pa's histories state that Somapuri was founded by Devapāla on the bed of a magically dried up lake. This contradiction
Plate 6: Seal of the Uddanapura vihāra


Plate 7: Seal of Devapāla's Nālandā copper plate

Suspected Missing Page 32
relating to Dharmapāla, it seems that his devotion to Buddhism was genuine and was expressed through active patronage. Since his personal leanings were toward tantric Buddhism, as avowed by the Tibetan sources, it is possible that the expansion of tantric Buddhist art and literature during the Pāla period was related to his extensive activity. However, it is not impossible that some of the reasons behind Dharmapāla's profession and patronage of Buddhism were secular; he may have wanted both to secure status for the new dynasty by associating it with the previous Deva rulers of Bengal, and to gain the support of the Buddhist clergy, an influential minority especially well established in the region of Magadha in modern Bihar, where Dharmapāla's capital was located. Similarly, Dharmapāla's founding of new monasteries at Vikramāśīla and Somapura, removed to the east of the traditional Buddhist homeland and independent of it in doctrine, may have represented his desire to create other centers of support for his rule, more directly under his own control. Indeed, Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India states that the head of Vikramāśīla at that time was Dharmapala's personal preceptor, Buddhajñānapāda. 63

When discussing Dharmapāla's religious patronage, however, it must not be forgotten that at least two of his high government officials are known to have been Hindus, 64 and that he supported such Hindu institutions as the caste
system and donations to Brahmins and shrines. Thus, he combined his patronage of Buddhism with most of the official practices characteristic of an orthodox Hindu monarch.

The next ruling Pāla king was Dharmapāla's son, Devapāla, who like his father apparently reconciled a personal inclination toward Buddhism with a public support of Hinduism. His name, meaning 'protector of the gods,' carries both Brahmanical and Buddhist connotations, for, though the Hindu gods were relegated by Buddhists to an unimportant position, their existence was not denied. We know of two copper plates issued by King Devapāla, the Monghyr plate of regnal year thirty-three and the Nālandā plate of year thirty-five, both of which (Plates 7 and 8) are surmounted by dharma-cakra seals. This usage might seem a mere conventional imitation by Devapāla of his father's practice, were it not for other indications of his own devotion to Buddhism. For example, the invocation to Buddha found in Devapāla's plates was original—not copied from that in Dharmapāla's Khalimpur plate. The latter praises the Buddha as Vajrāsana, while the former plates refer to him as Siddhārtha, an epithet meaning "the one who has attained siddha (supernatural power)." This innovation is not alone in suggesting that Devapāla's interest in Buddhism was personal; both the Monghyr and the Nālandā plates also compare his accession to the throne to the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment.
Plate 8: Seal of Devapāla's Monghyr copper plate

This last verse is significant as one of the rare examples in a Pāla copper plate of a metaphor employing Buddhist imagery to describe a ruler (verses in a section of Devapāla's Nālandā plate devoted to a description of the king of Suvarṇadvīpa also use Buddhist imagery, but this section is appended after the verse giving the date, the traditional end of a copper plate grant inscription, and so should not be considered an integral part of the text), and thus is another clue to King Devapāla's Buddhist faith. Most of the metaphors that are applied to Devapāla's achievements, though, draw on the conventional vocabulary of Hindu mythology; for example, the verse devoted to his dig-vijaya states that he "enjoyed the earth, extending from the unparalleled mountain, honoured by the appearance of the Ganges to the bridge proclaiming Rāma's fame, and from the abode of Varuṇa--the (western) ocean--to the residing place of the Goddess of fortune--the (eastern) sea." This introductory portion of the text, common to both of Devapāla's copper plates, ends with a description of Devapāla's capital city, Mūdagiri, borrowed word for word from that used for Pātaliputra in Dharmapāla's Khalimpur plate, and a list of the king's titles, which include parama-saugata.

Devapāla's Nālandā copper plate was found in the ruins of one of the monasteries at the site of
Nālandā, and its text states that it was issued in response to the request of King Bālaputra of Suvarṇadvīpa (Java), who had just built a monastery at Nālandā. The grant itself was a gift of several villages, whose income was to be used for offerings, the personal needs of monks, the copying of texts, and the upkeep of the monastery. Though the gift was requested by the Javanese king, Devapāla seems to have appropriated the merit for himself and his parents, and may be considered the actual donor. Nevertheless, the land donated was stated to exclude "the gifts to gods and the Brahmanas, which were granted before," which implies either that Devapāla had previously made such gifts, or that he supported the practice of making them. This statement is clarified by the content of Devapāla's Monghyr plate, whose purpose was indeed to grant a village to a Brahmin, Bhihekartamitira by name, a student of the Vedas. No other individual is mentioned as having requested this grant from the king, and he assumed the merit for it, thus proving himself a patron of Hinduism as well as Buddhism. It seems from the evidence of these two copper plates, then, that Devapāla, like his father, combined a personal devotion to Buddhism with a public support of Hindu traditions.

Other contemporary inscriptions, unrelated to the king's religious policy, are found on a bronze image of Saṃkarsana and a female image, both from Nālandā and both
dated to Devapāla's reign; 73 a metal image from Nālandā
dated to his third regnal year; 74 a metal image of Bala-
rāma from Kurkihar, dated to his ninth year; 75 and a stone
image of Tārā from Hilsa, dated to his twenty-fifth year. 76
An inscription found at Ghosrāwān, however, is quite
significant for this study. It states that the Buddhist
monk Vīradeva was "treated with reverence by the lord of
the earth, the illustrious Devapāla...," 77 relates
Vīradeva's lavish patronage of the Buddhist establishment
at Nālandā, and reveals that he was appointed permanent
head of Nālandā by the decree of the assembly of its
monks. This inscription clearly indicates that Devapāla
honored a prominent Buddhist monk who was associated with
Nālandā, but it is not implicit in the text whether
Devapāla revered Vīradeva because the latter was already
an important Buddhist personage at Nālandā and elsewhere,
or whether Vīradeva's election as head of Nālandā was
influenced by the favor Devapāla had shown him.

Two terracotta sealing found at Nālandā are also
pertinent to the question of Devapāla's relationship with
this Buddhist community. One bears a representation of a
conch at the top and has the legend "śrī-devapāla-gandha-
kudvām," i.e. "in the gandhakuti of the illustrious
Devapāla." 78 (Plate 9). This seems to indicate that a
temple had been founded there by Devapāla; 79 although the
meaning of a conch symbol in this context is unknown. The
Plate 9: Seal of Devapāla's gandhakuti at Nālandā

other sealing is not decorated and bears the legend "śrī-devapāladevasya," i.e. "of the illustrious Devapāla" (Plate 10). It seems superficially unlikely that such a simple seal would have been used by a great king, and indeed it may represent the personal seal of some private individual. However, although the title śrī and the suffix -deva do not necessarily imply royalty, they are the only honorific designations applied to Devapāla in all the short (under fifteen lines) inscriptions that are known to refer to him. Two explanations of the meaning of this sealing may be suggested, either that it was employed by minor monastic or royal officials charged with governmental inspection or supervision, or that it was used to label materials donated by the king to the institutions that he patronized at Nālandā. As an argument in favor of the latter hypothesis, there exists a similar combination of the famous monarch Yaśovarman, a Yaśovarmmapura vihāra (at which Vīradeva was residing when Devapāla honored him), and an undecorated seal discovered at Nālandā with the inscription "śrī yaśovarmmadēvah" (Plate 11). In any case, the combined evidence of the Nālandā copper plate, the Ghosrāwān inscription, and these terracotta sealings indicates that Devapāla was materially concerned with the welfare of the Nālandā vihāra. His relationship with Vikramaśīla vihāra, implied by the colophon of the Ratnakarandodghata-nāma-madhyanaka-upadesa, probably also was
Plate 10: Seal of Devapāla from Nālandā


Plate 11: Seal of Yaśovarman from Nālandā

that of a patron.

One other inscription, slightly later in date, similarly refers significantly to Devapāla. This inscription appears on a stone pillar dedicated in the reign of Nārāyaṇapāla by his Brahmin minister, Guravamśra, and asserts that the latter's ancestor, Darbhapāṇi, was Devapāla's minister. According to this inscription, Devapāla, who was a ruler comparable to Indra, owed his military successes to Darbhapāṇi's counsel. Devapāla is said to have stood at Darbhapāṇi's gates awaiting his convenience, and to have offered Darbhapāṇi a seat of state before mounting his own (Devapāla's) throne. Though this account is poetically exaggerated, the respectful treatment of Brahmins that it attributes to Devapāla is corroborated by the Monghyr copper plate.

Most of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions about King Devapāla have already been noticed. Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India, the most detailed source, states that Odantapurī vihāra was entrusted to Devapāla at the time of his founder's death, that Devapāla built Somapurī, and that he caused many Hindu temples in "Bhamāgala" and Varendra to fall down. The first of these statements is possibly based on some actual patronage of Odantapurī by Devapāla, but the second seems to have been an error and the third is rendered unlikely by Devapāla's demonstrated respect for Brahmins. The Caturśāṭi-siddha-
pravṛtti, which recounts the activities of a series of yogic preceptors associated with Sahajayāna Buddhism, dates two of these individuals to Dharmapāla's reign, one to Mahīpāla's reign, and five to Devapāla's reign. Whether or not these attributions are correct, they indicate that Devapāla's reign was considered to have been an extremely productive period for esoteric Buddhism.

In conclusion, though it seems that Devapāla, like Dharmapāla, was primarily a patron of Buddhism, whose activity may have contributed to the flourishing of Buddhist culture in the ninth century, he was also evidently quite active as a patron and supporter of Hindu religion and culture.

The next Pāla ruler, Śūrapāla I, son of Devapāla, is considerably less well known than his predecessors. A copper plate issued by this king has been discovered in the Mirzapur District of Uttar Pradesh state, but has not yet been published. According to a single brief report about this plate, it bears the dharmacakra and attributes to Dharmapāla, Devapāla, and Śūrapāla the title parama-saunata. Its purpose was "to record a donation of some villages... to the Śaiva-chāryas of Banaras at the behest of the chief queen Mahādevī Māheshobhāṭṭārikā," and it was issued from Mudgagiri by the king in his third regnal year. Without examining a transcript and translation of this inscription, i.e. without such evidence as the type of invocation used,
the choice of metaphors, and the assignment of the merit of the gift, it is difficult to derive any definite information about Śūrapāla's personal religious preference from it. All that is certain is that he was styled a Buddhist, had a Śaivite queen, and was willing to approve his queen's religious donation.

Two Buddha images from Bihar, dated to the third regnal year of Śūrapāla, a stone slab from Rājaunā dated to his fifth year, and an inscription from Nālandā, dated to an unknown year in his reign, are attributed to the time of Śūrapāla I rather than Śūrapāla II, but have no bearing on the king's own religious preference. The pillar inscription of Guravamiśra, however, states that King Śūrapāla (I), who resembled Indra, relied on his Brahmin minister, Kedārāmiśra, for the success of his conquests and "attended, in person, the sacrifices, on many occasions, of Kedārāmiśra, comparable to Vṛhaspati, and with a mind flooded by waters of reverence, accepted on his bent head the pure sacrificial waters." This statement attributes to Śūrapāla a greater participation in Hindu religious activity than the same inscription attributes to Devapāla or Dharmapāla, presumably indicating that Śūrapāla was more favorable to Hinduism than either his father or grandfather. This may be one reason why Śūrapāla's name does not appear in any of the Tibetan Buddhist historical works.
Finally, it is appropriate to mention here the colophon of a manuscript copy of the Buddhist text Cakra-
saṃvaravivṛti by Bhavabhaṭa, dated to the first year of Śūrapāla's reign, but without any indication as to which of the two kings of this name was meant. This colophon is of interest because it lists all of the usual formal titles claimed by Pāla rulers, except the title parama-
saṅgata. Generally in such colophons, a Pāla king is either given all his formal titles or else is simply styled śrī or śrīmaṇa for the sake of brevity. The fact that the one title which would refer to Śūrapāla's Buddhist faith has been omitted may indicate that the scribe did not consider him a true Buddhist, but it is equally possible that this was just a clerical error.

To summarize, then, it cannot be shown that Śūrapāla I was in any way a patron of Buddhism, but there is definite evidence to indicate his support of Hinduism.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1 F. Kielhorn, "Khalimpur Plate of Dharmapāla-deva," Epigraphia Indica, IV, 1896-1897, 251. This translator states that Vāpyaṭa "embellished the earth with massive temples." Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 102, merely states that he "decorated the earth."

2 Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 100.


4 Jayaswal, Imperial History, 42, 72. This translation represents verses 682-690 and 883-884 of the Sanskrit text.

5 Obermiller, Bu-ston, II, 120-121; S.C. Sarkar, "A Tibetan Account of Bengal," Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, XXVI, 1940, 352. This passage ends with the statement that, after the death of Gopāla's son, the nephew of Pasahana or of Vahana and others would appear as kings. This may refer to the break in the direct Pāla lineage after the reign of Sūrapāla I.

6 Obermiller, Bu-ston, II, 156.

7 Ibid.

8 Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, Tāranātha's History, 257.

9 Ibid., 258-259.

10 Das, Sumpa, 55, 93.

11 Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 103.

12 Ibid., 120-121. The verse comparing Gopāla's good qualities to those of the Buddha, which appears in all Pāla copper plates from Nārāyaṇapāla's time on, must be understood in a different context and will be discussed in Chapter III.


15. Ibid., 61-62.


18. Ibid., 25.


21. Ibid., 108.

22. Kielhorn, "Khalimpur Plate of Dharmapāladeva," 251. The author believes that this verse could also be interpreted as referring to King Dharmapāla, seated on his diamond throne.


25. Ibid., 121.

26. Ibid.


31. Even in ancient times, such an active patron of Buddhism as King Aśoka had enjoined his subjects to respect Brahmins.

32. Sastri, Nālandā, 43.

33. K.N. Dikshit, Excavations at Paharpur, Bengal (Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, LV), Delhi, 1938, 90.

34. Ibid.

35. Sastri, Nālandā, 85-86.


38. Ibid., 155

39. Obermiller, Bu-ston, II, 158; R.C. Majumdar, "The Date of the Khadga Dynasty of Bengal," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, n.s., XIX, 1923, 32. This manuscript is said to be in the Durbar Library, Nepal.


41. S.K. Saraswati, "Two Tours in the Districts of Mālādhah and Dinājpur," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, n.s., XXVIII, 1932, 180; T.N. Chakravarti, in "Some Aspects of Religious Life as Depicted in Early Inscriptions and Literature of Bengal," Journal of the Department of Letters of the University of Calcutta, n.s., I, 1957, 136, states that the Dharmaśāla mentioned here may not have been the Pāla ruler of that name. This manuscript is said to be in the Durbar Library.
42 Ingalls, *Subhāsītaratnakosa*, 81.


44 Das, "Indian Pandits in Tibet," 11.


50 Sastri, *Rāmacaritam*, 3.

51 Ibid., xv.

52 This tradition may have had a historical basis in some relationship between the Pāla family and the Nāga tribe. See S. Chattopadhyaya, *Early History of North India*, Calcutta, 1968, 146-148, 216-217, for the historical role played by this tribe in pre-Pāla times.


54 D.C. Sircar, "Date of Abhinanda, Author of the Rāmacarita," *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XXV, 1949, 132.


58. S. L. Huntington, *The Origin and Development of Sculpture in Bihar and Bengal, ca. 8th-12th Centuries*, Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1972, 344.


62. Lévi and Chavannes, "Du-K'ong," 358. Du-K'ong did, however, make visits to the eight famous sites associated with the Buddha's earthly life.

63. Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha’s History*, 278. The fact that the head of Vikramaśīla was also placed in charge of Nālandā (*Ibid.*, 275) may indicate that Dharmapāla was trying to impose personal control over this center also.

64. These were his minister, Garga, and Mahāsāmanta-adhipati Nārāyaṇavarman, who requested the Khalimpur grant.

65. R. C. Majumdar, "Some Dates in the Pāla and Sena Records," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters*, VII, 1941, 251. This author has corrected the date of the Nālandā plate from year 39 to year 35.


70. Sastri, *Nālandā*, 107. Verse 33 of this inscription, however, implies that Bālaputra also claimed the merit.
-51-


Ibid., 125.


Ibid., 87.


Ibid., 40.


Ibid., 60, 91.

Above, 27.


Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha's History*, 264, 266, 268.


Ibid.


91. Mukherji and Maity, *Corpus*, 158.

92. R. Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Second Search for Palm-Leaf Manuscripts in Tibet," *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, XXIII, 1937, 42. This text was found in the Shalu monastery in Tibet.
CHAPTER III:

THE PĀLA RULERS OF THE BRANCH LINE

After Śūrapāla's Mirzarpur plate, the next known copper plate issued by a Pāla ruler is the Bhagalpur plate of the seventeenth year of King Nārāyaṇapāla. In it, Nārāyaṇapāla is described as the son of Vigrahapāla, son of Jayapāla, son of Vākpāla, younger son of Gopāla.¹ Thus, it seems that the direct line of the first Pāla rulers had come to an end some time after the fifth year of the reign of Śūrapāla, and the sovereignty had passed to another branch of the same family. With the available evidence, it is not possible to determine how or when the rule of Śūrapāla terminated, and it is difficult to prove anything about Vigrahapāla, who may have succeeded him. The Badal pillar inscription mentions no ruler between Śūrapāla, who was served by Kedārimiśra, and Nārāyaṇapāla, who was served by Kedārimiśra's son, Guravamiśra,² but such an unofficial record is not absolutely reliable. In the matter of succession, the Bhagalpur plate is the chief authority, so it will be discussed before we return to the question of Vigrahapāla's status.

The Bhagalpur plate is one of the most significant epigraphic records of the Pāla dynasty because of the influence it exerted on Nārāyaṇapāla's successors. Devapāla, in his copper plates, borrowed from his father a verse to describe the capital city, but his invocation to
Buddha and his verses about Gopāla and Dharmapāla were completely original. He used the dharmacakra seal and the title parama-saugata, which his father had also used, but other epigraphic evidence of his Buddhist patronage explains these choices. Šūrapāla's Mizarpur copper plate is not sufficiently well known for his originality to be analyzed. However, every Pāla king who issued a copper plate after the time of Nārāyaṇapāla apparently employed the same invocation and repeated the same genealogical verses that were used in the Bhagalpur plate. Furthermore, while these kings do not seem to have been patrons of Buddhism, all employed the dharmacakra seal and the title parama-saugata. Apparently the format introduced by Nārāyaṇapāla became the almost absolute standard for his heirs, and I believe that this can be explained by the fact that it was such a successful solution to the problem of justifying the rule of a branch line.

The problem that evidently faced Nārāyaṇapāla in the composition of the Bhagalpur grant was the necessity of legitimizing his position. First of all, he needed to place emphasis on King Gopāla, the only ruler from whom he could actually trace his descent. Second, he needed to de-emphasize the importance of Šūrapāla, whose heirs might possibly contest the throne. Finally, though he was not personally a supporter of Buddhism, he wished to establish a relationship with the Buddhist kings Dharmapāla and
Devapāla, under whom the military power and territorial expansion of the dynasty had reached their height.

Nārāyaṇapāla's solution to this problem was to maintain the seal and the titles which had come to be associated with the previous legitimate rulers, and also the verse describing the capital city. However he devised a new invocation and a genealogy which were more suitable to his own position. His most striking innovation was to combine the traditional invocation to the Buddha with the traditional genealogical description of Gopāla, by applying one set of adjectives to the two names. Thus, the relative importance of the Buddha was decreased while that of Nārāyaṇapāla's ancestor, Gopāla, was increased. Then, in the succeeding verses, famous conquests of Dharmapāla and Devapāla were mentioned, and each of these monarchs was closely associated with his contemporary in Nārāyaṇapāla's family. Vākpāla was described as the Lakṣmaṇa to his brother Rāma (Dharmapāla), and Jayapāla was described as the Viṣṇu to his brother Indra (Devapāla). The next reigning monarch, Śūrapāla, was not mentioned at all; his contemporary Vigrahapāla, was described instead. The following verses introduced Nārāyaṇapāla as the current king, described his capital, listed his titles in the traditional way, and then proceeded with the specific business of the grant. It is clear from the consistent repetition of this format in every known later Pāla copper
plate that it became a matter of formal procedure rather than personal choice. Therefore, unless other corroborative evidence is available (as for Dharmapāla and Devapāla), its invariable Buddhist elements must not be given too much weight in a consideration of the personal religious affiliation of any individual ruler who used it.

Returning now to the discussion of Nārāyaṇapāla's father, Vigrahaṇa, we find him described in verses seven through nine of the Bhagalpur grant. Some vague military successes are attributed to him here, but the only specific fact mentioned is the name of his wife, Nārāyaṇapāla's mother. Later in the inscription, Vigrahaṇa is said to have told Nārāyaṇapāla to "let asceticism remain with me and the kingdom with you." Thus, though he is given the title mahārājaḍhirāja, "great king of kings" (which is used in every later Pāla grant to describe the father of the ruler), it is uncertain whether Vigrahaṇa ever actually ruled. Since none of the inscriptions or manuscript colophons which refer to a King Vigrahaṇa can be unquestionably referred to this period by paleography, and since the Badal pillar names no king between Śurapāla and Nārāyaṇapāla, it is possible to hypothesize that Vigrahanapāla did not reign. In any case, the lack of evidence makes it impractical to assess his religious preferences.

Nārāyaṇapāla himself can be shown to have been a Hindu. The meaning of his name is "protector of Nārāyaṇa," where Nārāyaṇa is a common epithet of Viṣṇu,
and the Bhagalpur grant states that his actions were "fit to be painted in the Purāṇas." The most definite proof, however, is his grant itself, which is the gift of a village,
in order that worship, offerings of presents and rice, performances of sacrifice and other nine works directed to the Lord Śiva, whose thousands of temples have been constructed by Nārāyaṇapāla himself, may go on unobstructed in the village of Kalaśapota, where also his image has been established, and in order that maintenance, convalescence, education, medical treatment and restoration to good condition of the association of preceptors devoted to Śiva may be effected. 

The grant was made in the name of Lord Śiva for the merit of Nārāyaṇapāla and his parents, and the official messenger (dūtaka) was Gurava, a learned Brahmin. This Gurava was probably the same as the Brahmin Guravamisra who dedicated the Badal pillar, for the latter inscription states that "the merited discriminating king Nārāyaṇapāla, desirous of conquering enemies, held him in high esteem," and his "treasures of speech, scholarship in the Vedas, supreme devotion to statecraft,...were referred to (frequently) by the monarch." The only other known references to Nārāyaṇapāla are inscriptions dated to his reign and a single terracotta sealing found at Nālandā. The inscriptions include one in the Viṣṇupāda temple at Gayā, dated to his seventh year, another in the Indian Museum, dated to his ninth year, and a third on a metal image from Bihar, dated to his fifty-fourth year. The Nālandā sealing, inscribed "śrī-nārāyaṇapāladevasya," "of the illustrious
Nārāyaṇapāla"\(^{17}\) (Plate 12), is similar in form to the undecorated seal of Devapāla also found at Nālandā (Plate 10). However, since in this case there is no supporting literary or epigraphic evidence to indicate that Nārāyaṇapāla patronized Nālandā, the interpretation that it indicates some royal activity at the site in favor of Buddhism is highly speculative. In conclusion, the weight of the evidence indicates that Nārāyaṇapāla gave his chief patronage to Hinduism rather than Buddhism.

Nārāyaṇapāla's son and successor was King Rājyapāla, who is mentioned in the Jājilpāra grant of his son and successor, Gopāla II, as one who had constructed "lakes, whose beds were as deep as bottoms of the ocean, and temples, in which vaults were as high as age-old mountains."\(^{18}\) The fact that these temples were associated with lakes (tanks) probably indicates that they were Hindu rather than Buddhist in nature, because tanks for ritual ablution were usually found in the vicinity of Hindu temples of that period.

Though no copper plate issued by Rājyapāla is known, the Bhāturiyā stone inscription does record a grant made by him in favor of Hinduism. This inscription was dedicated by Yakṣodāsa, a minister of King Rājyapāla, who describes the king in conventional terms as a great conquerer, applies to him the epithet "rāmaparākrama" (like Rāma, an heroic incarnation of Viṣṇu, in prowess),\(^{19}\) and
Plate 12: Seal of Nārāyaṇapāla from Nālandā

states that he "was aspiring as it were, for the status of
the lord of the gods by honoring gods and Brahmanas with
haughty elephants in rut, principal horses (and) men that
had surrendered (to him, as well as) with land covered with
crops (and) many heaps of gold, which were acquired (by him
as a result of his victory in wars)." 20 Yasodāsa then
describes his own religious donations, including the con-
struction of a temple for Śiva, and states that Rājayāpāla
dedicated the "village of Madhusrava to one who has (the
emblem) of an ox for his banner (i.e. god Śiva) whom
Yasodāsa installed." 21 D.C. Sircar believes that Yasodāsa
probably had to pay to obtain this particular grant from
Rājayāpāla, 22 but the verse describing the king's supposed
lavish grants to gods and Brahmins indicates that he was
generally recognized as a patron of Hinduism.

Other inscriptions referring to Rājayāpāla include
one dated to his twenty-fourth year, on a stone pillar from
Nālandā, 23 and four on metal images from Kurkihar, two
dated to his thirty-second year and one each to his twenty-
eighth and thirty-first years. 24 None of these inscrip-
tions relates to the king's own religious preference, but
a verse attributed to him by Vidyākara's Śubhāsitaratnakosa
makes reference to Love, "defeated first by the god who
wears the moon, then by Buddha with his mighty wisdom." 25
Such a use of Śiva and the Buddha as comparable figures in
a literary allusion seems highly appropriate for this ruler,
whose personal preference was evidently for Hinduism, but whose traditional family affiliation was with Buddhism.

Rājyapāla's son Gopāla was the second of three kings of this name in the family. His Jājilpārā grant, issued in regnal year six, is the earliest known copper plate after the time of Nārāyanapāla. Aside from a verse describing Rājyapāla, mentioned above, and three which praise Gopāla's virtues and recount his dig-vijaya in conventional terms, its entire introductory section is borrowed from the Bhagalpur grant. The grant itself, a typical example of Hindu patronage, was a gift of land to the Brahmin Śrīdharāsarman. It was made by the king in the name of Lord Buddha after a bath in the Ganges on the occasion of the solstice (uttarayanā saṁkrānti).

Although there were three Pāla monarchs with the name Gopāla, most scholars have agreed in attributing three inscriptions and two manuscript colophons to the time of Gopāla II. The first such inscription, found at Bodh Gayā, refers only to the reign of the king. The second, found at Mandhuk in Tippera District, is dated to his first regnal year. The third, on an image from Nālandā, is also dated to the king's first regnal year, and ascribes to him all the royal titles invariably found in Pala copper plates, except parama-saugata. The manuscript colophons include one on a copy of the Maitreyavākarana, made in year seventeen, and another on a copy of the Astasāhas-
rikā-prajñāpāramitā, made in year fifteen; the latter attributes to the king full official titles (i.e. parama-saugata, paramesvara, parama-bhattaraka, and maharajadhāraja). It would seem that the use in such references either of full royal titles or of no royal titles at all would not be significant; however, the use of only the title parama-saugata would be an argument in favor of the king's Buddhist affiliation, and the use of the other titles without parama-saugata would be an argument against his Buddhist affiliation. In conclusion, Gopāla II seems to have been another Pāla ruler who lent his personal support to Hinduism rather than Buddhism.

The next king, Vigrahapāla II, is known chiefly from the two copper plates of his son, Mahīpāla, in which he is compared to the moon, springing from the sun (Gopāla II). Mahīpāla's Bāngarh plate additionally attributes a dig-vijaya to Vigrahapāla II, but since the same verse was applied to Gopāla II in the Jājilpāra copper plate, it is unlikely to have any historical validity for Vigrahapāla's reign. Various other inscriptions and manuscript colophons refer to a king Vigrahapāla, but as none can be attributed to Vigrahapāla II with certainty, it is best not to make use of them. Therefore, the lack of evidence makes it impossible to determine the religious preference of Vigrahapāla II.

King Mahīpāla I, son of Vigrahapāla II, is con-
siderably better known than his father. He issued at
least two copper plate grants, the Belwā grant of year five
and the Bāngarh grant of year nine (Plates 13 and 14). In
these he is said to have regained his father's kingdom,
which had been snatched away, but in the Belwā plate
he also assigns to himself the dig-vijaya verse applied
to his father in the Bāngarh plate. The Belwā plate
involves a grant to the Brahmin Jīvadhara devaśārmān, made
in the name of Lord Buddha, after the king had bathed in
the Ganges on the occasion of the equinox (visuvat saṁ-
krānti). The Bāngarh plate involves a grant made to the
Brahmin Krṣṇādityaśārmān, on the same occasion under
similar circumstances four years later. Such ceremonial
baths and the offering of gifts at the time of the visuvat
saṁkrānti are said to be recommended to Hindus by the
Brahma Purāṇa. Another inscription, while not issued by
the king himself, also refers to his patronage of Hinduism.
This is the Sarnath inscription dated in Vikrama year 1083,
which is equivalent to 1026 A.D. It records the Buddhist
renovations undertaken by two brothers, Sthirapāla and
Vasantapāla, and also mentions that they had been entrusted
by Mahāpāla with the "construction of hundreds of notable
things, such as Īśana, Citraghanṭa and the like at Kāśi." This
presumably refers to either temples or images of Śiva
and Durgā which were commissioned at that site by the king.

Several other inscriptions and manuscript
Plate 13: Seal of Mahipala's Belwa copper plate

Plate 14: Seal of Mahīpāla's Bāngarh copper plate

colophons also refer to the reign of a King Mahīpāla, and, since these are usually related to Mahīpāla I rather than Mahīpāla II, they will be discussed here. The inscriptions include: one of the third regnal year on an image from Bāghaurā, Tippera District; one of the fourth year on an image from Narāyanpur, Tippera District; two of the eleventh year, one on a door lintel from Nālandā and the other on an image pedestal from Bodh Gayā, the latter ascribing full official titles to the king; one of the twenty-first year on an image from Kurkihar; and two of the forty-eighth year on images found at Imādpur. Manuscript colophons relating to Mahīpāla include three copies of the Aṣṭasāhasri-kā-prajñāpāramitā. One simply refers to his reign, the second is dated to his fifth year and awards him full official titles, and the third is dated to his sixth year and applies full official titles to both the king and his father. The colophon of a copy of the Bhagavatyāmānāvānumāriṇo-nāma-vyākhyāna indicates that this text was originally written in the seventh year of Mahīpāla's reign. None of these inscriptions or colophons are concerned with Mahīpāla's personal patronage.

The later Tibetan Buddhist historians give accounts of a complete lineage of Pāla rulers, all of whom are described as supporters of Buddhism, but most of whom cannot be identified. Mahīpāla is the first of the epigraphically known kings to be mentioned after Gopāla,
Dharmapāla and Devapāla. This would be understandable if he had been a great patron of Buddhism, as were Dharmapāla and Devapāla, but it has been shown that there is no inscriptive evidence to support such a theory. Instead, it is probable that Mahīpāla, and also his son Nayapāla, became known to the Tibetans chiefly because they were contemporaries of the Indian scholar Atīśa, whose actions contributed to a revival of Buddhism in Tibet and renewed contact between Tibet and the monasteries located in Pāla territory. Following the same line of reasoning, it is possible that Gopāla, Dharmapāla and Devapāla themselves were known in Tibet not simply for their Buddhist patronage (since Gopāla was apparently not an important patron), but because of the fact that they were the rulers during the period when Buddhism was first introduced to Tibet from eastern India by Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, Kamalaśīla, etc. Indeed, since the reigns of Gopāla, Dharmapāla, and Devapāla, of Mahīpāla I and Nayapāla, and of Rāmapāla were the times when Pāla political power was at its height, it is possible that travel would have been safest and easiest then, that contact between East India and Tibet would consequently have been most frequent then, and, therefore, that these Pāla kings would have been better known in Tibet than any others, whether or not they were Buddhists.

In the earliest applicable Tibetan source, a
biography of Atīśa by Mkhan-po, King Mahīpāla is not described as a Buddhist, but is said to have appointed Atīśa to the position of head of Vikramāśīla vihāra.\(^{56}\)

As these two individuals were contemporaries, it is possible that this account contains an element of truth. Since Vikramāśīla vihāra was founded by Dharmapāla, he and his successors may have had the right to confirm candidates nominated by the monks. In the case of the Buddhist kings Dharmapāla and Devapāla, this might have taken the form of active royal supervision;\(^{57}\) in the case of the non-Buddhist Pālas it was probably only a formality. As to the later Tibetan historians, Bu-ston states that Mahīpāla was full of faith in the Prajñāpāramitā and sought to expound it in several different countries, and that he patronized the Buddhist scholar Haribhadra;\(^ {58}\) Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India mentions that Mahīpāla patronized the tantric preceptor Ānandagarbha at Otsayana vihāra;\(^ {59}\) and Sum-pa states that Mahīpāla received instruction in tantric Buddhism at this same vihāra.\(^ {60}\) These latter accounts imply that Mahīpāla was a Buddhist, but they also state that he was Dharmapāla's grandson,\(^ {61}\) and so misplace him chronologically by over a century and a half. This renders the rest of their information suspect, and so it may be concluded on the basis of the inscriptional evidence that Mahīpāla, like most of his predecessors, was a practicing Hindu.
No copper plates have yet been found for Mahāpāla's son Nayapāla, the next ruler. The only important known inscriptions referring to him are the plates of his son Vīgrahapāla, in which Nayapāla is compared to the sun. Two other inscriptions from Gayā, dating to the fifteenth year of his reign, have no bearing on his personal activities. The same is true for a manuscript of the Caturāṅgaśādhanatīkā, which was copied in his fifth year. However, a manuscript of the Pañcaraksā, which awards him full titles and was copied in his fourteenth year, is significant because it was made under the patronage of the queen, Uddākāyā, who is described as a devout Buddhist lay woman (paramopāsikā).

Tibetan accounts mentioning a ruler variously named Neyapāla, Naryapāla, or Nirapāla invariably associate him with Atiśa, and so presumably refer to the Pāla king Nayapāla, who was in fact Atiśa's contemporary. The text of a letter supposedly written from Atiśa to Nayapāla still exists in the Tanjur. This begins

"Naryapāla, who was born in Magadha, has spread Buddhism and has ruled the kingdom according to dharma, may he be prosperous. You have made gifts in the past, have observed the ten virtues, have practiced forgiveness and courage. That is why you, deva, are perfect with the three..."

The body of the letter contains advice about how a virtuous Buddhist king should act. Mkhan-po's biography of Atiśa
further states that he was made head of Vikramasila by Nayapāla, and that, in a war between Nayapāla and the king of Kārṇya, Atiśa played an important role as a peacemaker. Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India states that Nayapāla's Buddhist preceptor was known as Mahā-vajrāsana, and notes that the king gave a large property to a Buddhist named Yamāri. Sum-pa also refers to Nayapala's preceptor and to his contact with a king called Karna. Thus, since epigraphic evidence to the contrary is lacking, the Tibetan accounts affirm Nayapāla's interest in Buddhism, and his queen apparently was a Buddhist, it may be hypothesized that Nayapāla did profess and patronize Buddhism.

There is no such lack of evidence concerning Nayapāla's son, Vigrahapāla III, who is the only Pāla ruler known to have issued three copper plate grants. These are the Belwā plate of year eleven, the Āmgāchī plate of year twelve, and the Bangaon plate of year seventeen (Plates 15, 16, and 17). In the genealogical section of each of these grants, Vigrahapāla is described as being a worshipper of Smara's enemy (either Buddha or Śiva, presumably an intentional ambiguity), more expert in battle than Hari (Viṣṇu), and a supporter of the four castes. Also, the diq-vijaya verse applied in earlier copper plates to Gopāla II, Vigrahapāla II, and Mahīpāla I is applied in these three grants to Vigrahapāla III. The Belwā plate made a gift to the Brahmin Jayānandadevaśarman in the name of Lord Buddha,
Plate 15: Seal of Vigrahapāla's Belwā copper plate

Plate 16: Seal of Vigrahapāla's Āṅgāchhi copper plate

Plate 17: Seal of Vigrahapāla's Bangaon copper plate

after the king's bath in the Ganges at the time of the equinox. 72 The Āmgāchi plate made a similar gift to the Brahmin Khoduladevāśarman in the name of Lord Buddha, after the king's bath in the Ganges on the occasion of a lunar eclipse (soma-graha). 73 Finally, the Bangaon plate granted land to the Brahmin Ghāṇṭūkaśarman, again in the name of Lord Buddha and after the king's bath in the Ganges at the time of the equinox; however, it appears from the last two verses of this text that an official named Ghāṇṭīśa was the real donor, and that the king merely approved the transfer of property. 74 Other references to Vigrahapāla III occur in a copper plate of King Vaidyadeva of Kāmarūpa, a contemporary of Kumārapāla, and in the Rāmacarita, a poem written during the reign of Madanapāla. The former refers to Vigrahapāla as the right eye of Hari; 75 the latter refers to his valor, his victory over the king Karna, and his generosity. 76 From this evidence, it appears that Vigrahapāla III was a firm supporter of Hinduism.

Several other inscriptions and manuscript colophons refer to a King Vigrahapāla, but without any indication as to which of the three Pālas with this name was meant. For the sake of convenience, since none of these references imply any royal patronage, they will all be described here. The inscriptions include: three metal images, one of the third and two of the nineteenth years,
found at Kurkihar, an inscription of the fifth year, found in a temple at Gayā; a terracotta plaque of the eighth year, believed to be from Bihar province; an inscription of the twelfth or thirteenth year on a Buddha image now in the Indian Museum; and an inscription dated to the twenty-fourth year from Naulīgarh. Manuscript colophons from the reign of a King Vigrāhāpāla include: a Daśabhūmika-sūtra of year six; a Yogāmbarāsādhana-pāvika of year thirteen, which attributes to the king full royal titles; a Bodhi-caryāvata-ra of year twenty-six; and a Pañcarāksā of year twenty-six, which applies full royal titles to the king. Because these inscriptions and colophons do not offer proof of any royal religious patronage, the question of which of the three Vigrāhāpālas was meant by any particular reference is irrelevant to the present study.

Three sons of King Vigrāhāpāla III apparently reigned after him. No copper plates of these rulers are known, but they are invariably described in other Indian epigraphic and literary sources in terms that associate them with Hinduism. The Manahali copper plate of Madana-pāla says of the first of these three sons, Mahīpāla II, "being the crest-jewel of the foremost of Brahmans, he resembled Siva, decorated by the moon on his forehead." The same plate says of the second, Sūrapāla II, that he "had the personality of Indra and the wealth of Kartti-
The third son, Rāmapāla, is said to have resembled Indra and to have been the enemy of Divya. The copper plate of Vaidyadeva of Kāmarūpa does not mention Mahīpāla II or Sūrapāla II, but describes Rāmapāla as having effected the restoration of his ancestor's lost kingdom by slaying Bhīma, as Rāma slew Rāvana.

Sandhyākaranandandin's Rāmacarita narrates the events of this period in considerable detail. This text states that Mahīpāla II took the throne at his father's death and imprisoned his two brothers, but that soon a revolt occurred in which he was killed and the kingdom was occupied by the Kaivartas under Divya. The text does not mention the rule of Sūrapāla II, but describes Rāmapāla's efforts to defeat Divya's successor, Bhīma, and recover the kingdom. Rāmapāla is variously compared to Indra, the guardian deities of the quarters, Brahma, Mara (Śiva), and Hari in this work, but the entire composition revolves around his identification with his namesake Rāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Furthermore, although Rāmapāla's kingdom is described as the home of the great Buddhist monastery of Jagaddala, Rāmapāla himself is said to have given "temples of Śiva in groups of three" in his capital city. Finally, the Rāmacarita relates that the king, stricken with grief at the death of his uncle, gave away much wealth and plunged himself into the holy waters of the Ganges to die. Another, later
text, the Sekhāsubhodaya, also ascribes to Rāmapāla a traditionally Hindu manner of death: he "died in the waters of the Ganges by reflecting on the feet of the wheel-ensigned god (Viṣṇu) without touching any food," i.e. he fasted to death. Thus, all these sources imply that the sons of Vigrahapāla III were Hindu by preference.

No inscriptions or manuscript colophons can be definitely attributed to the reigns of Mahīpāla II or Śūrapāla II, who probably held the throne only briefly, and, although several are known from the reign of Rāmapāla, none are indicative of his personal patronage. The inscriptions relating to Rāmapāla include one on an image from Tetrawan dated to his third year, and another on an image from Chandīmau, which is dated to his forty-second year and awards him full royal titles. A manuscript of the Kujikāmata is merely dated to his reign, while copies of the Astasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā are dated to his eighth and fifteenth years. All three of these colophons list the king's full official titles. Finally, the colophon of a copy of Abhayākaragupta's Buddhakapāla-tantra-tīkā states that this text was completed in the twenty-fifth year of Rāmapāla's reign.

Though there is no evidence that Rāmapāla was a patron of Buddhism, he is one of the few epigraphically known Pāla rulers to be mentioned in the Tibetan histories. This may have been due to his military
successes, which revived the Pāla kingdom for the last
time, or possibly to the fact that he was the contemporary
of Abhayākaragupta, a remarkably active author and trans-
lator\textsuperscript{101} who was known to Tāranātha as "practically the
last among the famous great ācāryas who fully nourished
the Law with their scholarship, compassion, power, and
wealth."\textsuperscript{102}

Rāmapāla is described by Tāranātha in his
\textit{History of Buddhism in India} as the next to last Pāla
ruler. He is said to have appointed Abhayākaragupta as
head of Vikramaśīla, Vajrāsana, and Nālandā and to have
maintained two hundred and forty monks as permanent
residents of Vajrāsana.\textsuperscript{103} In Tāranātha's \textit{Mine of Precious
Stones}, Abhayākaragupta is said to have been the personal
preceptor of the king and to have lived in a \textit{vihāra} built
by the queen.\textsuperscript{104} According to Sum-pa, Rāmapāla himself had
formerly been a student at Vikramaśīla, but was expelled
from the monastery by Atīśa.\textsuperscript{105} These accounts are
unanimous in describing Rāmapāla as a Buddhist, but they
cannot be accepted at face value due to the lack of in-
scriptional corroboration and to the Hindu affiliation
attributed to him by the far earlier \textit{Rāmācarita}. It is
possible the Rāmapāla did officially confirm Abhayakara-
gupta's appointment as head of Vikramaśīla, Vajrāsana, and
Nālandā, but he probably did not profess the Buddhist
faith.
Kumārapāla, the son of Rāmapāla and next ruler of the dynasty, is very little known. His name means "protector of Kumāra," but Kumāra (youth) is an epithet of both the Hindu god Karttikeya and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. This king is mentioned in the copper plate of Vaidyadeva, his former minister, as one who was as wise as Vācaspati and like the sun in military splendor;¹⁰⁶ both Madanapāla's Manahali plate and the Rāmacarita refer to Kumārapāla's military prowess,¹⁰⁷ but these descriptions are vague and conventional. There are no known inscriptions, and only one manuscript, dating from this king's reign—a copy of the Śīksāmuccaya which was made in his third regnal year.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the lack of evidence makes it impossible to determine Kumārapāla's religious preference.

Kumārapāla's son, Gopāla III, was the next reigning Pāla. The Manahali copper plate describes him as one who was famous while yet young,¹⁰⁹ and the Rāmacarita implies that he died prematurely while fighting an enemy.¹¹⁰ The Nimdighi inscription also seems to state that this king died in battle,¹¹¹ while the Rājibpur¹¹² and Lakhisarai¹¹³ inscriptions simply are dated to his reign. Again, it is not possible to make a positive statement about this king's religious preference.

Madanapāla, the brother of Kumārapāla and successor to Gopāla III, is the last known Pāla king to
have issued a copper plate. Therefore he is also the
last king who can be stated with certainty to have been a
member of the dynasty, and is the last king who will be
treated in this study. His copper plate, found at
Manahali, dates from the eighth regnal year and records a
grant of land made in the name of the Buddha to the Brahmin
Vāțeśvarasvāmiśarman. This grant was given to the Brahmin
as a payment for his reading of the Mahābhārata for the
chief queen, but it is not known whether the reading
was meant as entertainment or as a pious undertaking.
This grant has several features unique among Pāla copper
plates. First, it was made as a payment for services
rendered rather than a simple religious donation. Second,
it includes the phrase "om namo buddhāya," "hail to the
name of the Buddha," at the very start of the inscription.
As this was not a part of the traditional format, it would
seem to indicate that Madanapāla's devotion to Buddhism
was greater than was usual for a later Pāla ruler. However,
since the engraver of the plate, named Tathāgatasasara, was
probably a Buddhist, this innovation may have been due to
him. Third, there is a reference in the section of the
text describing the conditions of the land transfer to a
tax called ratnatraya-rājasambhoga, which was not
mentioned in previous grants. It is not certain whether
this important term refers to a royal tax levied for the
support of the ratnatraya (the three jewels: the Buddha,
his doctrine, and the order of Buddhist monks), or whether it was a tax exacted from Buddhists or Buddhist monasteries. If the former were the case, it would indicate that Madanapāla was a patron of Buddhism; if the latter, that he was unusually hostile to it. In this connection it may be noted that the name Madanapāla means "protector of Madana" and Madana (passion, an epithet of the god of love) was the sworn enemy of Buddhists.

The Rāmacarita, which was written in Madanapāla's reign and dedicated to him, compares Madanapāla to Indra, Rāma, and numerous other gods. He is said to have had "his mind engrossed in (or his heart possessed by) Hari," and to have been like Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, i.e. rich and learned. Inscriptions referring to Madanapāla include: one from Noṅgadh dated to his reign; one from Bihar, dated to his third year; one from Jaynagar and another from Ārmā, both dated to his fourteenth year; and one from Valgudar, dated to the king's eighteenth regnal year in 1083 Śaka, i.e. 1161-1162 A.D. Also, a manuscript of the Astasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā was copied in Madanapāla's seventeenth year, and a manuscript of the Hevajrādākinījñālamahātantraṭīkā, which awards him full official titles, was copied in his nineteenth year.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the evidence relating to Madanapāla's religious preferences is ambiguous. It seems that his first devotion was to Hinduism,
as his name would indicate, but it is also possible, if *ratnatrava-rajjasambhoga* is interpreted positively, ¹²⁸ that he gave his support to Buddhism as well.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 170-172.

2. Ibid., 158-159.

3. Ibid., 170.

4. Ibid., 171.

5. Ibid., 172.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 174.

8. The difficulty of attributing inscriptions and manuscript colophons to the correct one of the three Vigrahapālas is illustrated by the case of the Bihar Buddha image (year 12 or 13). This object has been dated to the reign of Vigrahapāla III on the basis of paleography by R.D. Banerji, The Pālas of Bengal, 112; but it has been dated to the reign of Vigrahapāla I on the basis of style by S.L. Huntington, Sculpture in Bihar and Bengal, 174. All such examples of epigraphic and literary references to a non-specific Vigrahapāla will be mentioned below in connection with the discussion of Vigrahapala III.


10. Ibid., 175-176.

11. Ibid., 176-177.

12. Ibid., 159.

13. Ibid.


15. Ibid., 62.

16. R.D. Banerji, "The Pratīhāra Occupation of Magadha," Indian Antiquary, XLVII, 1918, 110. This in-
scription, which reveals that Nārāyanapāla ruled for at least 54 years, is a further indication that Vīgrahapāla I could not have had a very long reign.

17 Sastri, Nālandā, 58.

18 Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 205.


20 D.C. Sircar, "A Note on the Bhāturiyā Inscription of Rājayapāla," Indian Historical Quarterly, XXXIV, 1958, 270.

21 Lahiry, "Bhāturiyā Inscription," 231.


25 Ingalls, Subhāsītaratnakosa, 231.

26 P.N. Misra and R.C. Majumdar, "The Jājilpāra Grant of Gopāla II: Year Six," Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters, XVII, 1951, 140-141. However, a few of the verses found in the Bhagalpur plate are omitted, presumably for the sake of brevity.

27 Ibid., 138-139.

28 A third manuscript, a copy of the Astasāhasrikā- pratīṣṭhanapāramitā which is number 20.589 in the Bōston Museum of Fine Arts, is said to be dated to the fourth regnal year of Gopāla (II), but no transcription of its colophon was available for this study. See A. Ghose, "Miniatures of a Newly Discovered Buddhist Palm-leaf Manuscript from Bengal," Proceedings and Transactions of the Fifth Indian Oriental Congress, Lahore, 1928, II, 1079. Also, the
Dacca copper plate of King Kalyāṇacandra of the Candra dynasty of East Bengal seems to refer to Gopāla II, but this inscription has little import for the present study. See A.H. Dani, "Mainamati Plates of the Chandras," Pakistan Archaeology, III, 1966, 34.

29 Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 184-187.


31 Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 187-189.

32 H.P. (Sastrī), A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanscrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection Under the Care of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1917, I, 13. This is manuscript number 4806 in the collection. The date was corrected from year 57 to year 17 by R.D. Banerji, "Pāla Chronology," Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, XIV, 1928, 491.

33 L.D. Barnett, "Note on the Dynasties of Bengal and Nepal," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1910, 151. This is manuscript number Or. 6902 in the collection of the British Museum.

34 Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 205.

35 A. Banerji, "On a Verse of the Pāla Inscriptions," Indian Historical Quarterly, XXXII, 1956, 52-53.

36 All examples of epigraphic or literary references to a non-specific Vīgrahapāla will be mentioned in connection with the discussion of Vīgrahapāla III.

37 M. Gupta, "Two Pāla Copper Plate Inscriptions of Belwā," Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters, XVII, 1951, 124. This author states that Mahīpāla's Belwā plate is dated to year 22.

38 Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 206.

39 Gupta, "Two Pāla Copper Plate Inscriptions," 127-128.


42. Sircar, "Two Pāla Plates," 2.

43. E. Hultzsch, "The Sarnath Inscription of Mahīpāla," *Indian Antiquary*, XIV, 1885, 139-140.

44. Mukherji and Maity, *Corpus*, 220-221.


47. Mukherji and Maity, *Corpus*, 209.


49. Banerji-Sastri, "Ninety-three Inscriptions," 245. The correction of the date from year 31 to year 21 was made by Majumdar, "Some Dates in the Pāla and Sena Records," 218.


51. R. Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Sanskrit Palm-Leaf Manuscripts in Tibet," 27, 37. This manuscript was found at the Kun-de-ling monastery in Lhasa, Tibet. A copy of the *Vyākaraṇatīkā* by Prajñāvarma found at Ngor monastery also seems to refer to Mahīpāla's reign, but is dated in the year 458 (1338 A.D.?).

52. M. Mookerjee, "Iconographic Aspects of an Illuminated Manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāparamitā* in the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters*, XVI, 1950, 237. This is manuscript number Add. 1464 in the University Library, Cambridge.
53. (Sastri), *Descriptive Catalogue--Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I, 2. This is manuscript number 4713 in the collection.


56. Das, "Indian Pandits in Tibet," 11.

57. Evidence to support this assumption includes Tāranātha's account of Dharmapāla's appointment of his preceptor as head of Vikramaśīla, and the Ghosrāwān inscription's report that Devapāla honored the monk who became head of Nālandā.


64. Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Second Search," 44. This manuscript was found at the Shalu monastery.

65. Banerji, *Pālas of Bengal*, 79. This manuscript is number 1688 in the collection of the University Library, Cambridge.


68. Das, "Indian Pandits in Tibet," 9-10.

69. Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, Tāranātha's History, 305, 308.

70. Sarkar, "Notes on a Tibetan Account of Bengal," 387.


75. Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 379.

76. Sastri, Rāmacaritam, 6,7; Canto I, vs. 7, 8.

77. Banerji-Sastri, "Ninety-three Inscriptions," 238-240. The author attributes these to the reign of Vigrahapāla III.

78. Banerji, Pālas of Bengal, 82. This inscription probably refers to Vigrahapāla III since members of the same family of patrons it mentions dedicated other inscriptions at Gaya in the reign of Nayapāla.


80. See above, note 8. The date of this image is usually read as year 13, but was read as year 12 by S.N. Chakravarti, "Development of the Bengali Alphabet from the Fifth Century A.D. to the End of the Muhammadan Rule," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters, IV, 1938, 390.
81. D.C. Sircar, "Some Inscriptions from Bihar," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, XXXVII, 1951, 2, 4. The author is uncertain whether this should be referred to the second or the third Vigrahapāla.

82. Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Second Search," 28. This manuscript was found in a library at Sa-skya monastery in Tibet.


84. Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Second Search," 24. This manuscript was found in a library at Sa-skya monastery.

85. Banerji, *Pālas of Bengal*, 67. This is manuscript number Or. 3346 in the British Museum collection.

86. Mukherji and Maity, *Corpus*, 218.


90. Sastri, *Rāmacaritam*, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27; Canto I, vs. 27, 29, 31, 36, 37.

91. *Ibid.*, 10-12, 103; Canto I, vs. 13-17; Kaviśrāstā, vs. 19. The author exclaims, "How can I sufficiently eulogize (Rāmapāla), who is the very abode of Hari?"


93. *Ibid.*, 82; Canto IV, vs. 8-10.


98. Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Sanskrit Palm-Leaf Manuscripts in Tibet," 32. This manuscript was found at the Ngor monastery.


100. (Sastri), *Descriptive Catalogue--Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I, 163. This manuscript is number 3827 in the collection.


107. *Ibid.*, 381; Sastri, *Rāmācaritam*, 83; Canto IV, vs. 11.
Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Second Search," 32. This manuscript was found in the library of Sa-skya monastery.

Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 219.

Sastri, Rāmacaritam, 82; Canto IV, vs. 12.


N.K. Bhattasali, "Two Inscriptions of Gopāla III of Bengal," Indian Historical Quarterly, XVII, 1941. The date of this inscription, usually read as year 14, has been questioned by R.C. Majumdar, in "Some Dates in the Pāla and Sena Records," 216.

R. Chaudhary, "Lakhisarai Inscription," Ganesh Datta College Bulletin, II, 1952, 23-24. It is possible that this inscription, which was attributed on the basis of the legible letters "gopāle", does not refer to a Pāla king at all.

N.N. Vasu, "The Manahali Copper-plate Inscription of Madanapāladeva," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXIX, 1900, 68.

Mukherji and Maity, Corpus, 211.

Ibid., 219.

Sastri, Rāmacaritam, 89, 90; Canto IV, vs. 25f.

Ibid., 94; Canto IV, vs. 38.

Ibid., 95; Canto IV, vs. 44.


Cunningham, Annual Report for the Year 1871-72, 125. This reading has been corrected from year 19 to 14 by R.C. Majumdar, "Some Dates in the Pāla and Sena Records," 216.
Sircar, "Three Inscriptions from Bihar," 43.

Sircar, "Three Inscriptions from Valgudar," 141, 146.

Sāṅkṛtyāyana, "Sanskrit Palm-Leaf Manuscripts in Tibet," 38. This manuscript was found in the Ngor monastery.

Ibid., 43. This manuscript was found in the library at Sa-skya monastery.

It is notable that such ambiguity occurs without any sign of syncretism. None of the evidence relating to the religion of the Pāla rulers indicates that Buddhist and Hindu ideas at that time had been "blended" to produce a composite faith. The form of Hinduism preferred by the rulers seems to have been orthodox; for example, the Brahmins they patronized were usually stated to have been Vedic scholars.

Paul, The Early History of Bengal, I, 135. This author tentatively suggests this interpretation.
CHAPTER IV:
CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study has been to demonstrate that the commonly held assumption about the role of the Pāla rulers as active patrons of Buddhist culture is not justified. This erroneous assumption has been largely based on two major facts. First, the Pāla kings used the Buddhist dharmacakra seal, the title parama-sauna, and an invocation to the Buddha in their official grants. Second, the Tibetan historians Taranātha and Sum-pa gave detailed accounts of an entire lineage of kings whose names bore the suffix "-pāla" and whose actions were consistently in support of Buddhism. These two sets of circumstances may be summarized separately.

Certainly it is undeniable that every Pāla ruler who is known to have issued a copper plate grant used the dharmacakra seal, the title parama-sauna, and an invocation which referred to the Buddha. Nevertheless, an examination of the contents of these grants has revealed that, of the twelve which are legible, only one, Devapāla's Nālandā plate, actually made a donation in favor of Buddhism; on the contrary, eleven were gifts to Brahmins or Hindu shrines. Also, the standardization of the grants from the time of Nārāyaṇapaṇāla on implies that the Buddhist format was a matter of dynastic tradition rather than personal choice for the later Pāla rulers of the branch line.
Thus, the formal title parama-saugata should be considered as no more necessarily valid for an individual Pāla king than the formal description of his capital, which was applied with equal consistency to at least six different cities. Supporting epigraphical evidence which may be brought to bear on the question of Pāla patronage includes: several terracotta sealings found at Buddhist monastic sites, which indicate that Dharmapāla and Devapāla were patrons of these establishments; the Ghosrāwān inscription, which states that Devapāla honored a Buddhist monk; the Bhāturiyā inscription, which states that Rājyapāla made a grant for a Śaivite temple; and the Sarnath inscription of 1026 A.D., which indicates that Mahīpāla I patronized monuments dedicated to Śiva and Durgā. Thus, positive epigraphical evidence shows that Dharmapāla and Devapāla made donations in favor of both Buddhism and Hinduism, and that Nārāyagapāla, Rājyapāla, Gopāla II, Mahīpāla I, Vigrahapāla III, and Madanapāla made donations in favor of Hinduism. Clearly, then, the inscriptional evidence does not reveal a strong dynastic preference for or patronage of Buddhism.

Turning to Tāranātha's and Sum-pa's literary works, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, it may be noted that, of the sixteen "Pāla" kings they list, only six correspond in name to historical rulers known from the Pāla copper plates. Thus, comparable
acts of devotion to Buddhism are attributed in these works to twelve "imaginary" Pāla kings and to six "real" Pāla kings. Since even the six "real" rulers—Gopāla, Dharmapāla, Devapāla, Mahīpāla, Nayapāla, and Rāmapāla—are not correctly placed in the dynastic sequence, the accounts of their reigns are highly suspect. Probably, the names of these six kings and no others were known to the Tibetans because travel and communication between eastern India and Tibet increased during their reigns. Therefore, unless there is external evidence to support assertions about Buddhist patronage made in these histories, as is the case for Dharmapāla and Devapāla, or unless there is no other available information about the religious preference of a particular ruler, as is the case for Nayapāla, it is best not to rely on these assertions. Certainly, Tāranātha's and Sum-pa's accounts should not be made the basis for general statements about the patronage of the dynasty as a whole.

In conclusion, the present study offers, as an alternative to the categorical statement that the Pala dynasty was the "stronghold" of Buddhism for four hundred years, a series of statements about the preferences and patronage of individual rulers, based on all available evidence. Considering these statements together, it appears that Dharmapāla and Devapāla did make significant contributions to Buddhist culture, and that Nayapāla and
Madanapāla might also have patronized Buddhism, but that every other Pāla king whose preference is ascertainable preferred Hinduism. Therefore, unless further evidence of Pāla patronage becomes available in the future, the late survival of Buddhism in northeastern India must be explained by other factors than royal support.


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