

## On the dynastic transition from the Śuṅgas to the Kāṅvāyanas

Ryutaro TSUCHIDA

Puṣyamitra, the commander-in-chief (*senānī*), having usurped the throne from Br̥hadratha the last Maurya king, established his own regime in the first half of the second century B.C. This Śuṅga dynasty lasted more than one hundred years until the throne passed to a minister called Vasudeva, who inaugurated a succession of rulers known by the name of Kāṅvas, Kāṅvas or Kāṅvāyanas. Due to the scarcity of relevant sources, we know very little about this Kāṅvāyana dynasty, which seems to have flourished in northern India for about forty-five years in the first century B.C. There is neither archaeological, numismatical nor epigraphical evidence showing any positive connection to these Kāṅvāyanas<sup>1</sup>. We must, therefore, rely solely on textual material, mainly consisting of Purāṇic verses, in our attempt to elucidate particular problems concerning their kingdom.

The main source we have to resort to constantly in our present study is provided by F. E. Pargiter in his work entitled *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age* (Oxford, 1913).

In this work Pargiter collated a number of passages from several *Purāṇas* and presented his restored text on the *Kaliyuga* dynasties. According to Pargiter's view, this text, originally composed in Prakrit<sup>2</sup>, goes back to a lost source referred to in some Purāṇic verses by the title of *Bhaviṣya*<sup>3</sup>. In this Purāṇic text we find the whole history narrated by way of a prophecy about the succession of kings and the events that are destined to occur in the future. Although the standpoint of the dynastic narration differs from one *Purāṇa* to another, we may generally say that the prophetic recital is represented as having taken place either shortly before or just after the beginning of the *Kali* age. In the case of the *Matsya*-, *Vāyu*- and *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* the entire account is placed in the mouth of Sūta, who at the request of the sages dwelling in the Naimiṣa forest gives a long discourse on the rise and fall of dynasties in the worst age of human history<sup>4</sup>.

In reconstructing the text about the four successive Kāṅvāyana rulers, Pargiter relies mainly on the relevant passages from the *Matsya*-, *Vāyu*- and *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, consulting also the corresponding verses from the *Viṣṇu*- and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. Below I simply reproduce Pargiter's reconstruction of the text on the Kāṅvāyanas. In the case of verses where

<sup>1</sup> There have, however, been made several attempts to ascribe some inscription and coins to Kāṅva dynasty. The theory of Bhandare (p. 91), who holds the group of coins bearing the names of Hathideva, Bhoomidata, Nārāyaṇamitra and Vasuśarmā to have been issued by the four successive Kāṅva rulers, namely, Vasudeva, Bhūmimitra, Nārāyaṇa and Suśarman, is worthy of our consideration. Further, the Sanskrit inscription found in Ghosūṅḍī (Lüders no. 6, Sircar pp. 90-91) has been attributed by some scholars to a Kāṅva ruler. Cf. Falk p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Pargiter, pp. X-XI, XVII-XVIII, 77-83 (Appendix I).

<sup>3</sup> Pargiter, pp. VII-VIII, XIII-XIV, XXVI-XXVII.

<sup>4</sup> Pargiter, pp. VIII-X.

the *MtP* and the *VāP* show textual divergences, Pargiter places the readings of both *Purāṇas*, each based on the text of the Ānandāśrama editions, on the left and right sides of pages 34-35 respectively, and he gives the variants in the manuscripts available to him and other editions of both *Purāṇas* as well as in those of the *ViP* and the *BhāP* in the critical apparatus. As for the Kāṇvāyana passage, the readings of the *MtP* and the *VāP* printed in the Ānandāśrama editions, particularly those of the latter, are full of corruptions, misprints and other defects. For this reason Pargiter's text cannot by any means be simple citations from the *MtP* and *VāP* versions but should be regarded as the product of his own emendations made to both of the printed passages with the help of other textual material. Pargiter's text on the Kāṇva dynasty, quoted immediately below, seems on the whole reliable, if we treat it with due care and consideration.

[ <i>MtP</i> 272,32cd-37]	[ <i>VāP</i> 99,343cd-347]
<i>amātyo Vasudevas tu bālyād vyasaninaṃ nṛpam</i>	
<i>Devabhūmiṃ athotsādyā</i>	<i>Devabhūmiṃ tathotpātya</i>
<i>Śauṅgas tu bhavitā nṛpaḥ</i>	<i>Śuṅgeṣu bhavitā nṛpaḥ</i>
<i>bhaviṣyati samā rājā nava Kāṇvāyano dvijaḥ</i>	
<i>Bhūmimitraḥ sutas tasya caturdaśa bhaviṣyati</i>	
<i>Nārāyaṇaḥ sutas tasya</i>	<i>bhavitā dvādaśa samās</i>
<i>bhavitā dvādaśaiva tu</i>	<i>tasmān Nārāyaṇo nṛpaḥ</i>
<i>Suśarmā tatsutaś cāpi bhaviṣyati daśaiva tu</i>	
<i>ity ete Śuṅgabhr̥tyās tu</i>	<i>catvāras Tuṅgakṛtyās te</i>
<i>smṛtāḥ Kāṇvāyanā nṛpāḥ</i>	<i>nṛpāḥ Kāṇvāyanā dvijaḥ</i>
<i>catvāras tu dvijā hy ete</i>	
<i>Kaṇvā bhokṣyanti vai mahīm</i>	<i>bhāvvyāḥ praṇatasāmantāś</i>
<i>catvāriṃśat pañca caiva</i>	<i>catvāriṃśac ca pañca ca</i>
<i>bhokṣyantīmāṃ vasundharām</i>	
<i>ete praṇatasāmantā</i>	
<i>bhaviṣyā dhārmikāś ca ye</i>	
<i>yeṣām paryāyakāle tu</i>	<i>teṣām paryāyakāle tu</i>
<i>bhūmir Āndhrān gamiṣyati</i>	<i>bhūr Andhrāṇām bhaviṣyati</i>

The *MtP* version of the passage can be translated as follows:

The minister Vasudeva, having overthrown the licentious king Devabhūmi by force, will become the ruler of the Śuṅga territory. Being a twice-born (Brahmin) of the Kaṇva lineage, he will be king nine years. His son Bhūmimitra will be king fourteen years. His son Nārāyaṇa will be king twelve years. His son Suśarman will be king ten years. These

vassals of the Śuṅgas will be recorded as the Kāṇvāyana kings. These four Kaṇvas, being twice-born (Brahmins), will enjoy the earth for forty-five years. They will have the neighbouring rulers in subjection and will be righteous. At the time of their decline the earth will pass to the Āndhras.

As for Vasudeva's overthrow of the Śunga king spoken of in *MtP* 272,32-33 and *VāP* 99, 343-344, it is depicted somewhat more dramatically by Bāṇa in his *Harṣacarita*. Towards the end of the sixth chapter (*ucchvāsa*) of the romance Skandagupta, the commandant of elephants serving under king Harṣa, recounts before his master a number of examples of how the imprudence and negligence of princes brought about their destruction. In this discourse he refers to the over-libidinous Śuṅga who was assassinated by a daughter of Devabhūti's slave-woman disguised as his queen at the instance of his minister Vasudeva<sup>5</sup>.

According to the just-quoted verses, the dynasty of the Kāṇvāyanas lasted for forty-five years until it was supplanted by the Āndhras, and during this period the throne was passed from father to son for four successive generations.

It is a puzzle to us how we are to interpret the title *Śuṅgabhr̥tyās* (*MtP* 272,35c) as well as the sentences 'Śauṅgas tu bhavitā nṛpaḥ' (*MtP* 272,33b) and 'Śuṅgeṣu bhavitā nṛpaḥ' (*VāP* 99,344b)<sup>6</sup>. These expressions seem to hint at some kind of Śuṅga authority to which the founder of the Kaṇva dynasty remained subject even after his accession to the throne. Indeed, we find the survivors of the Śuṅgas referred to in the verses about the rise of the Āndhras which immediately follow the lines cited above. The two versions of this passage restored by Pargiter run as follows:

[ <i>MtP</i> 273,1-2]	[ <i>VāP</i> 99,348-349ab]
<i>Kāṇvāyanāms tato bhr̥tyāḥ</i>	<i>Kāṇvāyanam athoddhṛtya</i>
<i>Suśarmānaḥ prasahya tam</i>	<i>Suśarmānam prasahya tam</i>
<i>Śuṅgānām caiva yac cheṣaṃ</i>	<i>Śuṅgānām cāpi yac chiṣṭaṃ</i>
<i>kṣapayitvā tu balīyasaḥ</i>	<i>kṣapayitvā balaṃ tadā</i>
<i>Śīsuko' ndhraḥ saajātyaḥ</i>	<i>Sindhuko hy Andhrajātīyaḥ</i>
<i>prāpsyatīmāṃ vasundharām</i>	<i>prāpsyatīmāṃ vasundharām</i>
<i>trāyoviṃśat samā rājā Simukas tu bhaviṣyati</i>	

For the Āndhra ruler who overthrew the Kāṇvāyanas, each of the two *Purāṇas* gives a different name: Śīsuka and Sindhuka. In the two *MtP* manuscripts consulted by Pargiter the name of the Āndhra king reads Śīsukas and Śiṃsukaḥ. However, he adopts none of these

<sup>5</sup> *Harṣacarita* 6, p. 50: *atistrīsaṅgaratam anaṅgaparavaṣaṃ Śuṅgam amātyo Vasudevo Devabhūtidāsīduhitrā devīvyāñjanayā vītajīvitam akārayat*. This sentence need not necessarily be taken as referring to Devabhūmi's death as a result of Vasudeva's intrigue. It would not be entirely impossible to interpret the statement to the effect that some other Śuṅga was murdered by the contrivance of Vasudeva on behalf of Devabhūmi. Raychaudhuri (p. 351) hints at this interpretation but dismisses it as unlikely.

<sup>6</sup> On the names of the dynasties as *-bhr̥tyas* cf. Thapar p. 134.

names given in the Purāṇic sources available to him, but identifies the king as Simuka, whose name appears in the Nānāghāt inscription<sup>7</sup>.

In the Ānandāśrama edition, *MiP* 273,1b reads ‘*tato bhūpāḥ*’. The word *-bhṛtya* occurs only in the corresponding line of some *MiP* manuscripts and the printed editions of the *ViP* and *BhāP*<sup>8</sup>. The reading *bhṛtyāḥ* (nom. pl.), not attested in any textual source of Pargiter, is solely derived from his conjecture. As for this plural form, Pargiter states that it may refer to Simuka and his tribesmen. He thus translates the passage as follows:

The Andhra Simukha with his fellow tribesmen, the servants of Suśarman, will assail the Kāṇvāyanas and him (Suśarman), and destroy the remains of the Śuṅgas’ power and will obtain the earth. Simuka will be king 23 years<sup>9</sup>.

Owing to the much corrupted condition of the transmitted text there is little hope for an accurate reconstruction of the verses, but Pargiter’s translation seems on the whole acceptable. We can, indeed, hardly think of any other reasonable interpretation of the verses. This consideration renders it probable that the Āndhra rulers had paid nominal allegiance to the Kāṇvāyanas until they attained to political and military ascendancy even in northern India.

The passage is all the more interesting as it tells of the remnants (*śeṣa*, *śiṣṭa*) of the Śuṅgas who survived Vasudeva’s usurpation of the throne and continued to exist until the termination of the Kāṇva dynasty by the Āndhras. From these verses R. G. Bhandarkar concludes that two dynasties reigned contemporaneously and the hundred and twelve years assigned to the Śuṅgas include the forty-five years of the reigns of the four Kāṇvāyanas<sup>10</sup>. This opinion is hardly tenable so long as we hold the Purāṇic account of Vasudeva’s overthrow of Devabhūmi to reflect the historical reality<sup>11</sup>.

Far more probable is it that during the Kāṇva period there still existed Śuṅga rulers who even after the death of Devabhūmi continued to hold sway over some areas in northern India, though neither their political status nor the geographical location of their power can be elucidated by us any more. Puṣyamitra and his successors are most likely to have adopted only a loosely organized and decentralized form of government. The *Mālavikāgnimitra*, a play by Kālidāsa, indicates the simultaneous existence of two royal capitals within the kingdom. In this respect the Śuṅga regime stands in contrast to the Maurya empire, which is usually regarded as having aspired to the centralization of political power and a highly organized administration of the state. It seems that within the Śuṅga domain some urban centres, together with the surrounding areas, were allotted to members of the royal family, each holding sway over his respective area, nominally as a viceroy but virtually as an independent ruler. Dhana(deva?), for instance, whose name appears in the Ayodhyā inscription but is nowhere

<sup>7</sup> Lüders, no. 1113. Cf. V.A. Smith, p. 230.

<sup>8</sup> Pargiter, p. 38, n. 2. Cf. also Bhandarkar, p. 34; Raychaudhuri, p. 357.

<sup>9</sup> Pargiter, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Bhandarkar, p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Raychaudhuri, pp. 353-354; Smith, p. 215; Sinha, p. 132.

recorded in the Purāṇic passage on the Śuṅga dynasty, should be regarded as one such local ruler<sup>12</sup>.

Most probably the founder of the Kāṇva dynasty had been able to overthrow only the branch of the Śuṅga lineage to which Devabhūmi belonged. Other branches of the same lineage seem to have continued to rule over their own inherited territories even after Vasudeva's accession to the throne. We cannot say anything definite about the location of the capital from where Devabhūmi ruled over his realm and which was later appropriated by Vasudeva after the success of his palace revolution.

From the *Malavikāgnimitra* it is obvious that Puṣpamitra ruled over his kingdom from Pāṭaliputra, while his crown-prince Agnimitra ran his own royal court in Vidiśā. From the same play we know that Vasumitra, the son of Agnimitra, who won a battle with the Greek army in his pursuit of the sacrificial horse, usually stayed with his grandfather in Pāṭaliputra. On the other hand, we cannot ascertain at all whether Agnimitra after the death of his father still remained in Vidiśā or transferred his seat of government to Pāṭaliputra. In such circumstances we remain ignorant about the whereabouts of most of the Śuṅga rulers and the four Kāṇvāyana kings<sup>13</sup>.

What we may say with considerable certainty is that both the Kāṇvāyana dynasty and the remnants of Śuṅga power were uprooted almost simultaneously by the invasion of the Āndhras from the south. The Purāṇic passage implies that the Kāṇvāyanas paid tribute to the Śuṅgas who survived the dynastic transition. It seems likely that these Śuṅgas belonged to a different branch of the royal family from that of Devabhūmi. This nominal allegiance may have had the character of a non-aggression treaty for the purpose of maintaining the status quo of politics in northern India.

About the final phase of the Kāṇvāyanas we cannot gain any further knowledge from literary sources. In the present article we should try rather to inquire into the process and background of their obtaining ascendancy at the court of the Śuṅga monarchs.

The designation of the Kāṇvas as *dvijāḥ* given in the Purāṇic verses leaves us little doubt as to their caste-identity as Brahmins. Their family name also indicates their membership of the clan (*gotra*) descended from the sage Kaṇva. According to the same passage, Vasudeva, the founder of the dynasty, had been a servant (*amātya*) of Devabhūmi before he usurped the throne. In the list of the seven constituents (*prakṛti, aṅga*) of the state, as given in *Manusmṛti* 9,294 and *Arthaśāstra* 6,1,1, *amātya* comes next to *svāmin* (sovereign). We find several functions of the *amātya* enumerated in *Arthaśāstra* 8,1,8. According to Kangle, in a few places in this treatise on statecraft the term *amātya* seems restricted to the chief minister, who is

---

<sup>12</sup> For surveys over the reigns of the Śuṅga rulers after Puṣyamitra, cf. Bhattacharya, pp.47-60; Sinha pp. 108-129.

<sup>13</sup> Several historians believe that the centre of Śuṅga power lay in Vidiśā. Cf. Rapson, p. 519; Filliozat, p. 135; Sinha, p. 121; Jagannath, p. 102.

in charge of the entire administration<sup>14</sup>. Even though the Purāṇic passages do not give any further account of Vasudeva's position within the Śuṅga government, it can be readily imagined that he and his immediate ancestors were dignitaries who not only administered state affairs but also played a significant role in the religious policies of the Śuṅga regime. They were either court chaplains or, at least, occupied some similar post of power and influence at the Śuṅga court, although the text does not make any explicit mention of their status as *purohita*<sup>15</sup>. Presumably the rise of the Kāṇvāyanas owes much to the influence they could wield over the Śuṅga rulers as their counsellors in religious matters as well as to their active commitment to the revival of Vedic ritualism inaugurated by Puṣyamitra.

In our quest for some clues for tracing the process of the Kāṇvāyanas' gaining of ascendancy, we come across an intriguing passage in the Purāṇic text on the *Kaliyuga* dynasties. Although these verses do not overtly concern the history of the Śuṅga-Kāṇva period at all, but narrate a quarrel of Janamejaya Pārikṣita with the Brahmins ensuing from his horse sacrifice, they deserve our full attention because we may possibly glean from them some hints about events concerning the rise of the Kāṇvas in the Śuṅga kingdom. These verses, though located within the genealogical account of Parikṣit and his descendants given in the *MtP* and the *VāP*, are not incorporated by Pargiter in his reconstructed text of the Paurava dynasty but are relegated to the end of the volume as Appendix III. Whether this passage constituted an integral part of the original text on the *Kaliyuga* dynasties, or whether they were only later inserted therein, should not be our primary concern. What arouses our special interest is the close relationship which the verses state to have once existed between the monarch and the Vājasaneyaka Brahmins. Here it should suffice to quote only the *MtP* version of the narrative:

[*MtP* 50,57cd-65 (*VāP* 99,250-256)]

*Janamejayaḥ Pārikṣitaḥ putraḥ paramadhārmikah* // (57cd)

*brahmāṇaṃ kalpayāmāsa sa vai Vājasaneyakam* /

*sa Vaiśampāyanenaiva śaptaḥ kila maharṣiṇā* // (58)

*na sthāsyatīha durbuddhe tavaitad vacanaṃ bhuvi* /

*yāvat sthāsyasi tvaṃ loke tāvad eva prapatsyati* // (59)

*kṣatrasya vijayam jñātvā tataḥ prabhṛti sarvaśaḥ* /

*abhigamyāsthītāś<sup>16</sup> caiva nṛpam ca Janamejayam* // (60)

*tataḥ prabhṛti śāpena kṣatriyasya tu yājinaḥ* /

*utsannā yājino yajñe tataḥ prabhṛti sarvaśaḥ* // (61)

*kṣatrasya yājinaḥ kecic chāpāt tasya mahātmanaḥ* /

<sup>14</sup> Kangle, p. 133.

<sup>15</sup> The qualities required of a *purohita* are enumerated in *Arthaśāstra* 1,9,9. Insofar as the system of Kauṭilya's statecraft is concerned, it is not certain whether the *purohita* should fall under the category of *amātya*. In a subsequent passage (1,9,10) it is stated that the king should obey his *purohita* as a servant does his master. Cf. Kangle, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Pargiter reads: *abhigamya sthitāś*.

*paurṇamāsenā haviṣā iṣṭvā tasmin Prajāpatim /  
sa Vaiśampāyanenaiva praviśan vāritas tataḥ // (62)*

*Parīkṣitaḥ suto'sau vai Pauravo Janamejayaḥ /  
dvir aśvamedham āhṛtya mahāvājasaneyakaḥ<sup>17</sup> // (63)*

*pravartayitvā taṃ sarvam ṛṣir vājasaneyakam /  
vivāde brāhmaṇaiḥ sārddham abhiśapto vanaṃ yayau // (64)*

*Janamejayaḥ Chatānīkas tasmā jajāne sa vīryavān /  
Janamejayaḥ Śātānīkam putraṃ rājye' bhiṣiktavān // (65)*

Janamejaya, the son of Parikṣit, being extremely pious, appointed the Vājasaneyaka the brahman priest. Then the great sage Vaiśampāyana cursed him, saying, “O stupid one, your proclamation will not be of abiding effect here on earth. It will be valid only so long as you are alive in the world.” Then all the subjects, having witnessed the victory of the kingly power over the Brahmins, flocked to the king Janamejaya and remained loyal to him. Thenceforward those officiant priests who took part in the sacrifice of the *kṣatriya* sacrificer went to total ruin by power of the curse uttered by the great sage<sup>18</sup>. When, after having completed the offering to Prajāpati, on a full-moon day, Janamejaya was about to enter (the sacrificial site), he was prohibited from doing so by the same Vaiśampāyana. Janamejaya Paurava, the son of Parikṣit the royal seer, however, became himself a great Vājasaneyaka and performed the horse sacrifice twice, enjoining the great Vājasaneyaka to administer the whole (sacrifice). He then retired into the forest on account of his having been cursed in the disputes with the Brahmins. Śātānīka the vigorous one had been begotten by Janamejaya. Janamejaya anointed his son Śātānīka and proclaimed him king.

The Purāṇic passage just quoted relates Janamejaya's celebration of the horse sacrifice with the aid of the Vājasaneyakas and his inevitable downfall as the result of Vaiśampāyana's malediction upon him and his quarrel with the majority of the Brahmins. In the *Mahābhārata* and several *Purāṇas* Janamejaya, the son of Parikṣit, is represented as the direct lineal descendant of Arjuna Pāṇḍava, who legitimately inherited the kingdom of the Paurava dynasty. In the frame-story of the *Mbh* he plays the crucial role of interlocutor of the sage Vaiśampāyana, who rehearses the whole epic before him during the performance of the snake sacrifice. Notwithstanding this well-known important part allotted to Janamejaya within the *Mbh*, the king had originally no specific relationship either with the Pāṇḍavas or with the Pauravas. In all probability it was at some early stage of the evolution of the great epic that the name of this ancient monarch was incorporated into the genealogy of its heroes. There must have

---

<sup>17</sup> Pargiter reads: *mahā-vājasaneyakam*. The nominative form is supported by the text of the Ānandāśrama edition and several manuscripts of the *MtP* (Pargiter, p. 88, n. 44). No corresponding *pāda* is found in the *VāP*.

<sup>18</sup> It is scarcely possible to clarify the ambiguities in *MtP* 50,61-62ab, in which one finds clumsy repetition of similar phrases. The *VāP* version of the story contains no corresponding verses.

existed ample narrative material about the Kuru king called Janamejaya Pāriḡṡita before the epic in its germinal form came into being.

In several passages from the Vedic texts Janamejaya Pāriḡṡita appears as a pious and prosperous king who was much fond of celebrating such large-scale *śrauta*-sacrifices as the *aśvamedha*. *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* 8,21,1 gives an account of Janamejaya's conquest of the world and his celebration of the horse sacrifice, while according to *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 13,5,4,1 the same king was able to expiate all his misdeeds, including the slaughter of Brahmins, by offering the horse sacrifice with the aid of Indrota Daivāpa Śaunaka as the officiant priest<sup>19</sup>. Each of these passages is followed by the same *yajñagāthā* eulogizing the sacrificial horse offered by Janamejaya<sup>20</sup>. The *Itihāsa* narrated in *Mhb* 12,146-148 can be regarded as the epic version of the story about Janamejaya and Indrota Śaunaka. Although it is Śaunaka's sermon on purificatory practice in general that accounts for the greater part of these chapters of the *Āpaddharmaparvan*, the story concludes with verses that relate how the sage supervised the celebration of the *vājimedha* for the benefit of Janamejaya so that the latter would be released from his sin of Brahmanicide and could return to his kingdom. We find a brief version of the same story narrated in the *Vaṃśānucarita* section of several *Purāṇas*<sup>21</sup>. It is worthy of our special notice that the celebration of the *aśvamedha* and some kind of antagonism with Brahmins are the motifs that almost constantly recur in the Vedic, epic and Purāṇic narratives about Janamejaya Pāriḡṡita<sup>22</sup>.

The fullest account of Janamejaya's horse sacrifice and his disputes with the Brahmins is given in *Harivaṃśa* 115-118. There is little doubt that these four chapters correspond to the Supplement (*Khila*) to the great epic, referred to as *Bhaviṡyat* in the second chapter of the *Ādiparvan*<sup>23</sup>. What the *Bhaviṡyat* relates at length is the sequel of events that took place immediately after the completion of Janamejaya's snake sacrifice. The king then goes on to prepare the horse sacrifice. Vyāsa, however, warns against the dangers of his undertaking. After a long discourse on the misery and disasters in the *Kali* age, which is about to set in, the sage foretells that Janamejaya's sacrifice will end in failure on account of the wrath of the Brahmins, and that thenceforward the *kṡatriyas* will never be able to perform the *vājimedha* because the tradition of the sacrifice will be made extinct by the act of the king himself. This prediction of Vyāsa comes true. The direct cause of the disaster is the violation of Janamejaya's wife by Indra, who has crept into the carcass of the immolated horse. During

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra* 16,8,27-9,7.

<sup>20</sup> *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* 8,21,3; *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 13,5,4,2; *Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra* 16,9,1. Cf. Horsch, p. 99.

<sup>21</sup> Kirfel, Abschnitt 4, Kapitel 3, Textgruppe I, 15-20 (p. 386).

<sup>22</sup> In the long story about Janamejaya's *sarpasatra* related in the *Āstīkaparvan* (*Mbh* 1,13-53), his enmity is not directed at any Brahmin but at Takṡaka and his race of serpents. On the other hand, at the conclusion of the story a cursory reference is made to his horse sacrifice. In *Mbh* 1,53,15, namely, the king asks Āstīka, the Brahmin youth, to attend the performance of the *vājimedha* on his next visit to the royal residence.

<sup>23</sup> *Mbh* 1,2,69,233. Cf. Brinkhaus, pp. 160-161.

this incident the king is involved in a quarrel with the priests, whom he drives away from his own realm, holding them responsible for the calamity. Although Janamejaya finally becomes reconciled with the Brahmins, the right of celebrating the horse sacrifice is irretrievably lost from the *kṣatriya* class on account of the reckless act of Janamejaya. Just before launching his discourse on the *Kali* age, Vyāsa prophesies that the *aśvamedha*, once taken away from the *kṣatriyas*, will be restored by a certain army commander of Brahmin descent:

*audbhido bhavitā kaścīt senānīḥ Kāśyapo dvijaḥ |*  
*aśvamedhaṃ Kaliyuge punaḥ pratyāhariṣyati || (Hv 115,40)*

In the *Kali* age a certain army commander, a twice-born [Brahmin] of the Kaśyapa clan born from the earth, will restore [the celebration of] the horse sacrifice.

In the *Kali* age, when the prerogative of performing the horse sacrifice has already been taken away from *kṣatriyas*, its revival cannot be realized by anyone other than a non-*kṣatriya* monarch.

It lies beyond any doubt that the just-cited verse from the *Hv* speaks of the restoration of the *aśvamedha* by Puṣyamitra, who dethroned the last Maurya king and established the Śuṅga dynasty. K. P. Jayaswal was probably the first scholar to identify the army commander (*senānī*) referred to in the verse as Puṣyamitra Śuṅga. This interpretation was then reinforced by Raychaudhuri, who tried to trace the origin of the Śuṅga rulers back to the Brahmin *gotra* of Kaśyapa<sup>24</sup>, whereas such Western scholars as Rapson, V. A. Smith and Filliozat do not seem to have paid any specific attention to the *Hv*-verse in their researches on the Śuṅga dynasty. In the Ayodhyā inscription Puṣyamitra is recorded as the army commander (*sēnāpati*) who during his reign performed the horse sacrifice twice (*dvir-aśvamedhayājīn*)<sup>25</sup>. As for the class-identity of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, it is most reasonable to assume that he was born as a Brahmin from the Kaśyapa *gotra*. In the above-mentioned play of Kālidāsa the lineage to which Agnimitra and Puṣyamitra belong is called Baimbaka. The *Pravara* text of the Baudhāyana school testified to the existence of Brahmins called Baimbikayaḥ, who fall under the category of the Kaśyapa *gotra*<sup>26</sup>. Another epithet of the commander, *audbhida* (plant-born), can be explained on the grounds of the close association of both family names of Puṣyamitra, i.e. Śuṅga and Baimbaka, with botanical concepts.

In the eyes of orthodox Brahmins, however, the revival of the horse sacrifice by the Brahmin king must have looked like a ritual enterprise that could hardly be acknowledged as legitimate. The *aśvamedha* was essentially the *kṣatriyayajña*<sup>27</sup>. From Vedic texts we can glean several passages which preclude both Brahmin and *vaiśya* from performing the rite. According to *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 13,6,3, for instance, it is exclusively a *kṣatriya* prince, possessing his own royal prerogative or territory (*rāṣṭrīn*), who is entitled to celebrate the

<sup>24</sup> Raychaudhuri<sup>2</sup>. Jayaswal's article referred to by Raychaudhuri is not available to me.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Sahni, p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> See *Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra*, vol. 3, p. 449 (*Pravara* 41). Cf. Raychaudhuri<sup>2</sup>, p. 365.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 13,4,1,2.

*aśvamedha*. We can thus well imagine that Puṣyamitra's offering of the horse sacrifice roused hot controversy among contemporary Aryans regarding not only the authenticity of his ritual undertaking but also the propriety of Brahmin kingship at large. This was because this ritual enterprise of Puṣyamitra assumed the character of usurping the prerogative of celebrating the *aśvamedha* from its legitimate custodians; or, to put it the other way round, the same enterprise meant the estrangement of the *kṣatriyas* from their own ritual tradition. It is precisely on this rupture of the *aśvamedha* tradition that the whole story of the *Bhaviṣyat* centres. The gist of the long story narrated in *Hv* 115-118 is that the *kṣatriya* class must inevitably be excluded from celebrating the *aśvamedha* until the end of the *Kaliyuga* as a result of Janamejaya's failure in accomplishing its performance and the subsequent quarrel between him and the Brahmins. What runs through the whole account as its keynote is a grave sense of crisis about the *aśvamedha* or Vedic ritualism in general.

There must have been some historical reality that evoked this sense of crisis in the mind of the author of the *Bhaviṣyat*. To be more precise, it was nothing other than the event of Puṣyamitra's horse sacrifice that inspired him to narrate the disaster caused by Janamejaya's unsuccessful performance of the same rite in the past. It would hardly be possible to conceive of any other motive than this sense of crisis that could have led the same author to take up as the subject of his composition the estrangement of the *kṣatriyas* from their own magnificent sacrifice. Most probably the *Bhaviṣyat* was composed at a time when the memory of Puṣyamitra's arrogation of the *kṣatriya* rite had not yet faded away but was still fresh in the minds of orthodox Aryans<sup>28</sup>.

Since the allusion to Puṣyamitra Śuṅga is made only once in the above-quoted verse within the long text of the *Bhaviṣyat*, it looks as if this allusion were of a mere incidental nature. Actually, the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty should be looked upon as the real hero lurking behind the whole story of Janamejaya as related in *Hv* 115-118. What the author of these chapters intended with his own composition was to offer some interpretation of Puṣyamitra's usurpation of the *kṣatriya* rite from his own world-historical perspective and to represent this usurpation as the unavoidable consequence of the ill-fated horse sacrifice undertaken by Janamejaya in the remote past<sup>29</sup>.

Puṣyamitra is usually regarded as the monarch who, after the downfall of the heterodoxically oriented dynasty of the Mauryas, restored the culture of Brahmanical orthodoxy. The narrative contexts of the *Bhaviṣyat*, however, suggest that the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty was not unanimously welcomed by the Brahmin elites of his time but was rather looked at with suspicion by some groups among them. In light of this precarious character of

<sup>28</sup> As for the date of this *Khila* text, it is most likely that it was composed either during the reign of Puṣyamitra or, speaking in terms of rough chronology, between the early Śuṅga and early Kāṇva period. Cf. Tsuchida, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> A brief analysis of the underlying ideology of the *Bhaviṣyat* (*Hv* 115-118) was presented by me under the title of 'Janamejaya and Puṣyamitra' at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference held at Kyoto University, Sept. 2009. Cf. also Tsuchida, pp. 9-20.

Puṣyamitra's regime to be inferred from the *Bhaviṣyat*, we shall now reexamine the above-cited Purāṇic verses about Janamejaya's horse sacrifice and his disputes with the Brahmins.

At first sight there does not appear to exist any specific connexion between both texts of Janamejaya's *aśvamedha*, for any such allusion to Puṣyamitra Śuṅga as we have detected in the *Bhaviṣyat* cannot altogether be traced in the story narrated in *MtP* 50,57-65 (*VāP* 99,250-256). On careful scrutiny, however, we can detect a certain narrative element that enables us to gain an insight into a certain historical situation forming the common background to these two different stories about Janamejaya's ritual enterprise. What serves us as the link connecting both stories is their reference to the Vājasaneyin (-neyaka, -neya, -neyika). Vājasaneyya is the patronymic of the renowned ritualist-philosopher Yājñavalka; thus the members of the school of the *Yajurveda* founded by the sage are called Vājasaneyins. As we see from the above-quoted *MtP* verses, the Vājasaneyins play a crucial role in the sequence of events narrated therein. According to these verses, it is as the result of Janamejaya's appointment of the Vājasaneyaka as *brahman*-priest for his horse sacrifice that the king brings upon himself Vaiśampāyana's malediction and becomes involved in a serious quarrel with the Brahmins. From this narrative emerges the rivalry that seems to have once existed between the White Yajurvedins and Brahmins belonging to other Vedic *śākhās*.

In the text of the *Bhaviṣyat*, on the other hand, the reference to the Vājasaneyins occurs only once in the following verse:

*sarve brahma vadiṣyanti sarve Vājasaneyinaḥ |*  
*śūdrā bhovādinaś caiva bhaviṣyanti yugakṣaye || (Hv 116,13)*

At the end of the (four) world ages all people will expound the sacred texts; all will behave like Vājasaneyins; even *śūdras* will utter *bho* (*bhos*) (in addressing other persons).

These sentences are found among the verses in which Vyāsa describes in the form of a prophecy the deplorable condition of the world in the *Kali* age. What the sage foretells in the verse just quoted is that in the *Kali* age even people of low birth will practise the profession of Brahmins and imitate their manner of conduct. The first half of the verse may be paraphrased as follows: during the *Kali* age all people, including non-Brahmins, will behave like Vājasaneyins and will preach the doctrine of *brahman* as did once Yājñavalkya Vājasaneyaka and his followers. Owing to its brevity, the second sentence '*sarve Vājasaneyinaḥ*' allows of several different interpretations<sup>30</sup>. It may also be construed to mean that almost all those who will transmit the sacred lore will flock to the school of the Vājasaneyins. In any case, the sentence can be taken as alluding to some kind of prominence or predominance attained by the Vājasaneyins which the author of the *Bhaviṣyat* personally witnessed with much displeasure in his lifetime.

In the same way the Purāṇic account of the enmity between the Vājasaneyakas and

---

<sup>30</sup> Dutt's translation 'In this [last] cycle all will read the Vedas and celebrate Vajasaneyi sacrifices....' (p. 823) is not quite correct.

other groups of Brahmins, ensuing from Janamejaya's favouritism toward the former, must have some real historical background. In view of the absence of any other textual reference to the close relationship between Janamejaya and the Vājasaneyins it is difficult to assume that the motif of antagonism among different Vedic *śākhās* should derive its origin from a genuine ancient source about the Paurava dynasty. It is rather more probable that this motif was taken from a totally different context and incorporated into the account of Janamejaya's horse sacrifice. We may suppose that the central figure in the original context was not a legendary king such as the great-grandson of a Pāṇḍava prince but some monarch of real historicity whose reign is to be fixed in a more recent period.

These reflections would lead us to the somewhat bold supposition that the Purāṇic account of Janamejaya's disputes with the Brahmins reflects some real situation in the reign of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga. The specific mention of the Vājasaneyaka as the *brahman*-priest also renders it improbable that the same Purāṇic account should deal with a ritual event in the distant past. It rather seems likely that, as in the case of the *Bhaviṣyat*, the Brahmin king lurks behind the whole story narrated in *MtP* 50,57-65 (*VāP* 99,250-256). This supposition may be endorsed by the fact that the hero of these Purāṇic verses is said to have celebrated the horse sacrifice not only once but even twice, like the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty, who is recorded to have undertaken the same rite just so many times in the Ayodhyā inscription. In view of the close association of both Janamejaya and Puṣyamitra with the *aśvamedha*, the task of projecting the biographical elements of one king onto the narrative about the other does not appear to have been difficult for the author of the Purāṇic passage.

We may now reckon with the possibility of making use of the Purāṇic passage as a textual source in our attempt at illuminating some phase of the dynastic history of ancient India. At the risk of being censured for putting forward too fanciful and far-fetched arguments, I would like to reconstruct in the following manner on the basis of the said passage the circumstances in which the dynastic change from the Śuṅgas to the Kāṇvas took place.

The celebration of the *aśvamedha* by the Brahmin commander must have given rise to an intense controversy among contemporary ritualists. We might well imagine that Brahminhood at that time was split into several factions by the dispute over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Puṣyamitra's ritual enterprise. Some groups of Brahmins, advocating Vedic orthodoxy, must have been outraged at the inauthenticity of the religious event, while another group may have tolerated Puṣyamitra's undertaking, albeit with certain feelings of reluctance and resignation, looking upon the whole affair as one of the deplorable phenomena in an age of general decline and degeneration. It would seem that it was to this group of Brahmins that the anonymous author of the *Bhaviṣyat* belonged. At the same time, there must have existed still another group of Brahmins who supported the cause of Puṣyamitra against the objections of other Brahmins and willingly took part in his celebration of the *aśvamedha* as its officiant priests. The leader of this group was none other than the ancestor of the Kāṇvāyana rulers, mentioned in the Purāṇic verses by the name of Vājananeyaka.

With regard to the background of the Kāṇvāyana dynasty, M. Witzel has made a quite interesting conjecture at several places in his publications. According to the German Vedist, the dynasty was founded by a member of the Brahmin clan who belonged to the Kāṇva branch of the Vājasaneyin school of the *Yajurveda*<sup>31</sup>. The state of the matter so far observed by us regarding the Purāṇic passage points to the validity of this conjecture. In view of the general character of the Vājasaneyins, who represented innovative trends within Vedic ritualism, we may understand their active participation in Puṣyamitra's horse sacrifice, which seems to have looked dubious in the eyes of more orthodox Brahmins.

The cooperation between Puṣyamitra and Vājasaneyakas alluded to in the *MtP-VāP* verses in a cryptic manner should be of great significance for our proper understanding of the revival of Brahmanism by the Śuṅga dynasty.

For the consolidation of their power and prestige, the Śuṅga rulers undoubtedly owed much to the Vājasaneyins or Kāṇva Brahmins, while this group of Brahmins must have derived great benefit from their royal patrons. Puṣyamitra's horse sacrifice was the very incident that brought about this mutually beneficial relationship between the two Brahmin lineages.

In the Purāṇic story, the Vājasaneyaka plays the role of *brahman*-priest who supervises every process of Janamejaya's ritual performance. The ancestor of the Kāṇvāyana rulers, who supported Puṣyamitra in his religious policy, seems to have held the same office during the performance of the *aśvamedha*. At the same time, he was probably elevated to the post of court chaplain (*purohita*), which soon became the hereditary office of his direct descendants. This position of royal counsellor for both religious and secular affairs gave them the possibility of wielding tremendous influence over the court and government of the Śuṅga rulers<sup>32</sup>. We might well imagine that their gradual rise to power was so successful that it awakened in them the ambition of establishing their own dynasty by supplanting the rule of their masters. The juvenility and laxity of Devabhūmi offered them a chance to realize their ambition. A member of the Kāṇva family called Vasudeva availed himself of this opportunity, and after contriving a palace revolution succeeded in usurping the royal throne from his young master and became the founder of the Kāṇvāyana dynasty.

This scenario about the dynastic change is outlined on the supposition that the text of *MtP* 50,57-65 (*VāP* 99,250-256), which overtly describes Janamejaya's horse sacrifice, cryptically alludes to the situation surrounding Puṣyamitra's celebration of the same rite. Perhaps the original author of the Purāṇic passage lived during the Śuṅga-Kāṇva period and had to avoid making any explicit reference to the ruling dynasties. Although this supposition still lacks decisive proof and is grounded solely on a hypothetical inference, the interpretation of the Purāṇic verses proposed in the present article should be taken into consideration in future attempts at elucidating the dynastic transition from the Śuṅgas to the Kāṇvāyanas. It seems

---

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, Witzel, p. 472.

<sup>32</sup> Rapson (p. 522) is right when he says that the Śuṅgas became puppets in the hands of their Brāhmana counsellors.

to me that the ruling family of the Kāṇvāyana kingdom descended from those experts in *śrauta* ritualism of the Vājasaneyin school who actively committed themselves to the accomplishment of Puṣyamitra's horse sacrifice and thereby seized an opportunity to gain political ascendancy within the regime of Śuṅga monarchs.

### Abbreviations and Texts

<i>Arthaśāstra</i>	The Kauṭīlīya Arthaśāstra. Part I: Sanskrit Text and a Glossary. R.P. Kangle Second Edition. Bombay 1969.
<i>Aitareyabrāhmaṇa</i>	Das Aitareya Brāhmaṇa herausgegeben von Th. Aufrecht. Bonn 1879 (Hildesheim. New York 1975).
<i>Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>	The Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra belonging to the Taittirīya Saṃhitā. 3vols. Edited by W. Caland. Calcutta 1904-1913.
<i>Matsyapurāṇa [MtP]</i>	Śrīmaddvaipāyanamunipraṇītaṃ Matsyapurāṇam. Poona 1981.
<i>Manusmṛti</i>	Manusmṛtiḥ edited by Vāsudevaśarman. Bombay 1925.
<i>Mahābhārata [Mbh]</i>	The Mahābhārata for the first time critically edited by V.S. Sukthankar. 19vols. Poona 1933-1959.
<i>Mālavikāgnimitra</i>	Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa edited by C.R. Devadhar. Delhi 1966 (Third Edition).
<i>Vāyupurāṇa [VāP]</i>	Mahāmuniśrīmadvyāsapraṇītaṃ Vāyupurāṇam. Poona 1905.
<i>Śatapathabrāhmaṇa</i>	The ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa in the Mādhyandina-çākhā edited by A. Weber. Berlin 1855 (Varanasi 1964).
<i>Śāṅkhāyanaśrautasūtra</i>	Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra translated by W. Caland, edited by Lokesh Chandra. Nagpur 1953 (Delhi 1980).
<i>Harivaṃśa [Hv]</i>	The Harivaṃśa edited by P.L. Vaidya. 2vols. Poona 1969-1971.
<i>Harṣacarita</i>	The Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. Edited by P.V. Kane. Bombay 1918 (Delhi 1965).

### References

Bhandare, Sh.	2006	Numismatics and History: The Maurya-Gupta Interlude in the Gangetic Plain. In: Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE (edited by P. Olivelle. Oxford 2006), pp. 67-112.
Bhandarkar, R.G.	1927	Collected Works of Sir R.G. Bhandarkar. Vol. III. Edited by N.B. Utgikar. Poona 1927.
Bhattacharya, T.	1949	The Sunga Dynasty. In: The Journal of the Bihar Research Society. Vol. XXXV 1949. pp. 47-60

- Brinkhaus, H. 2002 The Division into Parvans and the Bhaviṣyaparvan of the Harivaṃśa. In: Stages and Transitions: Temporal and historical frameworks in epic and purāṇic literature. Proceedings of the Second Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas (August 1999) edited by M. Brockington. Zagreb 2002. pp. 157-176.
- Dutt, M.N. 1897 A prose English Translation of Harivamsha. Calcutta.
- Falk, H. 2006 The Tidal Waves of Indian History: Between the Empires and Beyond. In: Between the Empires, pp. 145-166.
- Filliozat, J. 1957 Political History of India from the earliest time to the 7th century A.D. Translated from the French (1947) by Ph. Spratt. Calcutta.
- Horsch, P. 1966 Die vedische Gāthā-und Śloka-Literatur. Bern.
- Jagannath 1957 Post-Mauryan Dynasties (184 B.C. to A.D.200). In: A Comprehensive History of India. Vol. 2. Edited by K.A. Nilakantha Sastri. Calcutta. pp. 94-115.
- Kangle, R.P. 1965 The Kauṭīlīya Arthaśāstra. Part III: A Study. Bombay (Delhi 1997).
- Kirfel, W. 1927 Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa. Versuch einer Textgeschichte. Leiden.
- Lüders, H. 1912 Appendix to Epigraphia Indica and record of the archaeological survey of India. Vol. X: A List of Brahmi Inscriptions. Calcutta.
- Pargiter, F.E. 1913 The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age. Oxford (Calcutta 1962).
- Raychaudhuri, H. 1923 Political History of Ancient India. Calcutta 1923. Revised edition with a commentary by B.N. Mukherjee. Delhi 1996.
- Raychaudhuri<sup>2</sup>, H. 1938 The Audvijja Senānī of the Harivaṃśa. In: Indian Culture. Jan. 1938. pp. 363-366.
- Rapson, E.J. 1922 The Cambridge History of India. Vol. 1: Ancient India edited by E.J. Rapson. Cambridge.
- Sahni, R.B.D.R. 1931 A Suṅga Inscription from Ayodhyā. In: Epigraphia Indica. Vol. XX. pp. 54-58.
- Sinha, B.Ch. 1977 History of the Śuṅga Dynasty. Varanasi/Delhi.
- Sircar, D.Ch. 1965 Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization. Vol. I. Calcutta.
- Smith, V.A. 1924 The Early History of India, from 600 B.C. to the Muhammadan Conquest including the Invasion of Alexander the Great. Fourth Edition, revised by S.M. Edwardes. Oxford.
- Thapar, R. 2000 Society and Historical Consciousness: The Itihāsa-purāṇa Tradition. In: Cultural Pasts. Essays in Early Indian History. Oxford. pp. 123-154.

Ryutaro TSUCHIDA

- Tsuchida, R.            2009    Some Reflections on the Chronological Problems of the  
*Mahābhārata*. In: Studies in Indian Philosophy and Buddhism  
16. pp. 1-24.
- Witzel, M.            2006    Brahmanical Reactions to Foreign Influences and to Social and  
Religious Change. In: *Between the Empires*, pp. 457-499.

2010.3.18

Professor, University of Tokyo

## シュンガからカーヌヴァーヤナへの王朝交替について

土田 龍太郎

シュンガ王朝没落の後に、四代四十五年にわたって続いたカーヌヴァーヤナ王朝の実態は不明である。プラーナ中のカリユガ王朝テキストによれば、第十代シュンガ王デーヴァブーミの大臣であったヴァスデーヴァが、主君を斃して創始した王朝がカーヌヴァーヤナ王朝である。

同じカリユガ王朝テキストには、パウラヴァ王朝のジャナメージャヤ王のアシュヴァメーダ祭舉行の顛末がやや詳しく述べられてゐる。この叙述にはシュンガ王朝開祖たるブシュミトラ王の同祭舉行の實情が反映してゐると推測される。この推測に従へば、ヴァージャサネーイン派の支派たるカーヌヴァ派の婆羅門がブラフマン祭官としてプシャミトラの大祭祀の成功を助け、これをきつかけとしてかれの一族が政府宮廷内に勢力を扶植することをえ、つひには大臣となつたヴァスデーヴァがシュンガ王権を篡奪した、と考へられるのである。