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Meditating on the King's Feet? Some Remarks on the Expression *pādānudhyāta**

Cédric Ferrier and Judit Törzsök

One of the most widely used and commonest expressions occurring in Sanskrit epigraphical sources is the compound *-pādānudhyāta*, which is unhesitatingly translated by 'who meditates on the feet of.'¹ This interpretation would seem strikingly odd to

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¹It would be impossible to give a full list of occurrences and translators; but let us remark that in all translated passages of the EI cited in this article, this translation is given (with the exception of D.C.

anyone who does not read epigraphical translations, for it would be much more natural to take the past participle in the passive sense and understand the whole as an instrumental Tatpuruṣa compound.² Moreover, such an interpretation is supported by the other meaning of the verb *anu-dhyai*, ‘to favour, to bless,’ a meaning shared with a number of verbs prefixed with *anu-*, such as *anugrah-* or *anujñā-*.

Already in 1939, D.C. Sircar remarked³ that the traditional translation of this expression – followed ever since Fleet’s renderings in CII 3 – seemed wrong. He proposed that *-pāda* be understood as an honorific suffixed to the preceding name, and that *anudhyāta* mean ‘favoured by.’ However, this suggestion has never really been followed, nor has the problem been discussed in detail, with the exception of Mirashi in 1944. In this short note, the author defends the translation of ‘meditating on the feet of’ on the basis of one, not particularly convincing, example.⁴ Later, perhaps influenced by Sircar’s alternative translations in brackets, as e.g. in EI XXXVIII p. 210). For some examples, see: Ali, 2004/2006, p. 126ff; Bakker, 1991, p. 28 (we are grateful to Prof. Bakker for pointing out this occurrence); Moreshwar G. Dikshit in EI XXXVIII (1969/70), p. 70; Fleet in IA 15 (1886), p. 272ff.; Ku. Usha Jain in EI XLI, p. 39; Kielhorn in IA 21 (1892), p. 253; V.V. Mirashi in CII 5. p. 37; Willis 2004, p. 48 and Willis 2005, p. 134.

²We do not intend to imply that it is impossible for a transitive verb to have a past participle in *-ta* with the active sense, for which see e.g. Wackernagel II. 2. § 432b. However, the verb *anu-dhyai-* is not normally used in this way. Mirashi, 1944, p. 288 also admits that the interpretation of ‘meditating on the feet of’ implies some ‘grammatical irregularity.’

³Sircar, 1939, p. 239 note 2.

⁴For further discussion of his arguments, see below.

Mirashi and others, Sircar appears to have taken a more timorous standpoint, for in his *Epigraphical Glossary* of 1966,⁵ he accepts both meanings of *pādānudhyāta*: ‘meditating on the feet or favoured by the feet of.’ However, he notes that in some rare cases, the word *pāda* is omitted (and then what can be meditated upon?). He also remarks that the substantive *anudhyāna* is a synonym of *anugraha*, i.e. ‘favour’,⁶ and that *parigrhīta* (‘accepted’) is sometimes used in place of *anudhyāta*,⁷ referring to the selection or acceptance of a succession or an appointment or receipt in one’s favour.⁸

The only example given by Sircar in which the meaning seems to be ‘meditating on the feet of’ without any ambiguity is the compound *mātā-pitr-pādānudhyāna-rata* ‘engaged in thinking of the feet of’, which has a different compound structure.⁹

Sircar¹⁰ also draws attention to the fact that Mallinātha glosses *anu-dhyā-* with *anugrah-* in his commentary on the *Raghuvamśa*, which indeed uses the word in the meaning ‘to favour, to bless’.

Without considering these important remarks made by Sircar and his examples, ‘meditating on the feet of’ continued to be used ubiquitously in translations.¹¹ More-

⁵Sircar, 1966, p. 224.

⁶Sircar, 1966, p. 24.

⁷Sircar, 1966, p. 238.

⁸For similar remarks, see also Sircar, 1965, pp. 349-51, observing that *tat-pādānudhyāta* later would take the place of *tat-parigrhīta*. This observation was echoed by De Casparis, 1979, p. 120.

⁹See Sircar, 1965, p. 349 citing EI XXVIII p. 277. This inscription from Orissa is dated by Sircar *ad loc.* around the end of the tenth century.

¹⁰Sircar, 1965, p. 350 note 1 citing Mallinātha *ad Raghuvamśa* 17.36.

¹¹Although Sircar seems to have adopted this interpretation in his translations, he always maintained

over, in a more recent study on courtly culture in early medieval India, a whole paragraph is devoted to the analysis of how the focus on feet developed into a language of power. This analysis also includes references to men ‘meditating upon’ (*anudhyāta*) the feet of parents and overlords.¹² To illustrate the act, the famous Varāha image of the Udayagiri caves is evoked, where, according to the author, ‘a seated figure, perhaps a Sanakānika prince sits meditating on the feet of a Gupta emperor, represented as Viṣṇu’s boar incarnation.’¹³ Not only is the interpretation of *anudhyāta* problematic, as we shall see, but we have also failed to identify any person on the panel who actually concentrates on or even glances at Varāha’s feet, no matter how close they may be to them. The same is true for the sixth century relief from Deogarh, analysed on the subsequent page of the study.

In the absence of any early graphic or iconic evidence showing subordinates or sons clearly meditating on their lords’ or fathers’ feet, it does not seem unwarranted to take up the question of what exactly *pādānudhyāta* means. That the interpretation of this expression is not unproblematic has recently been pointed out by O. von Hinüber.¹⁴ In what follows, we hope to show that no meditation is implied, and we

the alternative in brackets: ‘who meditated on (or was favoured by) the feet of’. See e.g. EI XXXVIII, p.

210.

¹²See Ali, 2004/2006, pp. 126-9.

¹³This interpretation is based on Willis, 2004, p. 48ff., who points out that Varāha may represent both Samudragupta and Candragupta II.

¹⁴See Hinüber 2007, p. 185ff., who calls it a difficult expression and refers to some milestones of the controversy in note 10. He also draws attention to the fact that one should examine its usage depending

shall also attempt to define the particular meaning of this term in some contexts. Since most early occurrences date from Gupta times¹⁵ and the expression may have spread from Gupta usage, we shall concentrate on the evidence of Gupta and some Vākāṭaka inscriptions, and for parallels we shall occasionally turn to slightly later inscriptions.

First of all, it must be noted that standard dictionaries do not support the interpretation of meditating on the feet of someone. Although Apte's dictionary does not list the compound as a separate entry, he assigns the meanings 'to think of, muse, consider attentively' and 'to wish well of, to bless, favour' to the verb *anudhyai*. He mentions meditation and religious contemplation only in the case of the substantives *anudhyāta-* and *anudhyāna-*, and does not consider epigraphic usage as it was pointed out by Hinüber.¹⁶

The Petersburg dictionary is less ambiguous on the question and agrees with our understanding. It defines *pādānudhyāta-* to denote 'of whom the feet of this or that person thought' or 'of whom this or that person thought,'¹⁷ adding that it indicates rightful succession in the sense of 'of whom the predecessor had already thought.'¹⁸

The entry also states that the mention of the feet is not important, i.e. probably be-
on the preceding word and its exact denotation.

¹⁵However, the earliest occurrence is in a Pallava inscription in Prakrit, discussed below.

¹⁶Remarking that the dictionary failed to take into account Sircar's work and Mirashi 1944.

¹⁷*An den die Füße dessen und dessen gedacht haben ... für an den der und der gedacht hat.*

¹⁸*An den schon der Vorgänger gedacht hatte.*

cause it is interpreted as an honorific term.

Before considering the inscriptional evidence, it is perhaps of some interest to examine some early literary occurrences of the verb *anu-dhyai-* and its derivatives, especially because inscriptions and *kāvya* are so closely related.¹⁹ Both meanings, ‘to favour, to bless’ and ‘to think of, to remember,’ seem to be employed from early on. Kālidāsa uses both meanings, and his usage also shows that both senses can occur in religious contexts or with reference to gods.

Raghuvamśa 17.36 (on king Atithi, *anu-dhyai* meaning ‘to favour, to bless’):
ayodhyādevatāś cainaṃ praśastāyatanārcitāḥ / anudadhyur anudhyeyaṃ sāmni-
hyair pratimāgataiḥ.

The deities of Ayodhyā, worshipped in their famous temples, gave their blessings to the man who deserved their favour, through their presence in their images.

Raghuvamśa 14.60 (*anu-dhyai-* meaning ‘to bless’): *śvaśrūjanaṃ sarvam a-*

¹⁹Unfortunately, the earliest, vedic, occurrences are not helpful. The earliest example, according to the Vedic Concordance (see also Suryakanta, 1981), occurs in the *Atharvaveda* (7.114.2b: *preto yantu vyādhyāḥ prānudhyāḥ*), in which *anudhyā* means ‘sorrow’ (or ‘regret’ according to Whitney, 1962, p. 468), a meaning probably related to *anucintā* (anxiety, in the sense of thinking something over again and again). The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (14.7.2.23e) and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* (4.4.23e), sharing the same sentence here, provide us with the meaning ‘to think, ponder over’ (*nānudhyāyād bahūñ chabdān*); while in the *Gopatha-brāhmaṇa* (2.2.5) it figures with the meaning ‘remorse’ (*prāyaścittair anudhyānaiḥ*).

*nukrameṇa vijñāpaya prāpitamatpraṇāmaḥ / prajāniṣekaṃ mayi vartamānaṃ
sūnor anudhyāyata cetaseti.*²⁰ With my obeisance to all the mothers-in-law
in due order, tell them that a child exists in my womb by their son and ask
them to bless it in their minds.

*Kumārasaṃbhava 6.21 (anudhyāna meaning ‘thinking of’ or ‘meditating on’):
yā naḥ prītir virūpākṣa tvadanudhyānasambhavā / sā kim āvedyate tubhyam; an-
tarātmāsi dehinām.*

O Virūpākṣa, our pleasure comes from meditating on you. Does it need to
be explained to you? You are the inner soul of living beings.

Both meanings recur several times also in the *Mahābhārata* and a few times in the
Rāmāyaṇa. Now the only passage cited by Sircar to show that the past participle *anud-
hyāta* can have an active sense is *Mahābhārata* XII. 127, 19.²¹ This verse is to be found in
this form (*tam anudhyātam ālakṣya*) and at this place in the Calcutta edition as well as in
Nīlakaṇṭha’s commentary.²² However, as the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* shows
(12.126.19), most of the manuscripts read the present active participle: *tam anudhyān-
tam ālakṣya*.²³ Therefore, it seems that, just as for most other transitive verbs, the past
participle of *anu-dhyai-* has a passive meaning in the epics too.

²⁰Note that Mallinātha glosses *anudhyāyata cetasā* by *śivam astv iti cintayata*.

²¹Sircar, 1965, p. 349.

²²*The Mahabharata*, vol. 5, Calcutta, 1837. See also the lemma cited in the critical edition.

²³N.b.: as is evident from this, the *Mahābhārata* does not treat *anu-dhyai-* as a class 4 verb. Perhaps the
present participle was replaced by the past participle in some manuscripts to remedy this irregularity.

Turning to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the meaning ‘to think, to remember’ does not necessarily imply meditation of a religious kind or reflection of a greater intensity. Vālmīki’s text uses this verb and its derivatives several times in the sense of ‘to think, to consider.’

2.91.11ab *vanavāsam anudhyāya gṛhāya pratineṣyati.*

Considering [the difficulties of] living in a forest, he will lead us back home.

6.88.37ab *sa muhūrtam anudhyāya bāṣpavyākulalocanaḥ.*

Reflecting for a moment, his eyes were full of tears.

6.106.5ab *naiva vācā na manasā nānudhyānān na cakṣuṣā.*

Neither in words, in the mind, *in thought* or through the eyes...

Therefore, Sircar’s supposition, according to which the meaning ‘to favour’ derives from ‘to meditate,’ with religious overtones, is rather questionable.²⁴ It is more likely that the two meanings always co-existed : one, ‘to meditate, to think’ deriving from the meaning of the verbal root, the other ‘to favour, to bless’ originating from one of the meanings the preverb can carry.

Some scriptures, particularly *vaiṣṇava* ones,²⁵ use this verb sometimes in the sense of ‘to think of, remember, visualise,’ as a synonym of *smṛ-*, although it must be noted

²⁴Sircar, 1965, pp. 349-50: ‘since the object of one’s affection, favour or veneration demands one’s constant thought or meditation, the verb soon came to be used in the sense of “to wish well of”, “to bless”, “to favour” [...]’

²⁵In what follows, we restrict our research to *vaiṣṇava* occurrences, for the simple reason that the verb hardly ever figures in early *śaiva* texts.

that *anudhyai-* is hardly ever used in the earliest Pāñcarātra scriptures, the *Jayākhya-*, the *Sātvata-* and the *Pauṣkara-saṃhitās*.²⁶ Nevertheless, the verb is slightly more often employed in some scriptural sources before the tenth century, such as in the *Paramasaṃhitā*,²⁷ although in most later Pāñcarātra texts there are no or very few occur-

²⁶To be more precise, the *Jayākhya* has one occurrence, but it is to be found in an interpolated passage, after 1.78 (verse 49b-c of the added passage): *devadevaṃ ramāpatim / hṛdaye samanudhyāyaṃs...* In another passage, the edited text reads *anuccārya*, but it is probably a corruption for *anudhyāya* as Marion Rastelli notes in her etext (16.286b-c): ... *rūpam ujjvalam / anuccārya (for anudhyāya?) samuccārya mantraṃ saptākṣaraṃ dvija*. The *Sātvata* has no occurrence at all. We have not consulted a full etext of the *Pauṣkara*, but Marion Rastelli has kindly informed us that in the partial etext she has, she has found only one occurrence of *anu-dhyai-*, in 1.14cd (*dr̥ṣṭena pūjitenāpi hy anudhyātena vai hṛdi*), in which the past participle ‘visualised’ qualifies the deity, as do the other past participles.

²⁷For remarks on the use of this verb in the text meaning not only ‘thinking,’ but ‘visualising’ and ‘imagining,’ see Czerniak-Drożdżowicz 2003, p. 155. We have counted the following nine occurrences in the etext of the *Paramasaṃhitā*. *anudhyāyanti mām eva* 2.108c, *caturbhujam anudhyāyec* 4.38b, *snehapūrvam anudhyānaṃ bhaktir ity abhidhīyate* 4.71cd, *anudhyāyan paraṃ prabhum* 7.66d, *yasyānudhyānamātreṇa sarvam eno ’vaśīryate* 7.68cd, *yāṃ devatām anudhyāya* 6.53c, *anudhyāyan vadec cāpi* 24.5a, *caturbhujam anudhyāyet* 24.36b, *madbhakto madanudhyāyī* 30.80b.

rences.²⁸ The object is almost always the deity, often in his visual form, but his feet are not mentioned in particular.²⁹ One passage of the *Paramasaṃhitā* (4.71) defines devotion as visualisation or meditation (*anudhyāna*) preceded by affection: *sneha-pūrvam anudhyānaṃ bhaktir ity abhidhīyate*.

A few lines of the *Lakṣmītantra* (prose section after 44.15) are worth quoting in this context, for here *anudhyāta* is used in the sense of ‘favoured.’ In our opinion, the passage shows the way in which this – relatively late – passage uses the vocabulary of the servant-lord relationship, which derives, at least partly, from the language of the court. The first three sentences have parallel verbal expressions, each meaning that the subject turns to the deity as his lord for refuge. The second set of three sentences have a past participle each, clearly in the passive sense every time, expressing that the subject is privileged by his lord, who accepts him.

bhagavantam prapadye / bhagavantam gato 'smi / bhagavantam abhyarthaye.

bhagavad-anudhyāto 'ham / bhagavat-parikarabhūto 'ham / bhagavad-anujñāto

'ham.

²⁸The following occurrences have been identified : none in the *Ahīrbudhnyā, Īśvara, Padma, Viśvāmītra-saṃhitā*s; one in the *Pārameśvara* (6.227c *caturbhujam anudhyāyec*) and the *Śrīpraśna* (1.54c *manasā samanudhyātvā*); two in the *Viṣṇu* (9.46c *tasyānudhyānamātreṇa* and 30.31c *bhaktiyā devam anudhyāyēt*); and three in the *Viśvakṣena* (15.27c *caturbhujam anudhyāyēt*, 16.42c *pañcamūrtim anudhyāyēt*, 27.144a *ṭṭīyaṃ samanudhyānam*) and *Lakṣmī* (43.82c *madrūpaṃ tad anudhyāyēd*, prose after 44.15 *bhagavadanudhyāto 'ham* and 50.44 *hariṇīm mām anudhyāya*).

²⁹See the frequently recurring *pāda*, *catur-bhujam anudhyāyec*, in the citations above.

I turn to the Lord, I go to the Lord, I implore the Lord.

I have been *favoured* by the Lord, I have become an attendant of the Lord,

I have been honoured by the Lord.

Although Pāñcarātra texts do not speak about the deity's feet in particular, three passages of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* do mention meditation on or visualisation of the feet of the god.³⁰ The first one describes Arjuna's devotion, whose ardour was increased by meditating on Vāsudeva's feet (1.15.29: *vāsudevāṅghry-anudhyāna-paribṛṃhita-raṃhasā bhaktyā*). The second one mentions devotion enriched by meditating on the feet of the deity, which are like charming red lotuses and make the worshipper rejoice. (5.7.12 *nija-ramaṇāruṇa-caraṇāravindānudhyāna-paricita-bhakti-yogena*).³¹ The last one has a present participle in the feminine, 'meditating appropriately on Kṛṣṇa's lotus-feet' (10.53.40 *sā cānudhyāyatī samyaṅ mukunda-caraṇāmbujam*).³²

In all these passages, as well as in the earlier literary occurrences, we have not

³⁰Note that this text has a particularly large number of occurrences of derivatives of *anu-dhyai-*.

³¹The commentary of Śrīdhara Svāmin glosses the expression as follows: *anudhyānena paricitaḥ samṛddho*.

³²In addition to these lines, there is a passage that mentions the adoration of the feet in particular: 11.2.33 states that their worship (*pādāmbujopāsanam*) ensures absence of fear (*akutaścidbhayam*), but without prescribing any particular form of worship of or meditation on the feet. Indeed, in many passages on meditation, the lotus-feet of the god are simply among the various parts of his body, all of which become objects of the meditation. See e.g. 2.1.26ff. and 3.28 21ff. Others describe merely prostration, implying that the devotee seeks protection, such as 11.27.46. See also Nayak, 1978, pp. 34-35, 42, and 63ff.

found a single occurrence of the past participle in the active sense. Indeed, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* also uses the past participle in the passive sense, once with the meaning ‘to bless, to favour’ and once meaning ‘to meditate on, visualise’:

4.11.12 *sa tvam harer anudhyātas tat-puṃsām api saṃmataḥ*. You, being favoured by Hari and respected by all his people...³³

8.24.44 *so ’nudhyātas tato rājñā prādur āsīn mahārṇave*. Then, meditated upon / visualised by the king, he appeared in the ocean.

Although it is obviously not possible to examine all the occurrences of the verb *anu-dhyai-*, *pādānudhyāta-* as ‘meditating on the feet of’ in the active seems to be an unprecedented usage.

Furthermore, our brief examination of religious contexts appears to indicate that meditating on the feet of the god as a special kind of worship became common practice only from about the tenth century onwards.³⁴

³³Śrīdhara Svāmin’s commentary glosses *anudhyāta* with ‘situated in Kṛṣṇa’s heart,’ which shows how the two meanings, ‘to favour’ and ‘to think of’ can sometimes be inseparable: *anudhyāto harer hṛdi sthito vijñāto vā tatpuṃsām haridāsānām*. At this passage, it is particularly evident that Burnouf simply follows Śrīdhara Svāmin’s commentary in his French translation.

³⁴This also depends on how one dates the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, which is a subject beyond the scope of this study. However, realistic datings start from 800 the earliest, while the most commonly accepted range is 900-1000. For a summary see Rocher, 1986, pp. 147-8. One must also consider the negative evidence of the Pāñcarātra texts.

Now if we turn to inscriptional sources, in some of the first occurrences of the expression *pādānudhyāta*, in early Pallava inscriptions,³⁵ it is commonly preceded by the name of a god or simply ‘the Lord’ (*bhagavat-*).³⁶ The earliest occurrence is in Prakrit,³⁷ naming Citrarathasvāmin as the god (*cittarathasāmipādānujjhātassa*), followed, as is done in many other Pallava inscriptions, by the phrase ‘devoted to his respected father’s feet’ (*bappabhaṭṭāraka-pādabhattassa*).³⁸

Since the compounds containing the expression *pādānudhyāta* are never resolved, it is not possible to determine their exact meaning from the context, and Fleet jumps too fast to the conclusion that *pādānudhyāta* has the same purport as *pādabhakata*.³⁹ To resolve the compound, we need to turn to a somewhat later source, the famous Talagunda inscription of Śāntivarman, describing the origins of the Kadambas.⁴⁰ In this in-

³⁵EI IX, p. 58, IA 5, p. 51, IA 5 p. 155.

³⁶The usage is retained in later inscriptions: it is found for instance in Kanchi, in a grant of Vijaya-Viṣṇugopavarman in EI XXIV n. 18 p. 14. The Chura grant of Pallava Vijaya-Viṣṇugopavarman (III) in 14. Krishnamacharlu assigns it to the early seventh century.

³⁷EI IX (1907/8), p. 56ff. in the Plates of Vijayadevarman. This occurrence was pointed out by Hinüber, 2004, p. 54. note 54, who gives an overview of the problem.

³⁸An exception to this phraseology is to be found in the Andhavaram Plates of Anantaśaktivarman, in which the king is said to be devoted not to his father’s feet, but to those of Nārāyaṇa (*nārāyaṇasvāminah pādabhaktaḥ*). Then he is said to have obtained his body, kingdom, power and valour through his father’s grace (*-bappa-bhaṭṭāraka-pāda-prasādāvāpta-sarīra-rājya-vibhava-pratāpo*).

³⁹See Fleet, 1880, p. 124. Note that most of his examples come from Chalukya inscriptions, in which, as we show below, it explicitly means ‘blessed by the respected.’

⁴⁰See EI VIII. p. 24ff. and Sircar, 1939 p. 233ff. F. Kielhorn, who presents the inscription in the EI, dates

scription, we find the following line describing the founder of the dynasty, Mayūraśarman (perhaps of the middle of the fourth century AD).

ṣaḍānanaḥ yam abhiṣiktavān anudhyāya senāpatiṃ mātṛbhis saha

This is wrongly translated in EI VIII as ‘after meditating on Senāpati with the Mothers.’ According to Sircar’s analysis,⁴¹ the correct interpretation is ‘whom the six-headed [Skanda] and the Mothers favoured and then consecrated as general of the army.’ The compound, which figures in almost all inscriptions of the Chalukyas with only minor variations, *svāmi-Mahāsena-pādānudhyātānām [cālukyānām]*, is thus resolved.⁴² It does not mean that these kings meditated on Skanda’s feet, but that they were favoured by Skanda (and the Mothers). This interpretation is then also applicable to Pallava inscriptions, which name a god before *pādānudhyāta*.

The earliest occurrences in North Indian inscriptional sources describe the relationship between a lord and his servant or feudatory. In the famous Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta, it qualifies the chief military retainer⁴³ responsible for it in the sixth century AD and considers it to be of Kākusthavarman’s. Sircar, 1939, p. 233ff, whom I have followed, attributes the inscription to Śāntivarman, for it is Śāntivarman who commanded it according to the closing lines. Sircar places Kākusthavarman in the middle of the fifth century, i.e. about a century earlier than Kielhorn.

⁴¹Sircar, 1939, p. 233ff.

⁴²See e.g. EI VI p. 180 ff., EI VII p. 161., EI XIV p. 149., EI XIX p. 141., EI XXXVIII p. 217.

⁴³For this meaning in Gupta inscriptions, see Fleet, CII 3 (1888), p. 16 and Bhandarkar, CII 3 (1981), pp. 95-7. See also Ali, 2004/ 2006, p. 44.

the execution of the inscription, who is said to be *parama-bhaṭṭāraka-pādānudhyāta*. In the Udayagiri cave inscription of Candragupta II, it qualifies a feudatory prince of the Sanakānika tribe in a similar way: *parama-bhaṭṭāraka-mahārājādhi-śrī-Candra[g]u-pta-pādānudhyāta*.⁴⁴ The same expression figures in inscriptions of various Gupta and Vākāṭaka feudatories to describe their dependence on their overlords either by naming them,⁴⁵ or by adding simply *parama-bhaṭṭāraka* to the beginning of the compound.⁴⁶ In these examples, the expression – no matter how we interpret its literal meaning – seems to imply not simply a lord-servant relationship, but that the ‘servant’, i.e. the subordinate ruler,⁴⁷ derives his authority and power from his overlord. This implication would be particularly suitable if one was to understand *pādānudhyāta* as ‘considered (*-dhyāta*) favourably (*anu-*) / approved by his lord (*pāda*).’⁴⁸ Moreover, an early

⁴⁴CII 3 n. 3 ln. 1, p. 25. *Mahārājādhi-* stands for *mahārājādhirāja-*, see Fleet thereon.

⁴⁵See e.g. inscriptions of the Uchchakalpa king Vyāghradeva, (ruling in Kāñcanakā [Nachna] between around 470 and 490 AD, see Bakker, 1997, p. 170), feudatory of Pṛthivīṣeṇa II in CII 3 n. 54, CII 5 n. 21 and 22 (*śrī-Pṛthivīṣeṇa-pādānudhyāta-*)

⁴⁶As is done by the Vākāṭaka feudatories Svāmīdāsa, Bhulūṇḍa and Rudradāsa, whose inscriptions were mistakenly identified by Mirashi as referring to the Kalachuri era instead of the Gupta era. See CII 4 pt. 1 n. 2-4, criticised in Ramesh and Tewari, 1990, vii-viii. For more inscriptions of the kings (Mahārājas) Bhulūṇḍa (under Samudragupta according to Ramesh and Tewari, 1990, p. viii), Svāmīdāsa, Rudradāsa and others of the same region, see Ramesh and Tewari, 1990.

⁴⁷For an analysis of the extended meaning of ‘servant’ in the language of the court, where it does not refer to a menial job, see Ali, 2004/ 2006, p. 104 ff.

⁴⁸I.e. the overlordship would be expressed by the mention of the Lord’s feet, to which a servant or subordinate bows down in respect.

parallel could be cited to show that in similar phrases that denote a lord-servant relationship, *pāda* is commonly understood as an honorific suffix signaling lordship. In the Sanchi stone inscription of Candragupta II, an officer called Amrakārdava is qualified as someone whose means of subsistence has been made comfortable by the favour of ‘the feet of’ the glorious Candragupta, Mahārājādhirāja (*Mahārājādhirāja-śrī-Candragupta-pāda-prasādāpāyita-jīvita-sādhanah*).⁴⁹

However, it must be noted that the phrase *pādānudhyāta-* seems to be most commonly used to describe the relationship between father and son, and this usage is attested from Gupta times and by the Gupta monarchs themselves as well as by their feudatories. It is employed between Candragupta II and his son Kumāragupta,⁵⁰ and between Kumāragupta and his son Skandagupta.⁵¹ Furthermore, in the Riddhapur plates of Prabhāvatīgupta, it also figures to describe the relationship between Samudragupta and Candragupta II.⁵² As for the feudatories, a large number of examples could be mentioned from the late fifth century and later, all of which describe the father-son relationship in these terms.⁵³ In fact, the formulaic expression that recurs is

⁴⁹CII 3 n. 5 ln. 2-3, p. 31. Our translation agrees with Fleet’s here.

⁵⁰CII 3 n. 12 ln. 19-23 (the Bihar stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta); CII 3 n. 13 ln. 5 (the Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta).

⁵¹CII 3 n. 12 ln. 19-23.

⁵²CII 5 n. 8 ln. 4-5.

⁵³For examples from CII 3, see n. 19 (twice), n. 26 (four times), n. 27 (four times), n. 28 (five times), n. 29 (five times), n. 31 (five times), n. 46 (three times), n. 47 (four times), n. 52 (of Harṣavardhana, five times), n. 80 (three times).

somewhat longer and usually takes the form of *tasya putras tatpādānudhyātaḥ*, although alternatives to this did exist, such as the recurring *bappa-pādānudhyāta*⁵⁴ in Nepalese inscriptions for instance.⁵⁵ The earliest examples show that the phrase started to be used and became popular in this sense probably after Candragupta II.

Already in some Gupta inscriptions and then more frequently from the seventh century onwards several parallels and synonyms used in the same context show that *pādānudhyāta* must mean ‘favoured by the feet of (i.e. by the respectable),’ with the same implications as in the case of the servant-lord relationship, i.e. referring to the fact that the son derives his authority and power from his father. In genealogies of Gupta kings, the phrase *tatpādānudhyāta* alternates with *tat(pāda)parigrhīta*, ‘accepted, consented to, favoured by.’⁵⁶ The latter is commonly translated as ‘accepted by’ or ‘graciously favoured by,’ with the implication that the father accepted one of his sons as his favourite and chose him as his successor.⁵⁷ Although the two words, *parigrhīta* and *anudhyāta* may not have meant exactly the same originally, they appear to have completely converged in meaning.⁵⁸ In any case, attention should be drawn to the use of

⁵⁴Or *bappa-bhaṭṭāraka-pādānudhyāta* as in Regmi, 1983, n. 24. Here the Prakrit Bappa is used to denote the father, without naming him.

⁵⁵See e.g. Nepalese inscriptions / Regmi, 1983 n.s 24, 40, 42, 46, 49, 68-9, 75-7, 79-80, 97-102, 106, 108, 109, 116-7, 122, 127, 132, 133 (= etext 134), 136 ; / Gnoli 44 (= etext 163)

⁵⁶See CII 3 n. 12 and 13 for *pādānudhyāta / parigrhīta*, and CII 5 n. 8 for *pādānudhyāta / pādaparigrhīta*.

⁵⁷After Fleet (1888) CII 3 p. 12. In the Mathura stone inscription of Candragupta II in CII 3 n. 4 pp. 26-7, the king himself seems to qualify his own name with this participle.

⁵⁸Indeed, they are more likely to be pure synonyms without any important differences in meaning.

pāda before *parigrhīta*, in a way similar to *pādānudhyāta*.⁵⁹ This consistent and parallel usage shows that *pāda* must be honorific and that the past participle is meant to be understood (naturally) in the passive in each case.

Now it can be observed that *pāda* is less frequently used before *parigrhīta* than before *anudhyāta*. This could be due to the fact that *anudhyāta* means ‘meditating on,’ and therefore the object of meditation needs to be specified. But *anudhyāta* also occurs without *pāda*,⁶⁰ and the difference of usage may be explained by the less frequent oc-

However, if one tries to explore possible differences, it can be remarked that the phrase *pādānudhyāta* is much more common and thus may have originally implied a relatively smoother transmission of power – which, in any case, never seems to be very straightforward –, while *(pāda)parigrhīta* was much less frequent and may have possibly indicated a stronger or more personal choice of the father. It is notable that in the Gupta examples and in the Poona plates of Prabhāvatīgupta (CII 5 n. 2 ln. 4 *mahārājādhirājaśrīsamudraguptas tatyā(tsa)tputras tatpādāparigrhītaḥ...*) it is Candragupta II who stands out as the only *(pāda)parigrhīta* or particularly chosen, while all the others in the lineage are *pādānudhyāta*. This particularity could allude to Candragupta II’s less than smooth succession after a war with Rāmagupta. This is of course a mere hypothesis based on what seems to be a consistent usage of terms at an early date. Fleet already remarked this consistency concerning Candragupta II in CII 3 p. 12. Also Sircar, 1965, pp. 350-1 and Willis, 2005, p. 144. For an early review of evidence concerning Rāmagupta, see Mirashi, 1977. For a recent treatment, see Bakker, 2006, pp. 165-170. Only in the Riddhapur plates of Prabhāvatīgupta do we find an odd inversion, namely that Samudragupta is said to have been *tatpādāparigrhīta* and Candragupta II is qualified by *tatpādānudhyāta*. (CII 5. n. 8 ln. 2-5.)

⁵⁹As in the above cited examples of CII 5 n. 2 ln. 4 and CII 5. n. 8 ln. 2-5.

⁶⁰See Fleet’s CII 3 n. 1 note 2 p. 12, saying that the omission is due to carelessness. This is possible but would not be likely if the phrase meant ‘meditating on the feet of.’

currence of *parigrhīta* as opposed to the more formulaic *pādānudhyāta*. Thus *parigrhīta* often stands without any honorific before it, or with honorifics other than *pāda*, such as *prasāda* ‘favour.’⁶¹

For a more convincing but later example of synonymity between *pādaparigrhīta* and *pādānudhyāta*, two inscriptions from the first half of the seventh century of the Nepalese Amśuvarman could be cited. In n. 68 this king is said to be *Bappa-pādānudhyātaḥ*, while in n. 69 he is qualified by the phrase ‘accepted as his favourite by the feet of his father’ (*Bappa-pāda-parigrhītaḥ*) at the same place in the text. Therefore no meditation on the father’s feet can possibly be understood in the first case and the synonymity is complete: both expressions could be simply translated by ‘favoured by his revered father.’ The same inscriptions also show that a third synonym of these two is *anugrīta* or ‘graciously favoured by,’ for n. 68 mentions that the king was favoured by the grace of his revered Master, God Paśupati (*Bhagavat-Paśupati-bhaṭṭāraka-pādānugrīto*) using the verb *anugrah-*. The parallel expression in n. 69 is *Bhagavat-Paśupati-bhaṭṭāraka-pādānudhyāto*, which, again, clearly does not indicate any meditation on the Lord’s feet, but could be translated by ‘favourably considered / graciously favoured by his revered Master, Lord Paśupati.’ Thus, these inscriptions show that *pādānugrīta*, *pādaparigrhīta* and *pādānudhyāta* can be perfectly synonymous and mean ‘favoured by the revered’ and that the last one is not understood in the sense of ‘meditating on the

⁶¹For examples of *tatprasādaparigrhīta* see CII 3 n. 19 ln. 8 and 36 ln. 5-6. It could be noted that in this case the relationship is between a king and his younger brother, not his son.

feet of:

The Nepalese examples, in which Śiva Paśupati also figures in a compound before *pādānudhyāta*, lead to another question. Does this expression come from a religious context? Does it first of all designate service and submission to the deity who bestows his power upon the king? Indeed, there are many occurrences of the phrase with a god's name. The earliest inscription to use it in this way is the Riddhapur plates of Prabhāvatīgupta, in which the queen is said to be favoured by the revered Bhagavat, i.e. Viṣṇu (*bhagavat-pādānudhyātā*).⁶² Two other early examples can be found in which kings are 'favoured by the revered Mahādeva,' i.e. Śiva (*Mahādeva-pādānudhyātāḥ*): one in an inscription of mahārājas subordinate to the Guptas, and the other in the Gunaighar inscription.⁶³ This shows that no particular affiliation was implied, the phrase was used for various deities. However, the relative scarcity of the religious usage in Gupta inscriptions, especially compared with the numerous occurrences of the phrase describing the relation of royal father and son, seems to indicate that the religious use derives from the courtly one, rather than the other way round.

What appears to be a more common early usage than the religious one is that not only the father is mentioned as the source of favour but both parents. In such cases,

⁶²CII 5 n. 8 ln. 10.

⁶³CII 3 n. 24 The Bhumara stone pillar inscription of the maharajas Hastin and Sarvanātha, probably of 508-9 AD (Fleet, p. 111): *Mahādeva-pād[ā]nudhyāto*. Moreover, as CII 3 Bhandarkar, 1981, 320 points out, the Gunaighar inscription of the same period (Gupta era 188 / 507 AD) also contains the expression *bhagavan-mahādeva-pādānudhyāta*, with the representation of a bull on the seal.

the compound takes the form of *mātā-pitr-pādānudhyāta*, and neither parent is named, as opposed to the *tatputras tatpādānudhyātaḥ* phrase, in which the father is named beforehand and the mother (...-*mahādevyām utpannaḥ*) usually afterwards. In almost all cases, the king's religious affiliation is expressed either immediately before or after the compound *mātāpitr-pādānudhyātaḥ*, by terms such as *paramabhāgavata*, *paramavaiṣṇava*, *paramamāheśvara*, *bhagavatpādakarmakara* and other variations.⁶⁴ However, even this variant of the expression is much less frequently met with in Gupta inscriptions than the lord-servant or the royal father-son usage.

In spite of the occurrences of the phrase in parents-to-son relationships, we have not been able to find any examples of mother to son.⁶⁵ This usage of male-to-male relations tends to be respected even when deities are said to favour kings. Although of a later date, the Chalukya inscriptions mentioned above commonly name Skanda as the first element of the *pādānudhyāta* compound (*svāmi-Mahāsenā-pādānudhyāta / śrī-Mahāsenasya pādānudhyāta*) and find a different expression to show that the Mothers are also tutelary deities, usually saying that the Mothers protect the kings (*mātr-*

⁶⁴See CII 3 n. 40 ln. 3-4, n. 41 ln. 3-4, n. 81 ln. 17-18; EI XXIV n. 17 p. 135, EI XXXV pp. 221-3, EI XXXVIII p. 194 ln. 9, CII 4 pt. 1 n. 8 ln 1-2, CII 4 pt. 1 n. 9 ln. 1, CII 4 pt. 1 n. 11 ln. 1, CII 4 pt. 1 n. 12 ln. 15-6. It seems that early Kalachuri kings for instance used this version of the phrase relatively more frequently.

⁶⁵De Casparis, 1979, p. 120 already remarks in connection with dynastic transmissions that it was the father's designating his successor that was considered important.

gaṇa-paripālita-) or that they were consecrated by them (*saptamātarābhisikta-* – sic).⁶⁶ Furthermore, just as both parents can be the source of favour, so too both Skanda and the Mothers bestow privileges upon their devotees: in the Talagunda inscription of Śāntivarman describing the early genealogy of the Kadambas, Mayūraśarman is said to have been favoured (*anu-dhyā*) and consecrated both by Skanda and the Mothers.⁶⁷

As the last example shows, together with some other occurrences, it is by no means necessary for the element *pāda* to figure in the expression. Yet, in the vast majority of cases the set phrase is *pādānudhyāta*. What is the exact role of this word then? The simplest answer to this question is that it is an honorific suffix, which reflects reverence to the person it is attached to, and this is how we have treated it so far. However, by adducing a few additional parallels, it is possible to explain the function of this honorific as more meaningful than a mere expression of respect. The first examples come from the plates of Dhruvasena of the Valabhī line. Four inscriptions, one of 525-6 AD (Valabhī year 206), two of 529 AD (Valabhī year 210) and one undated, give the same two images to describe the transmission of power, in expressions that look very much like elaborations of *tat-sutas tat-pādānudhyātaḥ*, which is used as a third phrase in the series.⁶⁸

⁶⁶See e.g. EI XIX n. 24 ln. 2. p. 141, of the end of the tenth century AD; EI XIV n. 8 ln. 3. p. 149, perhaps of around 700 AD.

⁶⁷*Ṣaḍānanaḥ yam abhiṣiktavān anudhyāya senāpatim mātr̥bhiḥ saha.* EI VIII p. 31. (verse 22).

⁶⁸See EI XI. n.9 / I-IV pp. 106ff, 110ff, 113ff and 115ff. The only difference in the preamble describing

[*senā-pati-Śrī-Bhaṭakkaḥ...*] *tasya sutas tat-pāda-rajo-ruṇāvanata-pavitriḅṛta-śi-rāś...*

‘his son, whose bent head was reddened by the dust of his [father’s] feet and thus became purified’

[*parama-māheśvaras senā-pati-Dharasenaḥ...*] *tasyānujas tat-pādābhipraṇāma-prāśasta-vimala-maulī-maṇir...*

‘his brother, whose spotless head-jewel became praiseworthy/auspicious through bowing down to his [brother’s] feet’

[*parama-māheśvaro mahārāja-Droṇasi[m]haḥ...*] *tasyānujas ... paramabhāgavataḥ ... paramabhaṭṭāraka-pādānudhyāto mahāsāmanta-mahārāja-Dhruvasenaḥ...*

‘his brother, the great devotee of the Bhagavat, favoured by the respected Paramabhaṭṭāraka (Paramount Lord), the great king of frontiers, Dhruvasena...’

Another set of parallels comes from a later period. First, a copper plate inscription of Śīlāditya I or Dharmāditya,⁶⁹ also of the Valabhī line, of perhaps 605 AD, describes the lineage is that n. III has *caraṇarajo* for *pādarajo*. We do not reproduce the small errors in the following transcription. The portions of text enclosed between square brackets are included only to show the subject of each sentence and are left untranslated. As the examples show, power is often transmitted to a brother.

⁶⁹EI XI n. 9 / V pp. 116-7. Dated Valabhī year 286.

in its preamble how the next generation pays homage to the father by prostrating before his lotus-feet, and explains that by doing so the son obtains a special purification. Homage can be paid, of course, to both parents, as is the case in the first of the following examples:

lines 3-4 ...*mātā-pitr-caraṇāravinda-praṇati-pravidhautāśeṣa-kalmaṣaḥ*...

All his sins were washed away by prostrations at the lotus feet of his mother and father.

line 9-10 ...*tasya sutaḥ tat-pāda-nakha-mayūkha-sa[ntā]na-visṛta-Jāhnavī-jalau-gha-prakṣālitāśeṣa-kalmaṣaḥ*...

His son, all of whose sins were washed away – as if by the flow of the Ganges – by the rays of light [coming] from the nails of his father’s feet [when the son prostrated himself in front of him].

line 14 ...*tasya sutas tatpādānudhyātas*... His son, favoured by the feet of his father...

These very lines are taken up by later Śīlādityas, with the addition of further images of the same type. Thus, Śīlāditya III,⁷⁰ after adding three successors qualified by the expression *pādānudhyāta*, continues with the following descriptions of homage, which is taken up by his successors:⁷¹

⁷⁰Indian Antiquary 5, pp. 209-12.

⁷¹For instance by Śīlāditya VII, of 766/7 AD, see CII 3 n. 39.

tasya sutas tat-pāda-kamala-praṇāma-dharaṇi(i)-kaṣaṇa-janita-kiṇa-lāṃchana-lalāṭa-candra-sakalaḥ [...Śrī-Dharasenaḥ] His son's forehead was [radiant] as if it were a piece of the moon, bearing a mark [just as the moon has a spot] produced by its [constant] rubbing against the ground when making obeisance to his [father's] lotus-feet.

...śrī-śīlādityasya ... tat-pādāravinda-pravi(r)ttayā nakha-maṇi-rucā Mandāki-nyeva nityam amalitottamāṅga-deśasya... Of the prosperous Śīlāditya, the region of whose head was always made pure – as if he had bathed in the Ganges – by the radiance coming from the jewel-like toe nails of the lotus feet [of his predecessor].

These images make explicit what is only alluded to in the expression *pādānudhyāta*, namely that *pāda* is meant to suggest that the transmission of power from father to son (or between other relations in other contexts) was not due to the father's whim or arbitrary choice, but was considered a reward given to the son for his loyal service and respect. Now to what extent this was true is another question, but in any case, the use of *pāda* may have signaled service and loyalty, even if the word was destined to become a mere suffix.⁷²

⁷²Moreover, not only do the parallels suggest that the longer compounds are synonyms of *pādānudhyāta*, but they must have also expressed something more than *pādānudhyāta* (unless we assume that they are just occasional poetic ornaments). Just as in the case of the variations between *pādānudhyāta* and *pādaparigrhīta*, one can observe a certain synonymity, but at the same time it is also important to

This connotation of the word ‘foot’ and foot worship of course go a long way back in Indian history. In his study on the worship of footprints Bakker recalls that the prescription of clasping the teacher’s or someone else’s feet with one’s hands (*upasaṃgrahaṇa*) figures already in the oldest lawbooks.⁷³ He also points out that the custom of touching the feet of a revered person ‘may have been inspired by the belief that an auspicious potency was transmitted from the feet to the one who embraced them.’⁷⁴ The king’s foot could even stand for his person, as is seen in a passage from the *Raghuvamśa*, in which king Agnivarṇa shows himself to his subjects by sticking one foot out of an open window.⁷⁵ In the conclusion of his study, Bakker raises the question as to why it was in particular Rāma who became first associated with the cult of Viṣṇu’s footprints. He suggests that Rāma was the most human of the god’s incarnations, and since Rāma was the archetype of the ideal king, his feet were naturally the object of veneration. Thus, although the veneration of Viṣṇu’s feet may be traced back to as far as Viṣṇu’s strides in the Vedas, it is probably closer related to the veneration of the king’s feet. What seems to be a fundamentally religious practice may well go back to court ritual here, just as in the case of the expression *pādānudhyāta*.

see whether they are used as perfect synonyms (as *śāsāṅka* is a synonym of *candra*) or whether they have slightly different connotations.

⁷³Bakker, 1991, p. 26, citing *Āpastambadharmasūtra* 1.2.18-21 and *Manusmṛti* 2.71

⁷⁴As Bakker 1991, p. 26, mentions, such auspicious potency could be e.g. the *brahman*. He also cites non-Indian examples for the power of healing attributed to the feet.

⁷⁵Bakker, 1991, p. 26 note 27, citing *Raghuvamśa* 19.7-8.

A further important aspect of the expression was discussed by Mirashi 1944. He argues on the basis of several examples that it is used when the person named before *-pāda-* is no longer alive. As Hinüber shows, there may be exceptions to this rule, which nevertheless seems to hold true in many cases.⁷⁶

However, we think that Mirashi's examples do not support his own understanding of 'meditating on the feet of,' although he convincingly argues that, when a different expression is used for a living person, such as *tac-caraṇa-kamal-ārādhana-paraḥ* 'intent on the worship of his lotus-feet,' the implication is that the successor can still worship his (living) predecessor's feet. Now, we think that a perfect synonym of *tac-caraṇa-kamal-ārādhana-paraḥ* is the unique *tat-pāda-pāṅkaj-ārādhan-ānudhyātaḥ* of the Navasāri Plates cited by Mirashi, where *-anudhyātaḥ* can also be translated by 'intent on.'⁷⁷ But here, *-anudhyātaḥ*, used exceptionally as a synonym of *-paraḥ*, is preceded by *-ārādhana-*, and it is thus not meditation but the worship of the feet that is meant. Another synonym of *tac-caraṇa-kamal-ārādhana-paraḥ* is *tatpādabhaktaḥ*, 'devoted to his feet.' Thus, while the expression *pādānudhyāta* implies the transmission of power with the consent of the (often dead) predecessor (but without any meditation on the feet), *tac-caraṇa-kamal-ārādhana-paraḥ* and the like appear to imply the submission of one

⁷⁶Although Hinüber 2004, p. 54, lists some counter-examples, he seems to agree with the general validity of Mirashi's idea.

⁷⁷The use of *anudhyāta* in this sense is unique to this inscription and, we think, does not prove that *anudhyāta* generally means 'meditating on.'

(living) person to another.

Finally, given the courtly origins and the dominantly royal usage of *pādānudhyāta* with the meaning outlined above, the traditional translation of ‘meditating on the feet of’ with its religious connotations is somewhat surprising. What prompted such a grammatically, but especially historically, unnatural translation?

The answer may be that most scholars simply followed the first translations by Fleet without questioning his interpretation. However, some debate did arise around the problem, as Mirashi’s article suggests,⁷⁸ who defends Fleet’s choice with more ardour than examples. Thus, several scholars seem to have chosen Fleet’s interpretation deliberately, against the arguments of Sircar or others.

Therefore, it seems to us that what we are dealing with here is more than a case of blind followers. A few common misconceptions about Indian history must have also contributed to this and some similar misunderstandings of common expressions. First, the general idea that everything in India is religious and even spiritual must have played a role. Second, a particular manifestation of this idea, namely that kingship is always religious and the king is a god, must also have given ground to such misinterpretations. Now the idea of sacred kingship derives from Indian sources, most importantly from a famous passage in *Manusmṛti* 7.1-10. However, as Hopkins and Lingat

⁷⁸In the introduction, Mirashi 1944, p. 288, refers to an ongoing debate without giving any references.

already pointed out, it is royalty as a function that is sacred and not the king himself.⁷⁹

‘[I]t is the function rather than the god which is in the [epic] poet’s mind. Through the function is made the identification in quality, which in turn identifies the king with the god : “Seven are the qualities of a king as stated by Manu Prajāpati ; he is mother, father, teacher, protector, Fire, Kubera, Yama.”⁸⁰’ Although the passage is not to be found in the critically established text, it shows that the Indian tradition did analyse kingship as a function (even if it did not use a word for ‘function’), contrarily to Pollock’s claim, according to which divinity of a “functional sort” cannot be demonstrated in the Indian context.⁸¹

Concerning the epic period, Hopkins also shows that, in the same epic account, the statement is that a king “is” the god and that he “is like” the god, thus the two expressions are interchangeable.⁸² Furthermore, he cites a passage⁸³ to demonstrate that according to the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is only the king’s supernatural goodness that makes

⁷⁹Hopkins, 1931; Lingat, 1967, p. 232. It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider all the arguments on this subject. For some relatively recent treatments, see Kulke, 2001 and Bakker, 1992 and 2002. Note that none of the Gupta kings, nor those in the epics, claimed to possess those supernatural traits that define a god, as pointed out in Hopkins, 1931, pp. 314-5: ‘real gods do not wink or sweat or get dusty or touch earth as they walk, or cast a shadow, and their garlands never fade; and, apparently, real goddesses do not weep or sigh.’

⁸⁰Hopkins, 1931, p. 313

⁸¹For the ‘dichotomy between king and kingship finds little support in the Indian epic.’ Pollock, 1984, p. 524.

⁸²Hopkins, 1931, p. 313.

⁸³Hopkins, 1931, p. 312.

him a god, and not his simply being a king: “They say a king is human, but I respect you as a god, on account of your conduct endowed with *dharma* and *artha* that people recognise to be more than human.”⁸⁴

Although Pollock rightly observes that ‘reading Vālmīki’s poem, one gets the impression that the doctrine [of the king’s divinity] is one in the making,’⁸⁵ this impression certainly does not imply that the king was indeed seen as a god in the Gupta period. Pollock himself emphasizes that no cult of king-worship can be inferred from this, only the king’s protective role and his responsibility for the welfare of his people were comparable, and more and more often compared and assimilated, to that of Viṣṇu.⁸⁶

While there may be a close link between king, god and temple,⁸⁷ their strong interrelation is typical of a later period, and cannot be projected onto Gupta times and expressions.

Moreover, it seems that Western research has tended to concentrate upon sources such as the *Manusmṛti*, which explain and justify divine kingship, while ignoring others, such as the *Nāradaśmṛti*, which betray that the king’s divine nature was not self-

⁸⁴Our translation. 2.95.4 in the critical edition, Bharata speaking to Rāma: *rājānaṃ mānuṣaṃ prāhur devatve saṃmato mama / yasya dharmārthasahitaṃ vṛttam āhur amānuṣam //* Hopkins adds that the expression “they say” is ‘certainly an indication of popular opinion.’

⁸⁵Pollock 1984, p. 523.

⁸⁶Pollock, 1984, pp. 525-6.

⁸⁷See in particular Kulke, 2001.

evident.⁸⁸

The mere appellation of god does not imply that a king is indeed considered to be a god. This has been pointed out by Hopkins, who regarded statements about the king's divinity as formal declarations, affirming that 'neither epic nor drama treats a king as a god; he is called *deva*, but his divinity stops with his title [...] no one recognizes him as supernatural in any way.' Similarly, Bakker remarks⁸⁹ that 'the equation of the king, with, mostly Vedic, deities in (later) Sanskrit literature [...] should be taken as symbolic language expressing the extraordinary concentration of natural (not supernatural) powers within the figures of the sovereign, which make him appear *like* a god.' In this context, Hopkins also draws a parallel with ancient Greece: 'Godship of a sort is inherent in heroes as it was in Greece.'⁹⁰

One could quote other parallels, further removed in time and space, which may not be irrelevant. Two such examples may be evoked here. One is the fact that Roman emperors were called *deus*, without being considered gods, as Paul Veyne has demon-

⁸⁸See *Nāradaśmṛti* 18.49-50, which shows that the king's divinity needed justification: *aśucir vacanād yasya śucir bhavati pūruṣaḥ / śuciś caivāśuciḥ sadyaḥ kathaṃ rājā na daivatam // vidur ya eva devatvaṃ rājño hy amitatejasaḥ / tasya te pratigṛhṇanto na lupyante dvijātayaḥ //* How could one say that the king is not divine when, with a word, he can make the guilty innocent and the innocent guilty? Twice-born who realize that an infinitely powerful king is divine are not sullied when they accept his gifts. Trsl. Lariviere, 1989, pt. 2, p. 202.

⁸⁹Bakker, 1992, p. 86.

⁹⁰Hopkins, 1931, pp. 315-6

strated.⁹¹ The word was simply used as part of a common religious rhetoric to denote a ‘great person.’⁹² Another, even more distant, parallel is the statement by King James I of England, who said in a speech to Parliament in 1610: ‘The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth; for kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God himself are called gods.’⁹³ Now who would claim that James I was considered or considered himself (a) god?

In our understanding, the traditional interpretation of the expression *pādānudhyāta* resulted, at least partly, from prejudices concerning divine kingship in India as outlined above. As we have seen, meditation on the deity’s feet as a particular religious practice occurs probably from after the tenth century, and even then, *anu-dhyai* may be best translated by ‘visualising’ in most cases. Indeed, the only early inscriptional occurrences we have found in which *pāda* and the verb *anudhyai-* are construed in the active without ambiguity to denote meditation on the feet come from the tenth century.⁹⁴ However, the original meaning of ‘favoured by the respected ...’ had been used

⁹¹Veyne, 2005, pp. 68-73.

⁹²Veyne also reminds his readers of the fact that our monotheistic culture uses and understands such a word in a very different way. Veyne, 2005, p. 71. For a similar remark in the Indian context, see Scharfe, 1989, p. 98. cited by Bakker 1992, p. 86: ‘This so-called divinity of kings must be seen against the background of Indian polytheism, where *deva*-s are many and where everything is, at least potentially, charged with a higher power.’

⁹³Sommerville, 1995, p. 181 (On the Divine Right of Kings. Speech to Parliament at White Hall, on the 21st of March, anno 1609 [new style 1610]).

⁹⁴Interestingly, both of them are from Orissa. The first one is (*mātā-pitr-pādānudhyāna-rataḥ*) cited

and understood as such for centuries before that, and probably continued to be understood as such long afterwards.

Although some recent studies on Indian history attempt to break with the scholarly preoccupation of sacred kingship,⁹⁵ rarely do they draw conclusions concerning the traditional understanding of formulae. For important criticism concerning the mistranslation and misunderstanding of formulae that allegedly imply divine kingship, we must turn again to D.C. Sircar's works. In a study of 1974,⁹⁶ he shows that the traditional translation of *paramadaivata* as 'supreme deity,' qualifying the king, is wrong⁹⁷ and the compound should be understood as a synonym of *paramabhāgavata*, 'devotee of the supreme lord' or 'the great devotee of the god(s)'. We hope that our remarks on the meaning of *pādānudhyāta* will further demonstrate that preconceptions of divine kingship should be seriously reconsidered, at least for the period before the tenth century AD. This is not to say that kingship has no religious connections and

above, see Sircar, 1965, 349 citing EI XXVIII p. 277. The second is *śrī-mahā-bhava-gupta-rāja-deva-pādānudhyāyī* in EI XXXVIII p. 189. This usage must have become more and more dominant, as the relevant passage of the thirteenth / fifteenth century Lekhapaddhati (Strauch, 2002, 117 and 245) shows, in which the odd expression *-pādān dhyāta- / dhyānarata-* is employed, again clearly in the sense of meditation on the feet.

⁹⁵Among the recent ones, Ali 2004/2006 makes a great step in this direction. See, in particular, his – very cautious – remarks on p. 103 ff.

⁹⁶See Sircar, 1974.

⁹⁷He affirms that it is not an imperial title and does not denote 'great divinity'. See Sircar, 1974, p. 265.

implications. Indeed, the concept of lordship as kingship on the one hand and as superiority of the divine on the other seem to have evolved in a dynamic interaction throughout centuries. Our contention is simply that this dynamism is often described as a one-directional process, supposing that the divine is the origin and model for the king, whereas it seems that kingship also served as a model and source for the way in which a devotee sees his divine lord.⁹⁸

To conclude our remarks, we could summarise our propositions in four major points.

1. As our study shows (we hope), the expression *pādānudhyāta* is wrongly translated as ‘meditating on the feet of,’ both because the past participle should not be understood in the active sense and because such an understanding implies a (religious) practice that is not attested at the time of the appearance of the compound. The correct understanding appears to be ‘favoured by the feet of,’ where ‘feet’ is an honorific, the whole expression meaning ‘favoured by the respected.’ At the time of the first occurrences of this phrase and then probably for a number of centuries, this implied a delegation of power, whether from gods to kings, from overlords to lesser kings, from

⁹⁸This phenomenon has already been analysed by Kulke 2001, p. 11, in the context of legitimation of royal power, remarking that cults and gods at pilgrimage centres became more and more ‘royalized’ from as early as the sixth century: ... ‘the daily performance of the rituals and the great annual festivals of the “royal deities” – with all their royal paraphernalia and exuberant wealth – became the best and most visible legitimation of royal power and wealth of the “divine kings” on the earth.’

kings to inferiors, or from father to son in the transmission of kingship. The expression has thus a function that goes well beyond a mere devotional aspect,⁹⁹ legitimising the practically always male-to-male transmission or delegation of power.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, *pādānudhyāta* is often a mere synonym of (*pāda*)*parigrhīta*.

2. The religious meditation on the feet of a god cannot be the original meaning or implication of this phrase, for such practices seem to be mentioned only in texts of a much later date.¹⁰¹ We propose that it was often rather the servant-lord relationship as it was seen and experienced in the royal court or elsewhere that influenced the imagery of the devotee-god relation. Of course, the two must be seen as interacting.

3. The honorific *pāda* implies perhaps more than simple respect. Although the expression became formulaic very soon, some connotations of the ‘feet’ were perhaps not fully lost. It may have suggested that the transmission of power was a reward of loyal service to the king and that it involved a hierarchical relationship. In this sense, perhaps it meant, at least initially, a favour of a different kind compared to *parigrhīta*. The latter could possibly imply or was meant to imply a more personal choice of the previous king. The fact that Candragupta II is quite systematically described as being *parigrhīta* may implicitly signal that his succession was not unproblematic.

⁹⁹On the way in which many formal relations were expressed in affective terms in classical India, see the excellent study by Ali, 2004/2006, pp. 183 ff.

¹⁰⁰This function has already been remarked by many studies, including Sircar, 1966, but without changing the traditional translation of the expression.

¹⁰¹In this, we take a more categorical standpoint than Sircar, 1965 and 1966.

4. The expression *pādānudhyāta* has long been misunderstood partly because of the silent supposition that kingship is dominated by its sacred or divine aspects. However, in our opinion the king was not considered a god, and he was certainly not seen as a divine being in the Gupta period, even if there can be shared features of a god and the king. Just as there was a shift from the vision of dharmic to divine kingship in Vidarbha (where the Vākāṭakas did not claim to be divine but prided themselves on dharmic human qualities, whereas the Yādavas seven centuries later asserted the divine nature of kings claiming to be part of the transcendent divine incarnate),¹⁰² so too, it seems to us, the expression *pādānudhyāta* did not imply religious devotion to the king in the beginning, but came to be associated with it after the tenth century, and even then, perhaps only occasionally. It is to be hoped that this reconsideration of the traditional translation of the expression *pādānudhyāta*, together with other revisions of traditional interpretations (such as the one concerning the meaning of *paramadai-vata*), shall contribute not only to a more correct analysis of inscriptional sources, but also to a better understanding of the nature of kingship and the delegation of royal power.

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¹⁰²For the detailed analysis of this change, see Bakker, 1992.