CHAPTER FIVE

DECLINE AND DOWNFALL OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

1. THE IMPERIAL CRISIS

The history of the Guptas after the death of Skanda-gupta is shrouded in a thick veil of obscurity. Numbers of rulers are known, in some cases with dates, but they cannot be arranged in any genealogical and chronological order which is free from difficulties. Hypothetical schemes that received the general approbation of scholars have been upset by recent discoveries which have created more problems than they have solved. All that is possible, therefore, in the present state of our knowledge, is to present all the known facts, indicate the problems that confront us, and suggest what appears to have been the most probable course of events.

Four royal seals (Nos. 35, 41, 44, 46), found amid the ruins of Nālandā, and one discovered long ago at Bhitarī (No. 34) give the following genealogy of Gupta kings.

Kumāra-gupta = Anantadevī
           |                 Pūru-gupta = Chandradevī

Budhā-gupta               Narasimha-gupta = Mittradevī
                         |           |                 Kumāra-gupta
                         |           |           |                 Vishṇu-gupta

1 There is a vast literature on the subject among which the following may be specially mentioned:
   (a) R. C. Majumdar in JPASB, XVII, 249 (where all previous references are given); JUPHS, XVIII, 70; IC, X, 172-73.
   (c) A. Ghosh in IHQ, XIX, 119.
   (d) D. C. Sircar in IHQ, XIX, 272.

For the latest view on the subject cf. Goyal whose views are summed up in the genealogical table (op. cit., 402).
These seals do not refer to Skanda-gupta, though we know definitely that he ascended the throne the very year in which Kumāra-gupta I died, and ruled till at least A.D. 467-68. The first problem, therefore, that faces us, is the position of Pūru-gupta vis-à-vis Skanda-gupta. All the three possible alternatives have been suggested by different scholars, viz that he is identical with Skanda-gupta,² that he ascended the throne immediately after his father’s death but was ousted by Skanda-gupta within a few months, and lastly that he secured the throne after Skanda-gupta’s death either by removing the legitimate heir or by normal rules of succession, if Skanda-gupta died without any male issue.³ Each of these has weighty arguments to support it, and none has any decided advantage over the rest. A few gold coins with the name Pūru, and therefore ascribed to Pūru-gupta, were advanced as the chief argument against the identity of Pūru-gupta and Skanda-gupta. For although a king may have two names, as Chandra-gupta II certainly had, it is very unlikely that he would issue coins under different names. But it has been pointed out that the two letters read as Pūru are really Budha,⁴ and these coins must have, therefore, been issued by Budha-gupta and not Pūru-gupta. The principal objection against the proposed identity thus falls to the ground, but the use of two different names of the same king in official documents⁵ must also be regarded as very unusual. Chandra-gupta II is no doubt referred to both as Chandra-gupta and Deva-gupta in the Vākāṭaka records, but in the official Gupta records he is always called Chandra-gupta.

² This has recently been strongly supported by Krishna Deva (EI, XXVI, 235) on the authority of the Mañjuśrī-mūla-kālpa. This late Buddhist work, however, cannot be regarded as of much historical value. Krishna Deva’s views have been ably controverted by Jagannath (BV, VIII, 7).

³ A fourth possibility was suggested by Dr. R. C. Basak (EI, XV, 113), viz that there were two branches of the Gupta dynasty ruling concurrently in different parts after Kumāra-gupta. This theory of the partition of the Gupta Empire, as well as late Dr. N. K. Bhattasali’s theory that Pūru-gupta succeeded Bhānu-gupta about A.D. 511 (Eastern Bengal Notes and Queries, Second series, No. 11, pp. 50 ff) are no longer entertained by any scholar.

⁴ IC, I, 691. I had the legend photographed from a plaster of Paris cast of the coin and then magnified. I have no doubt that the first letter is Bu as it is a closed square. The second letter cannot be read definitely as either ‘ra’ or ‘dha’ but appears more like the latter. The reading ‘Budha’ therefore appears more reasonable. The late Mr. R. D. Banerji said that the name ‘Pura’ was clearly written on some coins in possession of Rai Bahadur Radhakrishna Jalan of Patna. I examined the gold coins which the Rai Bahadur sent me at my request and found no such coins. A friend of mine who also examined the whole collection at Patna assures me that no such coins are there. The name Budha is, however, quite clear on a gold coin recently acquired by the Kāli Bhavan, Banaras.

⁵ The name Pūru-gupta not only occurs in royal seals, but also in the so-called Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription of Skanda-gupta (IC, X, 170).
The answer to the question whether Pūru-gupta ascended the throne before or after Skanda-gupta depends largely upon our view of the political situation immediately after the death of Kumāra-gupta I. If we accept the hypothesis that there was a disputed succession and a civil war, Pūru-gupta must be regarded as the most likely rival candidate by defeating whom Skanda-gupta soon seized the kingdom. That would explain why the descendants of Pūru-gupta who ultimately secured the coveted throne regarded Skanda-gupta as a usurper and omitted his name from the genealogical list.6

Our decision in this respect must also be largely influenced by the view we take about king Kumāra-gupta who is known from an inscription dated 154 (A.D. 473-74). It is no doubt very tempting to identify him with Kumāra-gupta, son of Narasiṁha-gupta. But there are difficulties. Budha-gupta, in all reasonable probability, ruled, either before Narasiṁha-gupta, or after his grandson Vishnu-gupta, for otherwise, apart from serious incongruities,7 we have to assume an irregular succession which, though not impossible, cannot be regarded as a normal state of things, on which alone, as far as practicable, our hypothesis should be based. Therefore, if we identify the two Kumāra-guptas, the reigns of Narasiṁha-gupta, his son, and grandson must all be accommodated during the ten years or less that intervened between the death of Skanda-gupta and the accession of Budha-gupta. This difficulty would be still further increased if we regard Pūru-gupta also as having ruled after Skanda-gupta. For in that case four generations of rulers would have to be squeezed in a period of less than ten years. Thus the identification of Kumāra-gupta, who ruled in A.D. 473-74, with the son of Narasiṁha-gupta practically precludes the possibility of Pūru-gupta having succeeded Skanda-gupta. But even apart from this, the proposed identity involves serious difficulties as mentioned above and has little to commend itself.

As already noted, it may be legitimately deduced from the Mandasor Inscription (No. 52) that the reigning king in A.D. 473 was Kumāra-gupta, and he may be easily identified with the king who issued the inscription in A.D. 473-74. The last known date of Skanda-gupta is A.D. 467-68 and it is not unlikely that he ruled for a few years more. Thus the most reasonable conclusion seems to be to regard Kumāra-gupta of A.D. 473-74 as his successor. As Budha-gupta is known to have been on the throne in A.D. 476-77 he may be reasonably presumed to be the successor of this Kumāra-gupta. On this

6 If we assume that Pūru-gupta was on the throne for a very short time, it would satisfactorily explain the absence of his coins. For, it would take some time before the coins of the new king could be minted and largely circulated.

7 These have been discussed by me in JUPHS, XVIII, 71.
basis we may provisionally reconstruct the history of the period somewhat as follows.

Kumāra-gupta I had at least two sons Pūru-gupta and Skanda-gupta. The former was born of his chief queen and, as such, regarded himself as the legitimate heir to the throne. But the latter was probably senior in age and undoubtedly possessed greater ability, specially as a general. Towards the end of Kumāra-gupta's reign a foreign enemy, probably the Hūnas, threatened the frontiers of the empire and Skanda-gupta was sent against them. With great difficulty Skanda-gupta completely routed them, but in the meantime his father died and Pūru-gupta ascended the throne. Skanda-gupta, with the victorious army at his back, had probably little difficulty in defeating him and suppressing other rebellious chiefs who took advantage of the situation to declare their independence. Having thus averted a great crisis in the history of the Imperial family Skanda-gupta ascended the throne and ruled till about A.D. 470.

He was succeeded by Kumāra-gupta II who was not destined to rule long. If he were a son of Skanda-gupta, we must assume that either he died young without leaving any heir, or was violently removed from the throne by Budha-gupta. But it is also not unlikely that Kumāra-gupta II was the son of Pūru-gupta and successfully revived the claims of his father. In any case, after about five years' rule he was succeeded by Budha-gupta, son of Pūru-gupta, some time about A.D. 475.

2. BUDHA-GUPTA

Nothing proves more strikingly how strong were the foundations of the Gupta Empire than that it had survived the terrible shocks it had sustained after the death of the two kings bearing the name Kumāra-gupta. It certainly did not come out of the ordeal absolutely unscathed or without any scratch, but the huge imperial structure remained intact with all its paraphernalia. The foundations might have been shaken, but that was invisible to the eye. To all outward appearances the Gupta Empire remained, as it was before, stretching from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, and its frontiers were respected even by the barbarian Hūnas.

Only six inscriptions of Budha-gupta are so far known to us. These and other contemporary records give us a fair idea of the empire in the last quarter of the fifth century A.D. which is almost entirely covered by the reign of Budha-gupta.

An inscription (No. 36) found at Sārnāth which records the dedication of a Buddhist image in the year A.D. 476-77 describes Budha-

8 For some arguments in favour of this assumption cf. IC, X, 172.
gupta as ruling the earth. But beyond such general eulogy we do not get any historical information from this private record, except, of course, the date, which is so far the earliest that we know of Budha-gupta. Two copper-plate grants (Nos. 38, 40) of Budha-gupta have been found in Damodarpur in N. Bengal, one of which is dated in A.D. 482-83. These inform us that Pundravardhana-bhukti or N. Bengal was ruled by his governors Brahmadatta and Jayadatta. As the Gupta officials often enjoyed hereditary posts, it may be easily imagined that these two governors belonged to the family of Chirāta-datta who governed the same province during the reign of Kumāra-gupta I (p. 69) and is known from two grants dated A.D. 433 and 447. All the four land-grants closely resemble one another, showing the unbroken continuity of administration during the long interval filled by the reigns of no less than five different kings. One significant change must, however, be noted. The governors, in the days of Kumāra-gupta I, were called simply Uparika, but in Budha-gupta’s time they were styled Uparika-Mahārāja.

Another governor, Suraśmichandra, was governing the territory between the rivers Narmāda and the Yamunā. Not only had he the title Mahārāja, but even his subordinate Mātrivishnu, who was apparently the local governor of the district round Eran (Saugor district, M.P.), enjoyed the same title.

Further west, the Kāthiāwār Peninsula was being governed by the members of the Maitraka family who were destined ere long to found a long-lived ruling dynasty, with Valabhi as their capital. We have no positive record of Budha-gupta’s suzerainty in this region, as we have in the cases of Bengal, Central India, and Mālwa. But the records of the Valabhi rulers leave no doubt that they recognized the suzerainty of Budha-gupta. As this point is not generally recognized by scholars we may discuss it in some detail.

The earliest land-grant of the Maitrakas, issued by Mahārāja Dronasimha in 183 C.E. (A.D. 502-3) begins with the simple phraseology acknowledging the authority of the suzerain lord (Parama-hāṭṭāraka), whose name is not mentioned. It is not till 23 years later that we come across, for the first time, the historical preamble, which is repeated in the subsequent grants. It begins by saying that

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9 A minister of Chandra-gupta says that the position he held was acquired by hereditary descent (Ins. No. 10). The son of a minister of Chandra-gupta II became a minister of Kumāra-gupta (Ins. No. 18). General Bhaṭārka of Valabhi was succeeded by his son Dharasena. There are other instances also.
10 Cf. Ins. No. 39.
11 Cf. e.g. PHAI, 489-90, Mirashi in IHQ, XXI, 81.
12 EI, XVII, 17.
13 EI, XI, 106.
in the lineage of the Maitrakas was born the general (senāpati) Bhaṭṭakka (called Bhaṭṭārka in later grants) who obtained the glory of royalty by the strength of the array of devoted hereditary servants and friends. His son was the general (senāpati) Dharasena. His younger brother was the Mahārāja Dronasimha whose anointment to the kingdom was performed by the paramount sovereign in person. His younger brother Mahāśāmanta Mahārāja Dhruvasena, who meditated on the feet of the paramount lord, issued the grant in the year A.D. 525-26.

The Valabhi records show that during the last quarter of the fifth century A.D. Bhaṭṭārka, a general of the army, became the governor of Surāshṭra, probably in succession to Parṇadatta (p. 75). He was succeeded by his son Dharasena, as was the normal practice in Gupta times. Neither Bhaṭṭārka nor Dharasena assumed independence, and styled themselves simply as general. Dronasimha, the younger brother of Dharasena, was consecrated as a feudatory ruling chief by the Emperor in person, and assumed the title Mahārāja. The title, as well as the allegiance to the Emperor, was continued by the next ruler Dhruvasena I, whose known dates range from A.D. 526 to 545. After that the Valabhi grants do not contain the phrase acknowledging the suzerainty of the Emperor.

No doubt can possibly be entertained that the Paramabhaṭṭāraka to whom the rulers of Valabhi owed allegiance was the Gupta Emperor.14 As Dronasimha ruled in A.D. 502, his two predecessors may be regarded as having flourished during the reign of Budha-gupta. Whether the Emperor who anointed Dronasimha was Budha-gupta or his successor cannot be determined, but it is certain that up to the very end of Budha-gupta’s reign the Gupta suzerainty was acknowledged, both in theory and practice, by the Maitraka rulers of Valabhi.

The absence of any reference to the Emperor’s name perhaps indicates the growing influence of the Maitraka rulers, and the considerable decline in the power and prestige of the Gupta Emperors in Surāshṭra, since the days of Skanda-gupta. A similar phenomenon is observed in the case of the feudal principality ruled over by Mahārāja Hastin. Four copper-plate grants (Nos. 53-56) of this ruler, ranging in date between A.D. 476 and 517, begin with the date followed by the phrase, ‘in the enjoyment of sovereignty by the Gupta kings’. Here, again, the name of the Gupta Emperor is not mentioned, but there can be no doubt that Hastin acknowledged the suzerainty of Budha-gupta. Mahārāja Hastin is said to have been born in the family of Nṛipati-Parivrājaka (king-ascetic) Suṣarman, and hence the

14 Cf. IC, V, 409-10.
royal family is referred to by modern scholars as the Parivrājaka, though the name is not used as a family designation by Hastin or his son. The Parivrājaka kingdom must have comprised the modern Nagod State in the Baghelkhand division of Central India and the region round it.

Although the name of the Gupta Emperor is not mentioned, the date of Mahārāja Hastin shows that he acknowledged the suzerainty of Budha-gupta. His three immediate ancestors are named in his grant with the title of Mahārāja, and they may all be taken as feudal chiefs of the Gupta Emperors. Perhaps the Gupta supremacy was established in this region by Samudra-gupta and continued ever since without any break.

Contiguous to the Parivrājaka kingdom lay another with Uchchalapā as the capital. A record on a stone pillar at Bhumara (No. 59), about 9 miles to the north-west of Uchahara (or Unchahra) in Nagod, shows that it marked the boundary between the two kingdoms. King Javanātha, whose son Sarvanātha was a contemporary of Mahārāja Hastin, issued grants without any reference to any overlord, but he and his four immediate ancestors are all styled Mahārāja. The two copper-plate grants of Javanātha (Nos. 60-61) bear the dates 174 and 177. These years are generally referred to the Gupta Era, though some are inclined to refer them to the Kalachuri Era. If we accept the former view, Javanātha would be a contemporary of Budha-gupta. But as the grants contain no reference to any allegiance to the Guptas, we cannot say whether Javanātha acknowledged the suzerainty of Budha-gupta or not. It is held by some scholars that Vyāghra, the father of Javanātha, is identical with the ruler of the same name who is known from two inscriptions to have been a feudatory of the Vākāṭaka ruler Prithivisheṇa. They accordingly regard Javanātha and his son also as feudatories of the Vākāṭakas. It is suggested that the first three Uchchalapā rulers were feudatories of the Guptas, but on account of the invasion of the Vākāṭaka ruler Narendrasena, Vyāghra transferred his allegiance to the Vākāṭakas in

15 A number of silver coins with the legend Śri Rāṇa Hasti (Śri Rāṇa Hasti?) have been found in Rājputāna, at Kanaui, and a few other places in the Uttar Pradesh (CCIM, 118). Mr. R. D. Banerji thinks that these coins were issued by the Parivrājaka Mahārāja Hastin (AIG, 63). But this attribution is doubtful. The find-places of the coins are outside the dominions ruled over by Hastin, and they certainly do not resemble any of the Gupta types which were used by the Hūnas, Maukhāris and other powers that rose on the break-up of the Gupta Empire. It may also be considered whether Rāṇa-Hasti does not refer to the elephant which is depicted on the reverse, rather than to Rāṇā Hastin, as V. A. Smith construes it (CCIM, 118).

16 Cf. XXIII, 171.
17 Cf. Chapter VII.
the second half of the fifth century A.D.\textsuperscript{18} The uncertainty of the date of Narendrasena has been mentioned above, and so far as the history of the Vākātakas is known, it is doubtful if they could maintain their hold on the Uchchakalpa kingdom when the region practically surrounding it on all sides acknowledged the supremacy of the Guptas. It is, therefore, probable, though by no means certain, that the Uchchakalpa kingdom also formed a part of Budha-gupta’s empire.

The absence of any reference to the Gupta Emperor in the land-grants of the Uchchakalpa kings is regarded as the chief objection to the view that they were feudatories of the Guptas. The same objection, however, applies equally well to the other view which takes them to be feudatories of the Vākātakas, for no reference to the latter occurs in their land-grants. This objection, however, loses much force when we remember that there are several other cases where allegiance to the Guptas has almost certainly to be admitted even without any clear reference to it.

The first is the Paharpur copper-plate (No. 37) dated A.D. 478-79 issued from Puṇḍravardhana. This city (and province) is definitely known from the grants of Kumāra-gupta I and Budha-gupta to have been ruled by their governors. Yet in this grant no reference is made to Budha-gupta or even to Gupta sovereignty. Only there is a passing reference to the merit accruing to the Parama-bhaṭṭāraka from the pious grant.

Secondly, there are two copper-plates\textsuperscript{19} of Mahārāja Lakshmana, issued from Jayapura, in the year 158 which has been referred to the Gupta Era. The findspots of the plates and the identification of a place-name contained therein indicate the region near Allahabad to have been the territory ruled over by Lakshmana. It is difficult to believe that this kingdom lay outside the Guptan Empire.

Thirdly, we have two copper-plates of Mahārāja Subandhu whose capital was Māhishmati on the Narmadā.\textsuperscript{20} One of the grants is dated in the year 167 which is generally referred to the Gupta Era though some scholars suggest Kalachuri Era instead.\textsuperscript{21} If it is referred

\textsuperscript{18} EI, XXIII, 173.
\textsuperscript{19} EI, II, 364; ASIAR, 1936-37, 88.
\textsuperscript{20} EI, XIX, 261; IHQ, XXI, 81.
\textsuperscript{21} Mirashi refers this date and the years 67 and 107 of the grants of Śvāmidāsa and Bhuluṇḍa (EI, XV, 286) to the Kalachuri Era, though all these are generally referred to the Gupta Era. His principal argument is that if Śvāmidāsa, Bhuluṇḍa, and Subandhu were the feudatories of the Guptas, it looks strange that unlike other feudatories, they do not name their suzerain.’ But the examples quoted above take away much of the force of this argument. The findspots of the grants of Śvāmidāsa and Bhuluṇḍa are not known, and hence we cannot be quite sure if they were feudatories of the Guptas. But the epithet Parama-bhaṭṭāraka-pādānudhyāta seems to indicate this possibility, for no one other than a Gupta Emperor is known to have been referred to in this
to the Gupta Era, Subandhu would be a contemporary of Budha-gupta, one of whose provinces or feudal States is said to have extended from the Yamunā to the Narmadā river. As such we should take Subandhu of Māhishmati also as one of his feudatories. It may be noted in passing that if the date is referred to the Kalachuri Era, Subandhu’s date would fall in the early part of Kumāra-gupta’s reign. It is difficult to believe that Subandhu was an independent chief at that time, and yet no reference is made to Gupta sovereignty.

The first grant mentioned above clearly shows that the absence of any express reference to the Gupta sovereignty, or to any suzerain power, need not necessarily imply that the State in question was independent or did not acknowledge the suzerainty of Budha-gupta. Thus the Uchchakalpa rulers as well as kings Lakshmāṇa and Subandhu may all be regarded as feudatory to the Guptas. There are thus no good grounds to believe that the Guptan Empire had suffered appreciably in extent since the days of Skanda-gupta and we may reasonably hold that Budha-gupta’s suzerainty was acknowledged from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. This is in full accord with the fact that he was the last Guptan Emperor to assume the title of Vikramāditya.

There is, however, no doubt that the power and prestige of the Guptan Emperors showed visible signs of decline. The assumption of the title Mahārāja by the governors of Bengal, Malwa, and Surāṣṭra, and only vague references to Guptan sovereignty in the grants of the Parivṛṭakaka Mahārāajas all clearly point out in this direction. In the case of the Maitraka dynasty of Valabhi we can clearly trace the different stages in the process of this decline, and perhaps the same thing is true of many other provinces.

The coins of Budha-gupta also reflect the decline that set in in the Guptan Empire. His gold coins are very rare, and he discontinued issuing the type of silver coins current in Gujarat and Kāthiāwār.

Budha-gupta’s reign thus ushered in the first stage of decay. The imperial structure remained intact, but its vitality was weakened by the fatal tendency to local autonomy which slowly but steadily gathered force among the provincial satraps and feudatory rulers. Allegiance was still paid to the suzerain, but the sense of imperial unity was subordinated either to local patriotism and narrow regional way in that age. On the same ground Rudradāsa, who issued a grant in the year 117, bearing close resemblance in many details to those of Svāmidāsa and Bhulunḍa, may also be regarded as a feudatory of the Guptas. For Mirashi’s view cf. ABORI, XXV, 159 (which also gives an account of the grant of Rudradāsa), PIHC, VII, 62 and IHQ, XXI, 79. For further discussion of his view cf. IHQ, XXII, 64; XXIII, 156.

22 Cf. n. 4 above.
interests or to selfish ambition and love of power. As we have seen, Samudra-gupta laid down the policy by which the independent States were integrated into a vast empire through different stages. Now the reverse process set in, and different parts of the empire started on the long journey towards their cherished goal of independence, travelling along different routes and passing through different stages. There is nothing to show that Budha-gupta was in any way specially responsible for this. The Gupta Empire followed the way of all empires, not only in India but also outside it, though some historical incidents such as the Hûna inroads, civil war, or the Vâkâṭaka invasion might have hastened the process.

As noted above, the earliest known date of Budha-gupta is A.D. 476-77. Some of his coins bear the date 175 (A.D. 494-95), but on others the decimal figure of the date may be doubtfully read as 80 while the unit figure cannot be read with certainty. The date of these coins may therefore be anything between 180 and 189 (A.D. 500-9). Some scholars have referred to a passage in Skanda-Purâna according to which Budha-gupta was ruling in A.D. 499. On the whole we may regard Budha-gupta as having died about A.D. 500.

3. VAINYA-GUPTA AND BHĀNU-GUPTA

According to the official genealogy of the Gupta Emperors, supplied by the royal seals, Narasimha-gupta, the brother of Budha-gupta, his son Kumâra-gupta (III), and grandson Vishnu-gupta ruled in an unbroken line of succession (p. 78). If, for reasons stated above (p. 80), we have been correct in our assumption that Budha-gupta preceded Narasimha-gupta on the throne, we would normally expect that he was succeeded by Narasimha-gupta, and the latter by his son and grandson. But this view can hardly be reconciled with the fact that at least two kings, Vainya-gupta and Bhânu-gupta, are known to have ruled in the first decade of the sixth century A.D. We must therefore discuss their position before continuing the history of the main line.

A copper-plate (No. 45) found at Gunaighar, about 18 miles to the north-west of Comilla (East Bengal), records a gift of land by Mahârâja Vainya-gupta from the camp of victory at Kripura in the current Gupta year 188 (A.D. 506). The grant was made at the instance of his vassal Mahârâja Rudra-datta, and the Dûtaka (Royal Messenger) was Mahârâja Vijayasena who possessed several official

23 IA, XVIII, 227.
24 PAIOC, VII, 576.
25 Normally the Gupta year would correspond to A.D. 507 (S.I.4, p. 340), but according to the calculation of K. B. Pathak the date is equivalent to 13 December, A.D. 506 (IHQ, VI, 47).
titles of high distinction and had several Kumārāṃtyas under him. All these indicate that though styled only a Mahārāja, Vainya-gupta occupied an almost independent position and a high rank and power. This is confirmed by the discovery that a class of gold coins, hitherto attributed to an otherwise unknown king Chandra-gupta III Dvādaśā-ditya, were really issued by Vainya-gupta, the two letters vai and nya being till then wrongly read as Čha and dra.26 Lastly, a small fragment of a seal (No. 46) of Vainya-gupta has been found at Nālandā. It shows that all his ancestors had names ending in Gupta and that his mother was a Mahādevī. What is more interesting, he is given the epithet parama-bhāgavata which was borne by many Gupta Emperors from the time of Chandra-gupta II, though in the Gunaighar grant he is called a devotee of Mahādeva.

There is thus no doubt that Vainya-gupta belonged to the Imperial Gupta family. It is unfortunate that in the Nālandā seal we just miss the proper name of his father, though the concluding part 'Gupta' is still extant. But there seems to be a trace of u-kāra just before the name-ending Gupta, and it is very likely that the missing name of Vainya-gupta's father is Pūru-gupta.27 In that case, it is probable that Vainya-gupta was at first appointed a provincial governor of Bengal by Budha-gupta, and then he ascended the imperial throne in or some time after A.D. 506.28 The date of the death of Budha-gupta has to be shifted accordingly.

The history of Bhānu-gupta is more uncertain. He is known from a single inscription (No. 47) engraved on a stone pillar at Eran (Saugor district, M.P.). It mentions 'the glorious Bhānu-gupta, the bravest man on the earth, a mighty king', and then records that in the year A.D. 510-11 Goparāja, who came with him, 'fought a very famous battle and died, and his wife accompanied him on to the funeral pyre'.

It is evident that a famous battle was fought by Bhānu-gupta near about Eran. But we do not know the name of his adversary and the result of the battle. Nor have we any means to determine the exact status of Bhānu-gupta. He is called a rājā, but the same epithet is expressly applied to Goparāja's father and grandfather and, by

26 IHQ, IX, 784.
27 IHQ, XXIV, 67.
28 This assumption is not free from difficulties. For, if Vainya-gupta had issued the Gunaighar plate while he was a governor, it is strange that no reference is made to the Emperor in the official record. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the Gunaighar grant was issued after Vainya-gupta had already ascended the throne. But in that case the title Mahārāja is difficult to explain. We must hold either that it was inadvertently put for Mahārājādhirāja or that on account of Hūna invasions, or partition of the Empire (between Bhānu-gupta and Vainya-gupta), or other reasons, the Gupta king had to renounce the higher title for the time being. The latter view is, however, very unlikely.
implication, also to him. Except the name-ending Gupta, there is nothing to indicate that he was an independent ruler or a member of the Imperial Gupta family. No coin or seal of him has as yet come to light. For all we know, he might have been a general of the Gupta Emperor Vainya-gupta. As the Hūnas are known to have occupied the region round Eran about this time, it is likely that Bhānu-gupta fought with them. Evidently he was defeated, for otherwise his victory would have been described in glowing terms. But this cannot be regarded as certain, for being of the nature of a memorial to Goparāja and his wife, it need not have referred to subsequent events unconnected with them.

If, as is generally assumed, Bhānu-gupta was a Gupta Emperor, it is more reasonable to hold that there was a partition of the Gupta Empire after the death of Budha-gupta—Vainya-gupta ruling in the east and Bhānu-gupta ruling in the west. The alternative view is to suppose that Vainya-gupta had a very short reign and was succeeded by Bhānu-gupta. But so long as there is no clear evidence that Bhānu-gupta was a Gupta Emperor, we need not indulge in any hypothetical discussion about his position in the Imperial family. He undoubtedly fought on behalf of the Gupta Empire, but most probably as a general or a feudatory of Vainya-gupta, rather than as its suzerain lord.

We may thus provisionally accept Vainya-gupta as the sole heir to Budha-gupta’s empire. This view is in accord with the fact that the Maitrakas of distant Kāthiāwār still recognized the suzerainty of the Gupta Empire. It is doubtful if even a nominal allegiance would have been paid to one who ruled over only a part of the Gupta dominions.

Although we have no direct evidence, it may be presumed that Toramāṇa, who was probably the leader of the Hūnas, invaded the Gupta Empire during the rule of Vainya-gupta and had at least a temporary success. This follows from a comparison of two inscriptions found in two neighbouring temples at Eran, one of which (No. 39) is engraved on a stone pillar and the other (No. 68) on a colossal red sandstone statue of a Boar. Now, the first of these, dated A.D. 484-85, records the erection of a flag-staff (i.e. the pillar on which it is engraved) by Mahārāja Mātrīvīshnū and his younger brother Dhanyavīshnū and mentions Budha-gupta as the suzerain king. The second inscription records the building of the temple (in which the Boar stands) by Dhanyavīshnū, the younger brother of the deceased Mahārāja Mātrīvīshnū in year 1, while the Mahārājādhīrāj the glorious Toramāṇa was governing the earth. These two records leave no doubt that some time after A.D. 484-85 Eran, which formed an integral part of the Gupta Empire since the days of Samudra-gupta,
passed into the hands of Toramāṇa. As Dhanyavishṇu was alive in A.D. 484-85 as well as at the time of Toramāṇa’s conquest, the latter event most probably took place not later than A.D. 520 and perhaps much earlier, during the reign of Vainya-gupta.

The Hūṇa invasions will be dealt with in detail in Chapter IX. Here it will suffice to say that Toramāṇa and his son Mihiarkula were very powerful rulers and conquered a large part of North-western and Central India. But Mihiarkula was defeated by two Indian rulers Yasodharman and Bālādiṭya and after him the Hūṇa power declined in India.

4. NARASIMHA-GUPTA BĀLĀDITYA

(i) Defeat of Mihiarkula

Bālādiṭya, who defeated Mihiarkula, may be identified with the Gupta Emperor Narasiṃha-gupta, son of Pūru-gupta (p. 80), for we know from his gold coins that he assumed the title Bālādiṭya. In that case we should assume that Vainya-gupta was succeeded by Narasiṃha-gupta, probably his brother, some time about A.D. 515.

Narasiṃha-gupta ascended the throne at a time when the Gupta Empire was beset by great perils. The successful invasion of Toramāṇa had dealt a rude blow to its power and prestige. There was probably also an invasion by the Vākāṭaka king Harishena who claims to have exercised political authority over Mālava, Gujarat and other countries. But as his date is not known with certainty, we cannot say when he invaded the Gupta Empire. Then followed the invasions of Toramāṇa’s son Mihiarkula which threatened the very existence of the Gupta Empire.

Mihiarkula established his authority in the Gwalior region as we know from an inscription (No. 69) dated in the 15th year of his reign. According to a tradition preserved by Hiuan Tsang, his contemporary Gupta Emperor seems to have been Narasiṃha-gupta Bālādiṭya. The long story recorded by Hiuan Tsang may be summed up as follows: 29

'Some centuries ago Mihiarkula established his authority in Sākala (Sialkot, Panjāb) and ruled over India. He issued an edict to destroy all the Buddhist priests and overthrow the law of Buddha throughout India.

'Bālādiṭya-rāja, king of Magadha, profoundly honoured the law of Buddha. When he heard of the cruel persecution and atrocities of Mihiarkula, he strictly guarded the frontiers of his kingdom and

29 HTB, I, 167 ff.
refused to pay tribute. When Mihirakula invaded his dominions, Bālāditya took refuge with his army in an island. Mihirakula left the main part of his army in charge of his younger brother, embarked on boats, and landed with a part of his troops on the island. He was, however, ambushed by the troops of Bālāditya in a narrow pass and was taken prisoner. Bālāditya resolved to kill Mihirakula, but released him on the intercession of his mother. Mihirakula found on his return that his brother had gone back and occupied the throne. He, therefore, sought and obtained an asylum in Kashmir. Then he stirred up a rebellion there, killed the king, and placed himself on the throne of Kashmir. He next killed the king of Gandhāra, exterminated the royal family, destroyed the stūpas and saṅghārāmas, plundered the wealth of the country and returned. But within a year he died."

There are certain elements in this story which justify us in doubting its truth. In the first place Hsuan Tsang refers to Mihirakula as having flourished "centuries ago", though the interval between Mihirakula's death and Hsuan Tsang's visit to India could scarcely have exceeded one hundred years. The manner in which Mihirakula is said to have been captured and subsequently released also reads more like a romance than sober history. On the other hand we should remember that not unoften such legends grow around genuine historical facts, and Hsuan Tsang's reference to "some centuries" may be a clerical error or due to inadvertence.

The recent discovery of an inscription at Nālandā\(^{30}\) seems to confirm Hsuan Tsang's story. This inscription belongs to the middle of the eighth century A.D., but it refers to a great and extraordinary temple built by an old king named Bālāditya. He is described as "the great king of irresistible valour, who vanquished all the foes and enjoyed the entire earth". The inscription refers to the great height of the temple by saying that "it was erected as if with a view to see the Kailāśa mountain surpassed".

Now, Hsuan Tsang also refers in some detail to the three-storied saṅghārāma built by Bālāditya at Nālandā.\(^{31}\) There can hardly be any doubt, therefore, that the same king is referred to by Hsuan Tsang and the author of the inscription. Thus two independent sources confirm the tradition that Bālāditya of Magadha was a powerful ruler and a great conqueror, and in these circumstances we may place more credence in the main story of Hsuan Tsang than otherwise would have been possible. Thus, leaving aside all details, we may well

\(^{30}\) *EI*, XX, 37.
\(^{31}\) *HTB*, II, 168-69.
believe that Bālavāya defeated Mihirakula, and saved the Empire for the time being.32

As will be related later, a chief called Yaśodharman is also said to have defeated ‘Mihirakula, whose head had never been bent in obeisance to any other save the god Siva’.33 It is possible that the two defeats, mentioned in two different sources, really refer to one and the same event.34 In other words, Yaśodharman fought against Mihirakula on behalf of, or along with, Bālavāya, as his feudatory or general, and when later he gained the position of an independent sovereign he took the credit to himself alone without any reference to the suzerain king. The other alternative is to suppose that first Yaśodharman and then Bālavāya defeated Mihirakula in separate engagements, and perhaps in different regions. This follows from the statement in Yaśodharman’s praśasti that he defeated even Mihirakula who never before submitted to anybody. Such a statement would be hardly appropriate if Mihirakula had been already defeated by Bālavāya.35

But it is difficult to believe that Narasiṅha-gupta lived long enough after Yaśodharman to fight successfully against Mihirakula. As will be seen later, Yaśodharman was in full glory in the year A.D. 532, when the Gupta Empire existed, if at all, only in name. At that time

32 It was suggested by Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri (PIAI, 504-5) that Bānum-gupta was also called Bālavāya, and to him belongs the credit of having defeated Mihirakula. Jayaswal later propounded the same view with a great deal of embellishment (III, 53 ff). The basis of this view is the statement in the Mauyārī-mālakalpa that a king whose name begins with the letter pa was the son of one whose name begins in bha. These two are assumed to be Prakaśāditya and Bānum-gupta, and as an inscription found at Saināth (CII, III, 285) refers to a king called Prakaśāditya, son of Bālavāya, the latter is held to be a bīrula of Bānum-gupta. Such arguments are obviously very weak, and the cryptic statements in the Mauyārī-mālakalpa, whose representation of historical facts is neither methodical nor easily intelligible, can hardly be relied upon. Jayaswal’s elaborate reconstruction of history based on this work may be described, without much exaggeration, as imagination running riot. It hardly deserves consideration in a sober history.

33 Cf. Mandalor Ins. No. 70. Fleet’s translation of v. 6 is wrong. He takes the adjectival phrases quoted in the text to refer to Yaśodharman, whereas they really refer to Mihirakula. Cf. Sircar, SI, 395, n. 1.

34 Such a possibility has been hinted at by other scholars (cf. CGD, lix) who have, however, assumed that Yaśodharman must have been an independent king at the time he defeated Mihirakula. They were therefore troubled by the discrepancy between Huan Tsang’s statement and Yaśodharman’s inscription. But the view suggested above reconciles the two statements.

35 Allan, ignoring the point, suggests that Narasiṅha-gupta was simply successful in defending Magadha against Mihirakula’s aggressions, and that Mihirakula was afterwards utterly routed and taken prisoner by Yaśodharman (CGD, p. lix). Thus he attributes to Yaśodharman a feat expressly ascribed by Huan Tsang to Bālavāya. Cf. IHQ, III, 1.
Narasiṃha-gupta must have been a very old man. For his father Pūru-gupta must have died before A.D. 477, the known date of his son Budha-gupta, and probably even before A.D. 474, the date of Kumāra-gupta II. Even if we believe that Narasiṃha-gupta was born only a few years before his father’s death, he must have been well above 60 years in A.D. 532. It is therefore not very likely that his reign was continued much beyond A.D. 532.

On the whole the most reasonable view seems to be the one suggested by Hoernle36 long ago, that Yaśodharman, as a feudatory chief, helped Narasiṃha-gupta in his war against Mihirakula, and later asserted his independence. It is therefore necessary at this stage to give a detailed account of this great hero.

(ii) Yaśodharman

An inscription (No. 70), engraved in duplicate on two stone pillars at Mandasor, contains a long eulogy of Yaśodharman. He is said to have exercised suzerainty over the vast region extending ‘from the neighbourhood of the Lauhityā (Brahmaputra river) up to the mountain Mahendra (in Ganjam district), and from Himālaya up to the Western Ocean’. Further, as noted above, even Mihirakula paid homage to him (lit. bowed down at his feet).

The vague and bombastic claims of conquest, with which we are too familiar in Indian inscriptions, cannot of course be taken at their face value. They are belied by the fact that the Gupta Empire survived Yaśodharman. But we may readily take it for granted that he made extensive conquests.

More interesting is the specific reference to Mihirakula. It may be accepted as a historical fact that Yaśodharman inflicted a severe defeat upon Mihirakula, though it did not perhaps finally crush his power. It is probable that Yaśodharman rose to power and fame by this great achievement, and subsequently carried his victorious arms to countries which, to quote the words of his praśasti, ‘were not enjoyed (even) by the lords of the Guptas and which the command of the chiefs of the Hūnas failed to penetrate’.

Further information about Yaśodharman is supplied by another inscription (No. 71), also found at Mandasor. It begins by paying tribute to the tribal ruler (jaunendra) Yaśodharman for his victory over his enemies and then adds: ‘And, again, victorious over the earth is this same king of men (narādhīpatai), the glorious Vishnuvardhana, the conqueror in war, by whom his own famous lineage (ātmaraṁśa), which has the aulikara-crest, has been brought to a state of dignity that is ever higher and higher.’ The record then refers in glowing
terms to the great victories of the latter and makes specific reference to his 'having brought into subjection, with peaceful overtures and by war, the very mighty kings of the east and many (kings) of the north', adding that thereby he carried on high the second name of 'Rājādhirāja (king of kings) Parameśvara (supreme lord)' so difficult to attain.

Now the first question that arises in respect of this record is the relation between Yaśodharman and Vishnuvardhana. Referring to the expression 'this same king of men', Fleet, who edited the inscription, remarks as follows: 'This expression looks at first sight as if Yaśodharman and Vishnuvardhana were one and the same person. But the general structure of this verse, as well as the use of the two distinct titles janendra and narādhipati and of the expression ātmavaiśa, shows that this is not the case. “This same” simply means “this reigning king”, in whose time and territory the inscription is written.'

Now the distinction between the two titles need not be pressed very far, as both are used to denote kings, and the reference to ‘own lineage’ does not seem to have great bearing on the question of identity. The real ground in support of Fleet’s view is the general structure of the two verses, for it is very unusual indeed to refer to the same king by two different names in this manner. At the same time the identity is clearly hinted by the expression ‘this same king of men’, and what is said of Vishnuvardhana applies very well to Yaśodharman as we know him from the Duplicate Pillar inscription found in the same place. Indeed if Yaśodharman be regarded as a separate person, we must presume that he is the overlord of king Vishnuvardhana mentioned after him and yet the record leaves no doubt that the latter must be considered as the mightier of the two. This follows not only from the mention of his victories, but also, and specially, from the imperial titles Rājādhirāja and Parameśvara applied to him. We must, therefore, regard the two as identical and Fleet himself later accepted this view. The original name of the king was apparently Yaśodharman and he assumed the other name Vishnuvardhana after his victories.

By assuming this identity we can derive from this record a few more particulars about Yaśodharman. In the first place, his main

37 ChI, III, 155, n. 5.
38 This is the view of Allan (CGD, lvii).
39 Fleet’s original view (ChI, III, 155) that the two were different persons was upheld by Sir R. C. Bhandakar (JBBRAS, XX, 392) and Allan (CGD, lvii), but Hoernle took them to be identical (JASB, LVIII, Part I, 96; JRAS, 1903, p. 550). Fleet himself later accepted the identity (RG, I, Part II, 312; JRAS, 1904, p. 166).
40 This seems to follow from the phrase Yaśodharma-nāma (by name Yaśodharman in v. 5).
conquests were in the directions of the north and east, and these were achieved both by war and diplomacy. The ‘very mighty kings of the east’ probably included the Gupta Emperor, and it is evidently after defeating him that he assumed the imperial titles Rājadhirāja and Parameśvara. Secondly, we come to know from this record that his family had the ‘aulikara’ crest, and this connects him with the family of Naravarman, grandfather of Bandhu-varman (p. 67), who is called aulikara in one of his records (No. 50).

But whatever we might think of this identity, the record supplies a definite date for Yaśodharman. It is the Mālava year 589, corresponding to A.D. 533-34, and if the proposed identity be upheld, we may reasonably infer that Yaśodharman had begun his victorious career, and probably also completed it, before that year. This fits in with the inference drawn above from the Gupta records.

(iii) General Review

In the light of what has been stated above the history of Narasimha-gupta’s reign may be reconstructed somewhat as follows. At the time when he ascended the throne the rapid advance of the Hūnas constituted the gravest danger to the Gupta Empire. The battle which took place at Eran in A.D. 510-11 was an early episode in the long-drawn struggle with the Hūnas. We cannot say whether it represents an attempt to resist the advance of Toramāṇa, or an endeavour to drive him out of E. Malwa which he had already occupied. In any case Malwa seems to have been the cockpit of the struggle, and renewed attempts were made by Narasimha-gupta to fight the enemy in this region. The struggle was perhaps long and tedious, but ended in a complete success for the Gupta Emperor who was aided in this great hour of national peril by his feudatory chiefs, notably Yaśodharman. The respite of Narasimha-gupta was, however, shortlived. In spite of the ultimate success, the Hūna invasions extending over nearly a quarter of a century had exhausted the material resources of the Gupta Empire and considerably weakened its moral prestige. As often happens, it was a signal for the feudal chiefs or high officials to assert their independent authority. The most formidable among these was Yaśodharman who was probably a scion of the Varman family that ruled W. Malwa for a long time (p. 68), and who had acquired great prestige and renown by the important rôle he played in defeating Mihirakula. Whether he revolted against Narasimha-gupta or declared independence after his death cannot be definitely determined. But there is no doubt that the Gupta

41 Probably Jivita-gupta of the Later Gupta dynasty and a Maukhari chief fought with him against the Hūnas as will be shown later in connection with the history of the Later Guptas and the Maukharis.
Empire was overwhelmed for the time being, and Yaśodharman carried his victorious arms over an extensive region in North India. It does not appear, however, that he could consolidate his conquests. He rose and fell like a meteor. How his end was brought about we cannot say. But there is scarcely any doubt that the disintegration of the Gupta Empire, brought about by his victories, released other forces, and these probably wrought his ruin. As we shall see later, the Maukharis and the Later Guptas came into prominence about this time, and probably there were others, too, that followed the example of Yaśodharman. Perhaps the Gupta Emperor successfully contrived to rally these forces against Yaśodharman and brought about the downfall of this powerful rebel. It may also be that Yaśodharman was the first victim to perish in the conflagration which he had himself kindled to destroy the Gupta Empire.

Although Yaśodharman claimed to have established suzerainty over the whole of North India from the Brahmaputra river to the Arabian Sea, the epigraphic evidence clearly indicates that his conquests, whatever may be their nature, did not make any lasting impressions on the political or administrative system which continued more or less in the old way. The long series of Valabhi grants, no less than fourteen in number, issued by Mahārāja Dhruvasena between A.D. 525 and 545 are all drawn up in the old style. Due homage is paid to the Parama-bhāttāraka, as of old, and this can only refer to the Gupta Emperor. For if either Toramāna or Yaśodharman had exercised an effective suzerainty over Valabhi, some changes would have been introduced in the formula, and possibly their names would have been mentioned. Traditional or nominal homage, in vague and conventional terms, is only paid to an old ruling dynasty out of reverence for its past greatness even though it ceased to exercise any real authority, but that honour or privilege is not extended to a new conqueror. If he is weak, he is ignored. But if he is strong, he insists on more positive evidence of his suzerainty.

If we turn from the western to the eastern extremity of the Gupta Empire, we find the same state of things. Five copper-plates were found at Damodarpur in N. Bengal, all recording grants of land in the Pundravardhana-bhukti. Two of these were issued in the reign of Kumāra-gupta I and two in that of Budha-gupta. The fifth one (No. 48) was issued in the year 224 (A.D. 543-44) by a king whose proper name is lost, but the name-ending gupta is quite legible. As all the usual imperial titles are added to the name there is no doubt that he was a Gupta Emperor. This inscription proves that even so

42 Formerly when it was held that Narasiṃha-gupta and his son Kumāra-gupta reigned before Budha-gupta, and no Gupta Emperor was known to have ruled any-
late as A.D. 543-44 Bengal was still under the effective authority of a Gupta Emperor, and there was no violent break in the system of administration. Even in the Central part of the Empire, the last known grant (No. 58) of the Parivräjakas, dated 209 (A.D. 528-29) begins as usual with the phrase Gupta-nṛipa-rājya-bhuktau 'in the sovereignty of the Guptas'.

We should further remember that gold coins, though debased, still continued to be issued by the Gupta Emperors, whereas so far none has been discovered of Yaśodharman. All these clearly indicate that the imperial fabric reared by Samudra-gupta could not be destroyed by Yaśodharman. But there is no doubt that it was seriously damaged. The centrifugal forces led to a general upheaval all around. The Maukhari and the Later Guptas, whose history will be discussed in detail in another chapter, were gradually laying the foundations of independent States. The rulers of Eastern Bengal had already declared independence, and the Maitrakas were soon to follow suit. These were ominous signs and nobody could mistake the writing on the wall. The question was no longer whether, but when, the great empire would collapse.

The old Emperor Narasiṁha-gupta probably died before the great coup of Yaśodharman, but in any case he did not long survive it. It is not unlikely that in his last days, when power was slipping from his grasp, he devoted his attention more and more to religion, and sought the peace of mind in the teachings of Gautama Buddha, to which he was perhaps initiated early in life.43

4. Kumāra-gupta III and Vishṇu-gupta

The Gupta Empire survived the invasions of Toramāṇa and Mihirakula and the onslaughts of Yaśodharman. Its power and glory had faded, but the memory of its greatness sustained it for a time.

where after A.D. 510-11, he was naturally regarded as belonging to the Later Gupta family (HBR, p. 55). There is, however, no excuse for this belief, if we assume that Narasiṁha-gupta was a contemporary of Mihirakula and therefore flourished about A.D. 525.

43 We learn from Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu that king Vikramāditya of Ayodhyā was a patron of Buddhism and sent his son Bālāditya to study under the great Buddhist scholar. Later, when Bālāditya ascended the throne, he invited his teacher Vasubandhu to Ayodhyā. This Vikramāditya has been identified by some with Puru-gupta (or Skanda-gupta) and Bālāditya with Narasiṁha-gupta. But the correctness of these identifications rests on the date of Vasubandhu. If he lived in the middle of the fourth century A.D., as is generally supposed, none of the proposed identifications can be maintained. They are also opposed to Vāmana's statement that Vasubandhu was a minister of a son of Chandra-gupta, as noted above (JNAS, 1905, p. 33. NHIP, VI, 155-56, n. 2). Bhandarkar has identified Govinda-gupta, son of Chandra-gupta II, with Bālāditya (IA, 1912, pp. 1-2).
The substance had passed away, but the shadow lingered for nearly another quarter of a century.

We know the names of only two Gupta Emperors who may be reasonably assumed to have ruled during this period. These were Kumāra-gupta III and his son Vishnu-gupta, whose reign-periods probably covered the period A.D. 530-50. They are known both from their royal seals and gold coins.

The coins of Kumāra-gupta III, like those of his father Narasimha-gupta, may be divided into two classes: a small class I of good gold and of a style fairly good for the period, and a class II of very rude workmanship and base metal. It is generally held that these two classes were probably the issues of different districts. But it may be argued that only the class II coins of Kumāra-gupta, referred to above, really belonged to Kumāra-gupta III, for the known coins of Vishnu-gupta belong only to class II. In that case the class I coins may be attributed to Kumāra-gupta II. But as against this we should remember that in both the classes Kumāra-gupta is given the title Kramāditya. In any case the debasement of coins which had already commenced in the reign of Narasimha-gupta continued in the reign of his son Kumāra-gupta III. Whether he made any attempt to improve it remains doubtful, but in the reign of his son Vishnu-gupta, only the debased coins were current, and there was no effort to improve the style or standard of gold. This degradation of coinage aptly illustrates the gradual decay of the Gupta Empire.

No political event of the reign of Kumāra-gupta III Kramāditya is known to us. But the records of the Maukharis and the Later Guptas reveal a state of political chaos, leading to strife and struggle all round, which may be partly true of this and partly of the next reign. As Narasimha-gupta must have died in advanced age, Kumāra-gupta III had probably a short reign and died about A.D. 540.45

Vishnu-gupta, the son and successor of Kumāra-gupta III, assumed the title Chandrāditya. The Damodarpur copper-plate grant (No. 48) dated A.D. 543-44, referred to above, probably belongs to his reign. The portion of the copper-plate containing the proper name of the king is broken, but as the editor remarks, the missing space would permit of only two letters after Śrī and before gupta. The editor suggested that the missing name might be Bhānu, as he read the date of the plate as 214. But the date being really 224 (A.D. 543-44), 33 years later than the only known date of Bhānu-gupta, it is a more reason-

44 CGD, p. cii.
45 A mission was sent by the Chinese Emperor in A.D. 539 to the court of Magadha, and Paramārtha accompanied this mission to China where he spent the rest of his life (Bagchi—India and China, 48-49). The court of Magadha evidently refers to the Gupta Emperor who may be identified with Kumāra-gupta III.
able assumption that the missing name was Vishṇu, for the reign of Vishṇu-gupta falls in this period.46

Although the general tenor of this grant is very similar to the four earlier ones, there is one significant difference. The post of the Uparika (Governor) is no longer filled by a person with name-ending datta as in the other four grants (Chirāta-datta, Brahma-datta, Jaya-datta). Instead we have Rājaputra-Devabhaṭṭāraka. Whether this expression merely means something like Prince Royal, or we have to take Deva or Devabhaṭṭāraka47 as the name of the prince, it is difficult to say. But there is no doubt that the son of the Emperor was now acting as the Governor of Bengal. Perhaps in view of his higher distinction a new phrase is added in the description of the government, viz. infantry, cavalry and the elephants.48 The reason for this change in administration is not apparent. It may be due to disloyalty of the governors during the late upheaval, or simply a desire to secure the frontier by personal contact. But whatever may be the cause, it proves the effective hold of the Gupta Emperor over N. Bengal. This seems to be rather unusual, as the decline of an empire is almost inevitably preceded by the loosening of its hold on provincial authorities.

We may thus be more or less certain that Magadha (South Bihar) and Gauḍa, or a part of it (N. Bengal), still formed integral parts of the Gupta Empire. It is very doubtful if the actual power of Kumāra-gupta III or Vishṇu-gupta extended much further beyond it. For, as will be shown later, the Maukharis and the Later Guptas were ruling in U.P. and Malva, and an independent kingdom arose in South and Western Bengal.

How or when the Gupta Emperors lost their last stronghold in Magadha and N. Bengal is not yet known. A thick veil of mystery hangs over the last days of the Imperial Guptas. We have no definite knowledge of any king that succeeded Vishṇu-gupta. Nor do we know what became of his son, Prince Deva, who was ruling N. Bengal in A.D. 543-44.

46 Krishna Sastri suggests that the name is Kumāra (EI, XVII, 193, n. 1). In that case he may be identified with Kumāra-gupta III. For other suggestions see Sircar, SI, 337 n. 4. His suggestion that the name might be Vishṇu-gupta was already made by P. L. Paul (Early History of Bengal, 13-14).

47 The editor of the plate suggests Devabhaṭṭāraka as the proper name, but bhaṭṭāraka seems to be an honorary epithet.

48 The exact significance of the phrase bhogen-ānuvahamānake following the name of the Governor, in the first four grants of Damodarpur, is not quite clear. It is taken to mean ‘prospering under the government of’. But the addition of the words hasty-ākāra-jana (elephants, horses and infantry) before the phrase in the last grant undoubtedly emphasises the more dignified character of the government.
Various suggestions have been made for the identification of Prince Deva and the addition of one or more kings to the imperial line on the basis of the statements in the Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa. A perusal of the text, however, shows that it is a medieval chronicle of very doubtful historical value, and little reliance can be placed on it as an independent source for reconstructing the history of this period. There is no doubt that the author had before him a jumble of historical traditions, made up of facts and fancies, but it is impossible to credit him with even an imperfect knowledge of the correct sequence of historical events and a sense of their proper importance. While, therefore, we may occasionally find in it a corroboration or, rarely, even some amplification of events known from other sources, we shall hardly be justified in taking it as the basis for formulating any view of historical reconstruction.

49 This is the name of a medieval Buddhist text which contains a long chapter on political history. The history is narrated in the prophetic style (as in the Purāṇas) by the Buddha in course of his discourse on the future vicissitudes of his doctrine and church. It has the singular characteristic of referring to the kings by only the initial letter of their names, e.g. H. for Harsha-vardhana, R. for Rājya-vardhana.

The text has been printed by G. Sastri in Trivandrum Sanskrit Series and also by K. P. Jayaswal at the end of his Imperial History of India which is almost exclusively based on it. The historical value of the work, also known as Ārya-Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa, was much exaggerated by Jayaswal and other scholars, and more recently Goyal (op. cit., 372) has followed in their footsteps.

50 Jayaswal’s estimate of the value of this work (III, 34) as ‘a true history of the Great Gupta epoch’, ‘sober and fuller’, will hardly be endorsed by any historian. The very meagre account that we get from it can hardly be regarded as history, and no amount of ingenuity can make it really accord with facts known from coins and inscriptions. Jayaswal’s Imperial History of India, based on this work, hardly deserves serious consideration, and is more likely to mislead the unwary than add in any way to our knowledge of ancient history. His views have not, therefore, been refuted in detail.

As regards the Gupta history, of which so much has been made by Jayaswal, and more recently by Goyal, the verse 646 merely mentions king Samudra-Vikrama, good king Mahendra, and after him S-initialled king (i.e. Skanda-gupta). The verse 647 says that S had several names including Devarāja. The next 26 verses (648-73) are devoted to his younger brother (?) (anusū) named Bala of the eastern region. He is described as a great patron of Buddhism, and builder of a large number of monasteries, chaityas, orchards, reservoirs, gardens, pavilions, roads, and bridges. ‘After reigning without any rival and peacefully he becomes a wanderer and finally at the age of 30 years 1 month commits suicide by dhyāna. He had become a monk owing to his grief for his dead son.’ The stories of the rebirth of Bala are told in 18 out of the 26 verses. The accounts of the later Emperors have been quoted in the text.

This is all that we are told of the Imperial Guptas. By a curious piece of ingenuity Jayaswal finds a reference to Samudra-gupta again in verses 700-7, although the intervening verses, according to him, contain the accounts of the Later Guptas and the Pālas. Those verses seem to refer to a wicked king (durmati) Samudra, who ruled for three days or years, and his younger brother named Bhāsmama. The detailed
As a typical instance we may consider the account given in the *Maṅjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* of the Gupta kings after Bala. He was followed by Kumāra, the great lord of the Gauḍas who was very religious. Then U-initialled became king (v. 674). After a verse (675) referring to the internal dissension or mutual severance, the chronicle adds:

‘The separatist Gauḍas will be terrible. Thereafter, (there will be) Deva known as king of Magadha. He, surrounded on all sides by enemies, was suppressed and killed. Immediately next Chandra will perform kingship. He, too, will be severed by weapon on account of former (birth’s) deeds. His son Dvādasa (will) live for a few months. He, too, will be severed by weapon while a minor (vv. 676-678).’

Kings Bala and Kumāra in the passage quoted above may be taken to refer to the two kings Narasīṁha-gupta Bālāditya and his son Kumāra-gupta III. The U-initialled king who followed the latter is so far unknown. He has been identified with Budha-gupta by Jayaswal. It has been suggested by Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri that the name is probably Upa-gupta, the existence of such a king being inferred from Upa-guptā mentioned in the Maukhari records as the mother of Iśāna-varman. In that case Deva-Bhaṭṭāraka of the Damodarpur copper-plate might be Deva, son of U-initialled. This leaves out of account Vishṇu-gupta who is now known to be the son of Kumāra-gupta. Accordingly some have suggested the identification of U-initialled with Vishṇu-gupta. An alternative suggestion by Raychaudhuri is that U may be the initial of Upendra and refer to Kṛishṇa-gupta, his successor Deva being Devasṛi Harsha-gupta. This variety of suggestions shows the weakness of each and the difficulty of using the *Maṅjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* for reconstructing the Gupta his-account that follows seems to refer to the latter, though Jayaswal applies it to Samudra. It is hardly possible to regard this Samudra as Samudra-gupta as Jayaswal has done. Even if we do so, the account is not at all flattering to the great Gupta Emperor, and one would hardly agree with Jayaswal that ‘the character-estimate of the Gupta Emperors by the Buddhist historian is very valuable and it is fortunately very sound even when the kings were not Buddhists’ (p. 34).

No notice has therefore been taken of the hypotheses based on this text, propounded by Jayaswal and Goyal in regard to the successors of Kumāra-gupta I.

51 Jayaswal’s edition of the text and his translation (IHH, 33) are followed here. The extract quoted follows immediately the account of the Guptas reproduced in the preceding footnote.

52 Jayaswal further identifies Prakāśāditya of the coins with Budha-gupta on the ground that the letter ‘u’ occurs on these coins beneath the royal figure.

53 PHAI, 500, n. 2.
54 Sircar, SI, 337, n. 4.
55 PHAI, 500, n. 2.
tory. Although, therefore, it mentions two more kings as successors of Deva, we shall be hardly justified in regarding them as kings in the imperial line until corroborative evidence is available.

More importance attaches to two other kings whose names have been doubtfully read as Jaya-gupta and Hari-gupta on a few copper coins. These do not resemble the Gupta coins, but belong to the sixth century A.D. In a Jaina account of Toramāṇa, Hari-gupta, a scion of the Gupta family, is said to be the guru of Toramāṇa. Another disciple of this Hari-gupta was Deva-gupta who is described as a royal sage of the royal house of the Guptas. Whether this Hari-gupta is the king who issued the copper-coins, and Deva-gupta is identical with Deva-bhaṭṭāraka of the Damodarpur copper plate, and whether either of them had any relation with the Imperial Gupta family, cannot be decided in the present state of our knowledge. We must, therefore, conclude that Narasimha-gupta Bālāditya, Kumara-gupta (III) Kramāditya, and Vishnu-gupta Chandrāditya were the last three emperors who flourished between c. A.D. 500 and 550. With Vishnu-gupta Chandrāditya ends the Imperial Gupta family after enjoying sovereignty for more than 230 years.

This lower limit of the Gupta Empire is supported by independent evidence. In the first place it is very significant that in the royal seals of the Maukhariās, Isāna-varman was the first king to whom the title of Mahārājādhirāja is given, whereas all his three predecessors are styled only Mahārāja. This shows that it was not till Isāna-varman’s time that the Maukharis finally shook off the suzerainty of the Guptas. As the only known date of Isāna-varman is A.D. 553, his accession, or rather declaration of independence, may be dated about A.D. 550.

Secondly, the Maitraka ruler Dhruvasena I of Valabhi, who ruled till at least A.D. 545, used the phrase parama-bhaṭṭāraka-pādānudhyāta, by way of paying at least a nominal allegiance to the Gupta Emperor. This phrase disappears in the Grant of Guhasena, whose earliest known date is A.D. 557 (or 560). The nominal allegiance must have been given up between A.D. 545 and 557.

Lastly, there is an interesting land-grant, dated 232 (A.D. 551-52); found at Amauna in the district of Gayā (S. Bihar), i.e. in the heart of Magadha. It was issued by one Kumārāmātya Mahārāja Nandana who describes himself as meditating on the feet of deva-guru (devaguru-pādānudhyāta). Thus deva-guru is substituted for the name of

56 CGD, pp. civ-cv.
57 This will be related later in Ch. IX, Sect. III.
58 Cf. Ch. VIII, Sect. I.
59 Cf. Ch. IX, Sect. I.
60 EI, X, p. 50.
the suzerain king. Whether it means the king and his guru, as the editor of the grant suggests, or in general to 'gods and preceptors' in a general way, as seems more probable, it is certain that at the time the grant was issued no effective authority was exercised by any Gupta king in that locality. This may be due to a temporary cause such as a civil war between rival claimants to the throne when a feudal chief or district authority did not know to whom to pay allegiance. Or it may be due to the final dissolution of the Gupta Empire when no other power had securely established itself. In any case the grant seems to mark the virtual end of the authority of the Imperial Guptas in Magadha.

Thus all the three lines of evidence point out to A.D. 550 as the approximate date of the end of the Gupta Empire. Reference may be made in this connection to the Jaina tradition about the end of the Gupta rule. According to Jinasena's list of royal dynasties given in his Ilarivamśa, composed in 705 Saka (A.D. 783), 'the Guptas began to rule after the lapse of seven hundred and twenty years from the nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra. They ruled for 231 years and were followed by Kalkirāja.' On the other hand, Guṇabhādra, a disciple of Jinasena, says that Kalkirāja, a great tyrant who oppressed the world, was born 1000 years after the nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra. Again Nemichandra (eighth century A.D.) reproduces in his work Trilokasāra some details of the story of Kalkirāja and adds that he was born in 395 Saka, which corresponds to the 1000th year after nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra. In spite of the discrepancy from Jinasena's list, this categorical statement would place Kalki's birth in A.D. 473. Guṇabhādra further says that Kalki reigned for forty years and died at the age of seventy. So Kalki's reign extends from A.D. 503 to 543. It has been suggested by Pathak that this tyrannical and oppressive Kalki is no other than Mihirakula. On the other hand, it has been urged by Jayaswal that the Kalki incarnation of Vishnu, as described in the Purāṇas, was an historical personage, and considering his various achievements may be regarded as 'a patriotic and religious Napoleon of India who destroyed the Mlechchha kings and the irreligious and haters of the dharma', in the late fifth and early sixth centuries A.D. The same scholar has identified the Kalki with Yaśōdharman. Kalki has also been identified with Toramāṇa. This wide diversity of conclusions shows how little we may rely on deductions of this character. It is interest-

61 For the original Jaina texts and the different theories about Kalki, cf. K. B. Pathak in IA, XV, 141; Bhandarkar Commemoration Volume, 195 ff.; and Jayaswal in IA, XLVI, 148 ff.
62 This is the view of K. C. Sankar (NIA, IV, 36) who points out that Toramāṇa flourished about 1000 years after Vīra-Nirvāṇa. According to Guṇabhādra,
ing to note, however, that Kalki, who is generally regarded in the Purāṇas as having brought the Kali Age to an end, is placed in the Jaina chronicles immediately after the Guptas. In other words, it seems to testify to the general belief that the fall of the Guptas marks the end of an epoch in Indian history.

According to Jinasena’s account, the Guptas ruled from about A.D. 192 to 423, but this cannot be reconciled with known facts. On the other hand, if we count backwards from A.D. 503, the date of Kalki’s accession according to Guṇabhadra, we get the period A.D. 272 to 503 as the period of Gupta rule, which is not probably very wide of the mark, particularly if we remember that the Jaina writers generally had in view the political condition of Western India. At the same time, the total number of years assigned to the Guptas, viz 231 years, would not be far from truth if we count from the beginning of the Gupta era in A.D. 319-20. For this would place the end of the Gupta power in A.D. 550, a date which we have provisionally fixed on independent grounds.

Reference may be made to another Jaina text—Tiloyapannatti—a stanza of which gives the duration of the Gupta rule as 231 years, and thus supports the statement of Jinasena. But according to two other stanzas in the same text, the Śakas ruled for 242 years, and the Guptas for 255 years. It is interesting to note that the above duration of the Śaka rule gives exactly the difference between the epochs of the Śaka and the Gupta eras. In other words, the author regarded the Guptas as immediately succeeding the Śakas. Whatevver we may think of this, the discrepancy in the duration of the Gupta rule—231 and 255 years—in one and the same text, at first appears to be somewhat puzzling. But we know that the Gupta suzerainty was acknowledged in the Ganjam region in Orissa as late as the year 250 of the Gupta Era. This supports the duration of the Gupta rule of about 255 years, at least in some regions. It is, therefore, just possible that the tradition of Gupta rule for 231 years refers to Magadha and

Kalki was born in Pāṭaliputra and was a son of King Śīśupāla. Mr. Sankar finds a reference to this Śīśupāla in the Prahaldpur Stone Pillar Ins. (CII, III, 249) and thinks that he was probably a general of the Gupta king.

63 The date A.D. 192 agrees with the statement of I-ting that ‘Śrī-Gupta flourished about five hundred years ago’ (see ante p. 7). It has accordingly been suggested that this Śrī-gupta was the grandfather of Gupta, the first Gupta king mentioned in the Gupta Inscriptions (QJMS, XXIV, 220). But we can hardly accept the existence of this king without further evidence. Besides, this view would put the end of the Gupta rule in A.D. 424 which can hardly be supported.

64 Essays Presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, 346 ff.

neighbouring territories, while the other tradition of 255 years is true of some other outlying regions like Orissa.

5. RETROSPECT AND REVIEW

‘All mortal power is doomed to decline, but the memory of greatness stands for ever.’ These words, put in the mouth of Pericles by the great historian who witnessed the downfall of Athens, may be taken as a fit epitaph for the Gupta Empire. It rose and fell, but left a deep impress upon posterity by the standard which it set in all departments of life and culture—a standard which was alike the envy and despair of succeeding ages. Its greatness was such that even today, after the lapse of fifteen hundred years, the Gupta Age is regarded as the Golden or the Classical Age of India. In letters and science, as well as in arts and crafts, it evoked the highest intellectual expression that India was ever capable of, and the religious movements and philosophical speculations which it fostered are still the greatest living forces in Indian life. These noble achievements will be discussed in detail in a separate chapter. But it is necessary to emphasize here that at the root of all these lay the ‘Imperial Peace’ which was established by the efforts of a succession of able rulers.

The dynastic history of the Guptas is therefore of more than passing importance. We have traced above, as far as our very limited sources permit, the part played by the different emperors in building up the mighty edifice, and also the various forces that were at work in pulling it down. We may now pause for a moment to make a few general observations on the basis of our detailed study.

All empires in India have to face the great resistance fostered by a spirit of narrow autonomy, both regional and communal. Chandragupta Maurya in the fourth century B.C. and Samudra-gupta in the fourth century A.D. had both to fight hard against this inveterate and inherent spirit of Indian national life. But both were favoured to a large extent by the prevailing political condition in the country. The ruthless invasion of Alexander did as much as the succession of foreign rule in India in the later age to open the eyes of the Indians to the great danger of living in small separate political communities, however strongly such a thing might have appealed to their inborn sentiments. The way was thus paved for a political unity, though only to a limited extent. Samudra-gupta had to fight hard to impose the imperial unity, but his task was probably facilitated by the willing surrender of authority by many kings and tribal States. We may well believe that old republican clans like the Mālavas and the Vaudhevas would have found it very hard to give up their cherished independence. But though internal autonomy was left to them by Samudra-gupta, they
seem to have been gradually absorbed in the growing empire. At all events, they vanish for ever from the field of Indian politics. Either they were deliberately crushed, once and for all, by the ruthless policy of imperialism of which they have been natural enemies in all ages and countries; or they disappeared silently by the irresistible logic of stern facts which could no longer brook these small gaps in the solid organization of a real political life in the country. The small autonomous clans like the Lichchhavis and the Mālavas were great nurseries of freedom, and as such played a very important rôle in political and cultural life in India for more than a millennium. But their days were over and the Gupta Empire gave a death-blow to them. Whether they had outlived their utility or fell a victim to mere power politics, it is difficult to say. But they had no place in the imperialist State-policy which the Guptas left as a legacy to India.

This policy could take a deep root in the soil on account of the long duration of the Gupta Empire. It is not always realized that this empire lasted longer than most of the empires that flourished in India, perhaps not excluding even the Mughal Empire. It could thus establish an imperial tradition which lasted long after it had disappeared, and inspired a series of able dynasts, in a long and almost unbroken line of succession, to build up an empire after their model. Many of them succeeded, in varying degrees, but the fruit of their labour seldom outlived their own life or continued at best for two to three generations. A thousand years passed before we find another empire of equal strength and duration in India. But it was founded by foreign invaders of an alien culture. The imperial peace established by the Mughals was not followed by that outburst of intellectual activity and the deep stirrings of spiritual emotions which characterized the Gupta Age. Thus while the Gupta Empire set in motion forces which made themselves felt in later ages, it still remains almost a unique achievement in India.

The broad steps by which the empire was brought into being are fairly known, and have been described above. But we are not equally well informed about the causes of its downfall or even the chief stages in its decline. The general impression that the Hūna invasion brought about the end of the Gupta Empire can hardly be regarded as correct. The Hūnas were completely defeated and suffered a severe set-back in the days of Skanda-gupta. If they achieved greater success half a century later, it was due perhaps as much to the internal decay of the Gupta power brought about by other causes as to their own inherent strength. But even then, in spite of their initial success, the Hūnas were effectively checked. They had no doubt caused damages and devastations on a large scale, and dealt a great blow to the prestige
of the empire, but, except for a very short period, they did not count as an important factor in Indian politics, and the Gupta Empire successfully outlived that period. If other factors had not intervened, the Gupta Empire might have rallied even after the great shock that it had sustained at the hands of the Hūṇas.

But that was not to be. The disruptive forces within the empire were now let loose, and it proved impossible to control them. Personal ambitions, combined with the spirit of local autonomy, led to the defection of feudal chiefs and provincial governors, and the situation was probably rendered worse by quarrels and jealousies among the members of the imperial family. Perhaps even all these causes would have failed to make any headway if there were a strong personality at the helm of affairs. But it is idle to expect an uninterrupted succession of able and efficient rulers in a single dynasty for more than two centuries.

The events leading to the downfall of the Gupta Empire are not known to us, and we know only a few isolated unconnected facts whose bearing on the main question is not always easy to determine. Nevertheless, on the analogy afforded by other historical examples, it is safe to presume that the downfall was brought about, not so much by the Hūṇa invasion as by the causes just mentioned, viz internal dissensions and disruptions and the weakness of the central authority. The fatal blow to the Gupta Empire was dealt, not by Toramāna or Mihrakula, but by Yaśodharman and other rebellious chiefs or governors. There is a remarkable analogy between the last days of the Gupta and Mughal Empires which no historian can possibly overlook.

It is natural to suppose that the same causes were at work, and the process of decline and downfall followed the same line, in the two cases. We may go even a little further and say that the Gupta Empire fell a victim to forces, both internal and external, which have, in all ages and countries, brought about the downfall of kingdoms and empires. They seem to be laws of nature in the sphere of politics. The general course, everywhere, is nearly the same, only particulars vary in their incidence and emphasis.

The Gupta Empire came to an end in the fullness of maturity. It had served its purpose and accomplished its objects. It laid down an ideal and fixed a standard for the future. It marks the end of an epoch and the beginning of another in Indian history. Taking everything into consideration, the Gupta Empire, which ushered in the Gupta Age, may be regarded as the most important phenomenon in the political history of ancient India.
LIST OF GUPTA INSCRIPTIONS


(Unless otherwise stated the year refers to the Gupta Era. The object on which the inscription is engraved is mentioned after the find-place.)

SAMUDRA-GUPTA

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(For the era used in Nos. 60-65, cf. *EI*, XXIII, 171; *Bh. List*, p. 159 n.)

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| 71. | 589 (V.S.) | Yaśodharman | Mandasor-S. | *IA*, XVIII, 219; XX, 188. |
CHAPTER SIX

THE KUSHĀNAS, THE ŚAKAS AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY STATES IN NORTHERN INDIA DURING THE GUPTA RULE

I. THE SUCCESSORS OF THE GREAT KUSHĀNAS

At the beginning of the fourth century A.D., with which this volume opens, the Sassanian rule was fully established in Sindh and Sakastān, as well as in Bactria. Afghanistan, including the Kabul valley, was under the rule of Kushāna chiefs who were Sassanian feudatories. The Western and the Central Panjab were being ruled by a number of chiefs who, in the absence of any definite information about their nationality, may be conveniently described as ‘Scythians’. Their coins are a close imitation of the Kushāna prototype, but whether they were themselves Kushānas or not we do not know.

In the present state of our knowledge it is extremely difficult to give even an outline of the history of these ‘Scythian’ rulers. We have to rely almost exclusively on the evidence of coins, and it is both scanty and inconclusive. As these coins are close imitations of those of Vāsudeva II, the rulers must have come into power at about A.D. 250. One of the last rulers of the series inscribed the name of Samudra-gupta, probably his overlord, upon his coins.1 We may, therefore, assume that these ‘Scythian’ rulers, who may or may not have been Kushānas, were holding sway in parts of the Panjab during the period c. A.D. 250 to 350.

The coins of these rulers are found neither in Afghanistan nor in the south-eastern Panjab. It is thus clear that they were holding sway in the Western and Central Panjab only. One series of coins of this period has the word Shāka (not Śaka) invariably written perpendicularly on the obverse to the right of the spear held by the king in his left hand. Cunningham thought2 that this term Shāka was an abbreviation of Śākala, and concluded that the coins were issued by the kings of a Scythian dynasty ruling at Śākala or modern Sialkot.

1 Cunningham, Later Indo-Scythians, Pl. II, 11.
2 Ibid., 122.
But it is difficult to accept this view, for a large hoard of the 'Shāka' coins was found at Peshawar in 1905, and no ancient Indian coin series is known to have been named after the city of its issue for several generations. Cunningham's theory that the coins bearing the legend Gadhara were the issues of the city of Nagarāhāra, situated near modern Jālālābād, is still less plausible, for the legend on these coins reads not as Nagarāhāra but as Gadhara, as admitted by Cunningham himself. The coins attributed by the same scholar to Pakandhi, a district to the north of Rawalpindi, clearly do not have the legend; the inscription concerned reads not Pakhanda but Shā( or Shi)lada.

It is not, therefore, possible to accept the view of Cunningham that the three series of coins we are discussing were issued from the districts of Sākala, Nagarāhāra and Pakandhi. It is more likely that the terms concerned denote the names of the tribes of the rulers who issued these coins, the individual names appearing under the arm of each king.

We may, therefore, tentatively assume that there were three 'Scythian' houses ruling in the Central and Western Panjāb during c. A.D. 250 to 350 which, for the sake of convenience, may be called Shāka, Gadhara, and Shālada or Shilada. Whether these families succeeded one another, or whether they were ruling contemporaneously, we do not know. When empires disintegrate, a number of small satrapies spring into existence. It is, therefore, not unlikely that these houses were to some extent contemporaneous with one another.

On the coins of the Shāka dynasty, letters appear under the arm of the king, to the left of his right foot and to the right of his left hand. The legend in the last mentioned place is invariably Shāka and most probably denotes, as observed already, the name of the dynasty. The legend under the arm almost certainly gives the name of the king and that to the left of the right foot is either the initial of the name of the governor or of the mint city.

If these assumptions are correct, it appears that about six or seven kings ruled in the Shāka dynasty during c. A.D. 250 to 350. Unfortunately, the full names of only a few of them are known. One of them is Sīta; his coins are found in large numbers and he probably ruled for a long time. Another was Savatha, and a third was Lava... or Layu. The name of another ruler began with Bhṛi... The coins of

3 Ibid., 124.
4 Ibid., pl. II, 12-13; Smith also reads the legend as Shala (CCIM, Vol. I, Pl. XIV, 8).
6 Ibid., Pl. II, 6. Cunningham has wrongly read this name in Saya.
two or three more rulers are known, but the names of their issuers are too indistinct to be deciphered. Peshawar was most probably the capital of this dynasty. What precisely was the extent of this kingdom we do not know; probably it was not more extensive than the North-Western Frontier Province.

The coins of the Shâladas⁷ are much fewer. Only three rulers of the dynasty are known, viz Pâsaka, Bhadra and Bacharna.⁸ The coins of others may have been lost, or alternatively the dynasty may have been shortlived. It is probable that the principality of this house was to the east of N.W.F.P. and may have included a portion of the Jhelum valley.

Kirada and Peraya are the two kings of the Gaḍahara house known to us from its coinage. On another Gaḍahara coin the name Samudra(gupta) appears under the king's arms.⁹ It is likely that the petty principality of this house was to the east of the Jhelum, possibly in the Ravi valley. Being the easternmost Scythian family, it came earliest under the Gupta sphere of influence, and its last ruler was probably compelled to put the name of the great Gupta conqueror upon his coinage.

II. THE KIDĀRA KUSHĀNAS

While the 'Scythian' houses of the Central and Western Panjab were dragging a precarious existence by the middle of the fourth century, a new leader arose among the Kushānas in Bactria. His name, Kidāra, supplied a designation to the branch of the Kushānas to which he belonged, and was destined to remain on coins issued several centuries after the disappearance of the Kidāra Kushānas. Kidāra found that there was a fresh danger to his clan from a rising tribe, called Juan-Juan, and decided at c. A.D. 340¹⁰ to migrate southwards and carve out a kingdom there.

At the beginning of his career, he naturally professed allegiance to the Sassanian emperor, as was done by his predecessors in Bactria. This is shown by his following the Sassanian numismatic convention of issuing coins with the bust facing right, which all feudatories were

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⁷ It has been already pointed out above that Cunningham's reading Pakandhī is wrong.

⁸ Cunningham, op. cit., Pl. II, 12-13. CCIM, I, 88-9, Pl. XIV, 4: 8. The last name was read by Cunningham as Bāshan.

⁹ Cunningham, op. cit., Pl. II, 11.

¹⁰ Cunningham had placed Kidāra in the second quarter of the 5th century (op. cit., 184); but Col. Martin has adduced sufficient evidence to show that his time was about 75 years earlier and dates his invasion of India at c. A.D. 348-50, Num. Suppl. No. XLVII, 25 ff.
required to follow. Kidāra, however, was an ambitious adventurer; he gradually began extending his power towards India. The Wei-shu or the Annals of the Wei Dynasty vaguely tells us that Kidāra crossed to the south of the Great Mountains and invaded Northern India, where five kingdoms to the north of Kantholo (Gandhāra) submitted to him. We are further told by another Chinese historian, Ma-tuan-lin, that the capital of Kidāra was the city of Fu-lou-cha (Peshawar), and that he left it under the charge of his son when he had to march westwards to meet the attacks of Juan-Juan.  

We may conclude from the above evidence that the Scythian principalities of the Shākas, Gaḍaharas, and Shālas which existed in the N.W.F.P. and Western and Central Panjab were annexed by Kidāra. The Chinese authorities refer to his invasion of ‘northern India’ But we need not suppose that it penetrated further than the Ravi. The coins of Kidāra are not found to the east of that river, and we know that the Madras, the Yaudheyas, the Ārjunśyas and the Nāgas were holding their own in the south-eastern Panjab and the northern U.P. by the middle of the fourth century A.D. It, however, appears certain that Kidāra penetrated into the Jhelum valley and annexed Kashmir; the letters Ki, Kidā or Kidāra appear almost regularly on the Kashmir currency down to the seventh or eighth century A.D.

When Kidāra succeeded in establishing his rule firmly in Afghanistan, North Western Frontier Province, Kashmir and the Western Panjab, he naturally did not like to continue his allegiance to the Sassanian emperor. He soon repudiated it and signalised the event by issuing coins with his bust facing front. He also assumed the Kushāna imperial title Daivaputra-Shāhi-Shāhanushāhi.

The Sassanian emperor Shapur II was not disposed to ignore this challenge to his supremacy by an erstwhile feudatory of his, and soon moved eastwards at the head of a strong force. Ammianus Marcellinus, an officer in the Roman army, who fought against Shapur II in Mesopotamia, tells us that this monarch was engaged in wars against the Chionitae and Euseni living on his eastern frontiers during c. 350-58. The name Euseni is usually regarded as a textual corruption for Cuseni or Kushānas. An inscription discovered at Persepolis by Dr. Herzfeld attests to the anxiety of Slok, High Judge at Kabul, that Shapur should return to Kabul in safety. Kabul seems to have been a good base of military operations against Gandhāra and the territory contiguous to it. It is, therefore, most natural to assume

11 Herzfeld, Kusano-Sassanian Coinage, 3-5; Martin, op. cit., 29.
12 Num. Suppl., XLVII, 24-25.
13 Ibid., Pl. 1.
that operations against the Euseni were really the operations against the Kushānas and their new chief Kidāra, who had recently asserted independence. Shapur was successful in the expedition, and Kidāra was compelled to acknowledge the Sassanian sovereignty. A number of gold coins showing his face profile to right have been found, and they prove his subordination to Shapur II.

It appears that Kidāra sent his own contingent to help his liege-lord in his campaign in Mesopotamia; for Roman sources refer to the participation of the Cuseni, i.e. the Kushānas in the siege of the Roman fortress of Amida in a.d. 359.

Kidāra, however, was an ambitious ruler and was only biding his time. By c. a.d. 367 he made all the necessary preparations and rebelled once more against Shapur II. This time he was able to avenge the earlier defeats; on one battlefield he annihilated the opposing Sessanian force and on another he compelled Shapur himself to fly away to save his life.14

It seems that Daicaputra-Shāhi-Shāhānushāhi, who is mentioned as offering submission to Samudra-gupta in the Allahabad inscription, is none other than Kidāra himself.15 It is very likely that while he was making his preparations against Shapur II, he thought it prudent to secure his eastern frontiers by keeping the Gupta emperor in good humour, by sending him formal presents which were interpreted as tokens of submission by the courtiers of Samudra-gupta.

The numismatic evidence suggests that Kidāra was succeeded by Piro, who was probably his son. Piro did not only maintain his independent status for some years, but tried to expand his kingdom eastwards. This brought him into conflict with the Guptas, and very probably the 'Saka' chief who was in a position to inflict a humiliating defeat on Rāma-gupta was Piro himself.16 The power and pomp of Piro did not, however, last long. Shapur III soon succeeded in avenging the discomfiture of his namesake and predecessor, and completely broke Piro's power. The latter was compelled to acknowledge Sassanian suzerainty and issue coins with his bust facing right, like other feudatories of the Sassanian empire. Chandra-gupta II also took active steps to retrieve the glory of his house, darkened temporarily by the cowardice of his predecessor. He defeated the armies of the Kidāra Kushānas and seems to have chased them right up to the Indus.17 Whether Chandra-gupta's campaign against Piro was before

14 Ibid., 32.
15 For other views on this cf. Ch. III.
16 For the Rāma-gupta episode cf. Ch. IV.
17 This is on the very probable assumption that Chandra of the Meharaulī pillar inscription is Chandra-gupta II. Some scholars however do not accept this hypothesis (cf. Ch. IV).
or after the latter’s defeat at the hands of Shapur III, we do not definitely know. If it took place in C. A.D. 390, which seems very probable, it would appear to have been started after Piro’s overthrow by Shapur III (C. A.D. 383-88).

Chandra-gupta II, however, did not press his victories home, and occupy and garrison the Khyber pass. We have very little evidence of the Gupta influence in the Panjab during C. A.D. 375-425 apart from that supplied by the Shorkot inscription, which seems to have been dated in the year 83 of the Gupta Era (A.D. 402). Nor can we suggest that the province was under the Sassanian rule, for the coins of the Sassanian emperors or their feudatories are not found in the Panjab in any appreciable number.

It appears that Piro even after his defeat continued to rule, though over a very much attenuated kingdom. He seems to have been succeeded by Vahram, who continued to profess allegiance to the Sassanians.

The empire of the Kidāra-Kushānas, which at one time seems to have stretched from the Hindu Kush to Lahore and included Kashmir as well, was thus a shortlived one; it hardly flourished for more than 25 years. When it declined after the overthrow of Piro, the usual phenomenon occurred, and several Satraps became independent and carved out small principalities for themselves. A number of coins have been found having the name of Kidāra on the obverse, but giving the names of a number of chiefs like Kritavīrya, Śilādirya, Kuśala and Prakāśa on the reverse. It is very unlikely that Kidāra would have allowed his feudatories to issue coins when his power was at its height. Most probably Kritavīrya, Śilādirya, Kuśala, and Prakāśa were local chiefs who carved out independent principalities after the break-up of the shortlived Kidāra-Kushāna empire. They continued to pay a kind of nominal allegiance to the defunct Kidāra-Kushāna power by putting the name of its founder on the obverse of their coins. But they took care to put their own names also on the reverse, evidently to show that they were something more than mere feudatories. The names of these chiefs are all Sanskritic; they were, therefore, either Hindu governors under the Kidāra-Kushānas, who later on became independent, or they were Kushāna or Scythian chiefs who had been completely Hinduised and adopted Hindu names.

These petty rulers must have professed allegiance sometimes to the descendents of Kidāra, sometimes to the Sassanians, and sometimes to the Guptas, as the exigency of the times may have demanded. They seem to have ruled from C. A.D. 390 to 440; they were swept away by the Hūṇa avalanche some time in the fourth decade of the fifth century.
III. THE WESTERN KSHATRAPAS (SATRAPS)

We have shown above how the power of the Kushāṇa and Scythian rulers of the Panjab was on the decline during the fourth century and how their houses eventually disappeared by the beginning of the next century. Exactly the same phenomenon is seen in connection with the fortunes of the Saka Kshatrapas of Western India. They were reduced to a feudatory status during the first half of the fourth century. There was a temporary revival of their power under Rudrasena III during the third quarter of the century, just as there was a revival of the Kushāṇa power at the time under Kidāra. The revival, however, was shortlived in either case; the Saka power was completely extinguished by the beginning of the fifth century; we have seen already how a similar fate overtook the Kidāra-Kushāṇas at about the same time.

Like the history of the Kushāṇas during the fourth century, that of the contemporary Western Kshatrapas also is shrouded in great mystery, and our reconstruction of their history can, therefore, be only tentative. As noted above, the ruling house of Chashṭana suddenly comes to an end in A.D. 304, with the reign of Bhartridāman. His son Viśvasena did not succeed him, and the crown passed on to Rudrasimha II. The accession of Rudrasimha II did not probably take place peacefully, and there was a sharp but short conflict between him and Viśvasena which rendered life and property unsafe at the capital. Rudrasimha II was, however, successful in the struggle and began to rule in A.D. 304, which is also the last known date of Viśvasena.

The coin legend of Rudrasimha II shows that his father's name was Jivadāman. No coins of Jivadāman have been found, and his simple title svāmi would suggest that he did not belong to any royal family and was not even a feudatory chief in status. We have no clue to determine the relationship, if any, between Jivadāman and Bhartridāman. The names Jivadāman, Rudrasimha and Yaśodāman, which are borne by the members of the new house, show that they were most probably collateral members of the Kshatrapa family. It is not improbable that Jivadāman was a younger brother of Bhartridāman, and that his son succeeded in ousting his cousin Viśvasena soon after the death of the latter's father. The view held that Jivadāman, father of Rudrasimha II, was a local Saka chief


19 A hoard of 520 coins was found at Junāgadh, where the last king represented is Bhartridāman, (Num. Suppl., XLVII, 97). It may be presumed that insecurity was the cause of this hoarding. Since both Viśvasena and Rudrasimha issued coins in the year A.D. 304 it is legitimate to infer that the conflict was a shortlived one.
ruling at Sāñchi in the last quarter of the third century A.D.\textsuperscript{20} is no longer tenable; it has been now shown that the Sāñchi inscription, on which it was based, does not at all mention any Saka chieftain named Jivadāman.\textsuperscript{21}

Throughout their reigns (c. A.D. 304-32), both Rudrasimha II and his son Yaśodāman II remained content with the humbler title of Kshatrapa. Not on a single coin of theirs do we come across the higher title of Mahākshatrapa, which at this time denoted an independent status. The abeyance of the title of Mahākshatrapa is a significant circumstance, for all the members of the house of Chashtana, from the time of Rudradāman I onwards, invariably adopted it when they became full-fledged kings. It is almost certain that political subordination was the real cause for Rudrasimha and his son Yaśodāman remaining content with the humbler title of Kshatrapa, which at this time denoted a feudatory status.

It is, however, not yet possible to identify with certainty the political power which reduced the Western Kshatrapas to a subordinate position. We have already seen how by c. A.D. 290 Seistan and Sindh had been brought under Sassanian suzerainty. It is, therefore, possible, that there may have been a fresh extension of Sassanian conquests in the first decade of the fourth century, as a consequence of which Rudrasimha II and Yaśodāman II found it necessary to submit to the Sassanian overlordship and remain content with the feudal title of Kshatrapa.\textsuperscript{22}

Herzfeld and others, who support this view, mainly rely on the evidence of the Paikuli inscription. This fragmentary record narrates how in the internecine war between Narseh (A.D. 293-302) and his grand-nephew Vahram (Varhran) III, a number of Indian chiefs took the side of the former, among whom were the lord of Avanti and the king of the Ābhīras. And since these are described as the feudatories of the successful rival to the Sassanian throne, it is argued that the Sassanian suzerainty had extended over the dominions of the Ābhīras and the Sakas, i.e., Kāthiāwār, Gujarāt and Mālwā.

There is, however, no force in these arguments. The Paikuli inscription is a kind of grandiloquent description of the accession of Narseh after the successful war of succession, and we need not take its statements at their face value. The Allahabad praśasti of Samudra-gupta, for instance, describes how the Kushāna rulers of the north-western Panjab and kings of Ceylon and all other islands came to offer submission to Samudra-gupta and beg the favour of copper charters,

\textsuperscript{20} R. D. Banerji in EI, XVI, 230.
\textsuperscript{21} N. C. Majumdar in JASB, XIX, 341-66.
\textsuperscript{22} Raychaudhuri, PHAI (4th Ed.), 428.
re-granting them their territories. But, as noted above (p. 29), these statements are highly exaggerated, and in some cases at least the formal presents offered to Samudra-gupta by these rulers were taken by his court-poet as sufficient evidence of their having accepted his suzerain position. The same may have been the mentality of the author of the Paikuli inscription when he described the king of Avanti and the chief of the Ābhīras as the feudatories of Narseh. Further, it has to be pointed out that the king of Avanti of the Paikuli inscription need not necessarily be identified with the contemporary Mahākṣatrāpa ruler, Bhartridāman. He may have been some junior prince of the Saka family who, finding no prospect of ascending the throne, may have entered the service of Narseh as a mercenary with the hope of carving out a kingdom in Sindh or Baluchistan. Being a scion of the Saka family of Avanti, he may have been popularly known as the lord of Avanti, and could therefore have been so described in the Paikuli inscription. We need not suppose that he was actually ruling over Avanti. Attention may in this connection be drawn to the custom of the inscriptions of the Yādavas of Devagiri and the Hoysalas of Dvārasamudra describing these kings as Dvāraravatīpuravarādhīśvaras, ‘lords of the city of Dvāra-kā’, although they never held any sway over Dvārakā. The same may have been the case with the lord of Avanti of the Paikuli inscription. He may have been a prince originally hailing from Avanti, but not ruling over that city in A.D. 293.

There is ample evidence to show that Bhartridāman, who was the real lord of Avanti between A.D. 285 and 304, had never been reduced to a feudatory status. On his numerous coins issued during this period, he is invariably given the imperial title Mahākṣatrāpa, and never the feudatory title Kshatrāpa. It is not he, but his successors who content themselves with the feudatory title Kshatrāpa from A.D. 304 onwards. Had the change in title taken place from A.D. 290, the evidence of the Paikuli record suggesting Sassanian overlordship would have been almost irresistible. But the change in title takes place 14 years later. During this interval the Sassanian power was ebbing. Narseh suffered a signal defeat at the hands of the Roman Emperor Galerius and had to cede extensive territories to the conqueror in order to recover his family fallen into the enemy’s hands. He was not in a position to reduce Bhartridāman to a feudatory position and there is no evidence of his ever having done so. Narseh’s successor had a short reign of 7 years (A.D. 302-9) and is not known to have undertaken any expedition to the east. The next ruler, Shapur II, was an infant in arms in A.D. 310. The discomfiture of the Western Kshatrāpas in A.D. 304 cannot therefore be attributed to an eastward expansion of the Sassanian power. No Sassanian coins have been found in Kāthiāwār,
Gujarat and Malwa; nor do the contemporary Saka coins show any Sassanian influence, like the coins of the later Kushana rulers known as Scytho-Sassanians.

The Vakataskas were the immediate neighbours of the Western Kshatrapas, and their king Pravarasena I, who ruled from c. A.D. 275 to 335, was the only ruler of the dynasty who had taken the imperial title samrat. He is also known to have performed as many as four horse-sacrifices. It is, therefore, not unlikely that Pravarasena tried to extend his sphere of influence by supporting the rebellion of Rudrasimha II on condition that he would become his feudatory and remain content with the humbler title of Kshatrapa. To support the claim of an upstart against the legitimate ruler is one of the most common methods of imperialism in all ages in order to extend its sphere of influence.

It must, however, be stated that there is no definite and direct evidence to show that Rudrasimha II and his son Yasodaman had become feudatories of the Vakataskas and were on that account compelled to remain content with the inferior title of Kshatrapa. It is a mere suggestion, and the only proof that can be adduced in its support is the assumption of the imperial title by Pravarasena. The subordination of Rudrasimha II and Yasodaman II is, however, a mere hypothesis, which requires much stronger grounds for its support before it can be accepted. No other hypothesis can, however, be advanced at present.

The years A.D. 332-48 are a dark period in the Kshatrapa history. We get no coins whatsoever during this period, which constitutes the longest gap in the Kshatrapa coinage. It appears that the Kshatrapa power was totally eclipsed for a part of this period, but who the enemy was who overwhelmed it, we do not know. It cannot be the Vakataskas, for a struggle for the imperial throne was going on in that kingdom at this time. It cannot be the Guptas, for they were yet a local power in Bihar and eastern U.P. It cannot be the Sassanians, for they were engaged in Roman wars during 337-38.

When the curtain rises over the Saka history in A.D. 348, we find Rudrasena III as a Mahakshatrapa. According to his coin legend he was the son of Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman II. It is, therefore, clear that Rudradaman II ruled as a Mahakshatrapa during part of the dark period of 16 years, A.D. 332-48, though no coin of his has been found so far. Rudradaman's relationship with Yasodaman II is not known. He may have been a younger brother or a collateral of Yasodaman II, who

23 Num. Suppl., XLVII, 95. But if we assume that Samudra-gupta ascended the throne in A.D. 320 as suggested above (p. 16) we can attribute the decline of the Western Satraps to the growing power of the Guptas. See also ante Vol. II, 201.
rebelled against him soon after A.D. 332. There was probably a prolonged civil war, and neither of the rival claimants to the throne found it possible to issue coins during the troubled period. This appears to be the most reasonable explanation for the cessation of the Kshatrapa coinage during the period A.D. 332-48.24 This, again, it must be added, is a mere theory, which needs stronger evidence in order to become generally acceptable.

Rudrasena III, who succeeded his father Rudradāman II in or before A.D. 348, had a fairly long reign of thirty years (A.D. 348-90). It was, however, not a peaceful one. For about eight years,24a from A.D. 352 to 359, his power seems to have been completely eclipsed, for no coins issued by him during this period are known. On the other hand, we get two hoards buried, one in his capital Junāgaḍh and the other at Sarvania in one of the easternmost districts of his kingdom, where we find that only those coins of this ruler are represented which were issued during A.D. 348-51; and they are found to be in a mint condition. It seems that there was a widespread political disturbance which affected practically the whole of the Kshatrapa kingdom and induced people to bury their treasures when they fled away for safety.

The causes of this political upheaval also are not yet known. The Sassanian Emperor Shapur II was encamped at Kabul in A.D. 356, probably engaged in fight against Kidāra, the Kushāṇa chief. It is not unlikely that he sent another expedition further south to Kāthiāwār from his advanced bases in Sindh, which may have temporarily eclipsed the Kshatrapa power. It is argued that a Persian principality may have been established in Kāthiāwār as a result of this expedition, and that Raghu’s land expedition from northern Konkan to the Pārāśika kingdom, described by Kālidāsa,25 was not an invasion of distant Persia but an attack on this Persian principality in Kāthiāwār via northern Gujarāt.26 There is, however, no direct evidence to support this theory of Sassanian invasion. No Sassanian or Indian inscriptions refer to it. We do not find any Sassanian coins in the Kshatrapa dominions, nor is the Kshatrapa coinage influenced in the least by the Sassanian prototype.

The Vākāṭakas were too weak at this time to inflict any defeat on Rudrasena III; and Samudra-gupta was still too distant. The territories directly governed by this Gupta emperor did not extend much

24 It has been suggested, with a great degree of plausibility, that Mahākshatrapa Iśvaradatta ruled during 332-48, and this sufficiently explains the cessation of the Kshatrapa coins (JBBRAS, XXX, 52; IHQ, XXXIV, 258). [Ed.]
24a Cf. HCIP, III, 48, n. 1.
to the west of the district of Saugar in M.P. It is, however, not impossible that he carried a raid into the Kshatrapa dominions with the help and co-operation of his western feudatories, the Kākas, the Sanakānikas, etc. This raid may even have resulted in a temporary subordination of the Kshatrapas; but it need not have stopped their coinage. The Gaḍaharas were the feudatories of Samudra-gupta, but they continued their coinage, only occasionally engraving the name of the Gupta Emperor on it. In spite of his subordination to Samudra-gupta, for which there is yet no definite evidence, Rudrasena could have continued his coinage. On the whole it does not seem very likely that Gupta imperialism was the cause of the Kshatrapa debacle during A.D. 352-59.27

The present writer has suggested that the rise of Sarva Bhaṭṭāraka, who started the so-called Valabhī coinage, may have been the cause of the temporary eclipse of the power of Rudrasena III.28 There is no doubt that Sarva ruled some time between c. A.D. 350-400, and that he held sway over Gujarāt and Kāthiāwār where alone his coins are found in large numbers. It is precisely in these provinces that the coinage of Rudrasena III stops suddenly during part of this period, i.e. A.D. 352-59. It is, therefore, very likely that the rise of Sarva Bhaṭṭāraka may have been the cause of the Kshatrapa debacle resulting in the complete stoppage of their coinage for eight years. This theory also, it must be added, has not yet quite convincing evidence to stand upon.

Whatever may be the real cause of his temporary overthrow, there is no doubt that Rudrasena succeeded in retrieving the fortunes of his family by 360. We find him ruling his kingdom with the higher title of Mahākshatrapa from 360 to 390.

But troubles broke out again towards the close of his reign. This is evident from the fact that his sister's son Svāmī Simhasena issued coins with the title of Mahākshatrapa in A.D. 382 and probably also in 384. It is clear therefore that there was a rival claimant to the throne who succeeded in occupying the whole or a part of the kingdom at least for some years. Rudrasena IV, son of Svāmī Simhasena, also occupied the throne of his father for some time, and we have got a single coin issued by him without any date. The matter is further complicated by the fact that there was another Mahākshatrapa, Svāmī Rudrasimha III who issued coins with a date of which the first two

27 But this is the most satisfactory explanation in the present state of our knowledge. The discovery of an inscription of an Ābhūra king named Iśvaradeva (Ind. Arch., 1967-68, p. 52), dated Saka 254, suggests the rise of the Ābhūras as a possible cause of the debacle of the power of the Western Satraps between 360 and 390 A.D. (Editor). 28 JNSI, VI, 19-23.
figures, 3 and 1, alone can be read, but the unit figure is lost. He must have therefore ruled some time between 310 and 319 Śaka, i.e., A.D. 388 and 397. Again, this Rudrasimha III is described on his coins as the son of Mahākṣatrapa Svāmi Satyasimha. Though no coins of the latter are known he must have ruled or at least pretended to do so for a short time.

Thus after a brief respite between A.D. 360 and 380 the Saka kingdom was again convulsed by troubles. These might have been the effect of the Gupta Emperor’s policy towards the kingdom. In any case these troubles, whether deliberately engineered by the Gupta Emperor or not, eminently served his purpose of destroying the kingdom of the Western Kśatrapas. It is very likely that the final encounter took place between Chandra-gupta II and Rudrasimha III, and it is round this that the legends about Rāma-gupta and Chandra-gupta II and their Saka adversary grew up in course of time.29

IV. INDIAN STATES IN NORTHERN INDIA

How the decline of the Saka and the Kūṣṭhā powers during the third century A.D. was partly due to the re-assertion of their independence by a number of Indian republics and kingdoms like those of the Yaudheyas, the Ārjunāyanas, the Mālavas, the Nāgas, etc. has already been narrated in the preceding volume. Not much is, however, known about the history and achievements of most of these States during the fourth century, and so we can add only a few words to the account of these States already given in the last volume.

1. The Madras, the Kuṇindas, the Yaudheyas and the Mālavas

These republics continued to flourish during the fourth century A.D. and were probably occupying the same territory as they did in the preceding century. Of these the Madras, who have left us no coinage, seem to have occupied the region between Lahore and Sialkot. The Kuṇindas were occupying the Kangra valley. Their coinage of the fourth century is not known, and Samudra-gupta’s Allahabad inscrip-

29 The author of this chapter accepted the dates of the known coins of Rudrasena III on the authority of Rapson (BMCAWK), but later discoveries (after the chapter was written) have proved that some of Rapson’s views, accepted by the author, are wrong. Thus, according to Rapson,

(i) there were no silver coins of Rudrasena III later than 273 (Śaka era) and earlier than 286; and

(ii) the latest known coin of Rudrasena III is dated 300.

But silver coins of Rudrasena III dated 282, 284 and 312 have since been discovered (cf. HCIP, Vol. III, 48-49). The text of this chapter, which could not be revised by the late lamented author, has been amended accordingly, and the consequential changes have been made by the Editor, who alone is responsible for the last two paras substituted for the two original ones.
tion does not mention them. It is, therefore, not unlikely that they had amalgamated with the Yaudheyas in a federation. The Ārjunāyanas, who were occupying the Agra-Jaipur area, are mentioned in the Allahabad inscription, but their post-Kushāna coinage is not known. It is not unlikely that they also formed a kind of loose confederation with the Yaudheyas. The find-spots of the coin-hoard show that the Yaudheyas had under their sway a fairly extensive tract of territory stretching from Ludhiana to Sahāranpur in one direction and from Sahāranpur to Bahāwalpur in the other. It appears most probable that they continued to govern this territory in the fourth century as well. Probably the republic was divided into three sub-States. The Mālavas continued to hold central and south-eastern Rajputana during this period also.

A fourth century inscription from Bharatpur State refers to a President of the Yaudheya republic, elected by its members (Yaudheyagana-puraskrita), but enjoying the title of Mahāraja and Mahāsenapati. No Ārjunāyana or Madra officer or President is known to us who can be definitely assigned to the fourth century. It appears that these republics were gradually veering round to the monarchical form of government during the third and fourth centuries A.D. The Bharatpur inscription shows that the Yaudheyas still continued to elect their Presidents, but permitted them to assume the royal title Mahāraja. The Mālavas permitted the heads of their States to become hereditary chiefs, though they did not allow them to assume royal titles. Among the Lichchhavīs also, the presidency had developed into a hereditary monarchy, for Kumāradevī, the wife of Chandra-gupta I, was a Lichchhavi princess.

The absence of any reference to republics after c. A.D. 400 seems to be due to their having been transformed into hereditary monarchies. The view that Gupta imperialism was the cause of the destruction of the ancient Indian republics, advanced by the late Dr. Jayaswal, does not seem to be correct. Samudra-gupta only imposed his imperial supremacy over them; there is no evidence to show that he interfered with their constitution. The Allahabad inscription shows that they continued to be republics even after their submission to Samudra-gupta.

The disappearance of the republics must, therefore, be ascribed to the tendency to make the presidency hereditary and the custom of giving royal titles to the Presidents. Why this tendency arose, it is difficult to state. It was probably felt that the monarchy was a better form of government, especially from the point of view of self-defence.

30 CII, III, 252.
It is not unlikely that when the republican constitution degenerated, the republics virtually became scenes of oligarchic tyranny, and lost popular support. The growing popularity of the theory of the divinity of kingship may also have helped the republican Presidents in becoming hereditary chiefs. Whatever may be the real causes, the fact remains that the republics disappear from Indian history after c. A.D. 400.

2. The Nāgas

We have seen in the last volume how a number of Nāga families rose into prominence in U.P. and Gwalior in the third century A.D. They continued to dominate the Upper Gangetic plain during the first half of the fourth century as well. One Nāga family was ruling at Padmāvatī near Gwalior, a second one at Mathurā, and probably a third one at Ahichchhatra near Bareilly. Branches of some of these families seem to have carved small principalities in the northern U.P. Nāgadatta of Ārvavarta, mentioned in the Allahabad inscription, seems to have belonged to one of these families. King Achyuta of Ahichchhatra, who offered stubborn resistance to Samudra-gupta by c. A.D. 350 and perished, seems to have been also a Nāga ruler. His coin type, having a chakra on the reverse, imitates one of the well-known Nāga types. The coins of Achyuta are numerous; he may have ruled from c. A.D. 325 to 350. Who his predecessors were, we do not know. His house was probably a branch of the Nāga family ruling at Mathurā, about 100 miles west of Ahichchhatra.

The Purāṇas tell us that seven Nāga kings ruled at Mathurā before the rise of the Guptas. Their names are not given, and so we cannot tell which of them were on the throne during A.D. 300-50. The last ruler of the family was Gaṇapati-nāga; he is definitely known to have been overthrown by Samudra-gupta, and his coins are still found in large numbers in the bazaars of Mathurā. He was, therefore, the last Nāga ruler of the house of Mathurā.

Perhaps the most powerful Nāga family during the first half of the fourth century was that at Padmāvatī, modern Padam Pawaya near Gwalior. According to the Purāṇas nine kings in this family ruled before the rise of the Guptas to power. Its ruler at the beginning of the fourth century A.D. was Bhavanāga (c. A.D. 305-40). His coins are found in large quantity, showing that he had a long reign. On some of them he takes the title adhirāja, suggesting that he was aspiring to the imperial status. The triśūla, that invariably appears on his coins, shows that he was a staunch devotee of Śiva like many of his predecessors. It is, therefore, very likely that the Bhāraśīva king, Bhavanāga, who was a great devotee of Śiva and whose daughter
was married to the Vākāṭaka crown-prince Gautamīputra, was none other than the Nāga ruler Bhavanāga of Padmāvatī. The Vākāṭaka kingdom was at this time at the height of its power; Pravarasena I, the father of Gautamīputra, had assumed the imperial title of Samrāṭ and performed four horse-sacrifices. The condition of the Nāga kingdom under Bhavanāga was similar: it embraced a considerable part of Central U.P. and Central India, and included Gwalior, Kanpur Bandā and Jhansi. Its capital Padmāvatī was a flourishing city, and its fame as an educational centre continued down to the days of Bhavabhūti (c. A.D. 750).

Gautamīputra, the son-in-law of Bhavanāga, predeceased his father, leaving behind him a son named Rudrasena who found himself in a sea of troubles at the death of his grandfather in c. 335. What exactly was the nature of the troubles of the new king, we do not know; possibly his right to succeed to the throne was challenged by his three ambitious uncles, who had carved out separate principalities for themselves. Whatever the case may be, Bhavanāga successfully championed the cause of his grandson and secured his ancestral throne for him. The Vākāṭaka copper plates never fail to describe Rudrasena as the dauhitra (daughter’s son) of Bhavanāga, thus paying an indirect tribute to the great help received by Rudrasena from his maternal relations at a critical time in the history of the family.

Bhavanāga’s rule came to an end in c. A.D. 340. It is probable that his successor was Nāgasena, who figures as one of the nine kings of Āryāvarta overthrown by Samudra-gupta. If we are to believe the tradition current in the seventh century, the downfall of Nāgasena was due to his ministers’ disloyalty, who seem to have been won over by Samudra-gupta.

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription states that the Nāga rulers were annihilated by Samudra-gupta; they are significantly contrasted with the kings of the Deccan who were captured but subsequently released and permitted to rule as feudatories. It is therefore clear that the dominions of the Nāga rulers of Padmāvatī and Mathurā were annexed to the Gupta empire. Some Nāga chieftains seem to have survived as petty rulers. Princess Kuberanāgā, who was married to Chandra-gupta II, probably belonged to one such family. Some of the members of the dispossessed Nāga families were eventually absorbed in the ruling hierarchy of the new empire. Sarvanāga, who was the viceroy over a big province under Skanda-gupta, was probably a descendant of one of the Nāga houses overthrown by Samudra-gupta.

32 JNSI, V, 21-27.
3. The Maghas of Kauśāmbī

The Magha dynasty that rose to power in the Rewa-Kauśāmbī territory, continued its career to the end of the third century. By the beginning of the next century, Kauśāmbī seems to have been under the rule of a king named Nava who is known only from his coins, and who may or may not have been a Magha ruler. Nava was probably succeeded by king Pushyaśrī, who again is known from his coins only.33

Another king named Rudra, known from coins found at Kauśāmbī, has been identified by some as king Rudradeva of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. In that case he must have been ruling at Kauśāmbī when it was annexed by Samudra-gupta 34

33 These coins were first published by the present writer, JNSI, IV, 13-17.
34 Above, p. 42.