XIV

NOTES ON THE EDICTS OF ASOKA

By F. W. THOMAS

IN these notes I propose to deal as compendiously as possible with a number of points in the Edicts to which even after the publications of Kern, Senart, and Bühler more or less obscurity still attaches, or upon which additional light may be thrown by the aid of subsequent discoveries, such as that of the *Arthaśāstra* by Kauṭalya. However anxious we may be to avoid the fault of *punarukti*, it will be impossible in some cases not to recur to passages which have already been frequently discussed.

1. PRĀDEŚIKA

M. Senart, in his masterly account of Aśoka's administrative system, has followed Kern and Bühler in understanding (pp. 279–80) this official designation to denote local governors or local chiefs: "the ancestors of the Thākurs, Rāos, Rāwals, etc., of the present day" (ZDMG. xxxvii, 106); and Mr. Vincent Smith, whose excellent translations were published in 1909, understands by the term "District Officers" (p. 51). The word occurs only in the third Rock Edict, where the functionaries in question are included with the *Yuktas* (*Yutā*) and *Lājūkas* in the ordinance of the Quinquennial Circuit.¹ It will be admitted that this circumstance favours rather the view that royal officials rather than territorial nobles are mentioned.

The derivation of *Prādeśika* from *pradeśa*, in the sense of a division of a larger area, is, of course, flawless. Nevertheless, if the word had been employed substantively

¹ *Savate vijite mama yutā ca rājūke ca prādesike ca paṃcasu paṃcasu vāsesu anusamyānaṃ niyātu* (Girnar version; all the others seem to omit the first *ca*).

to denote a grade in the administrative hierarchy, we should have expected to find more evidence of the fact. As it is, we seem to have only one passage where the form occurs in substantive¹ use, the *Kauśika-Sūtra* (§§ 94, 120, 126) grouping together the terms *brāhmaṇa*, *vaiśya*, *prādeśika*, *rājan*; and this is obscure (the word apparently denoting local rulers of the place in question) and certainly less than is required.

On the other hand, we have excellent testimony to the employment of a rather similar term *pradeṣṭṛ* to designate certain officers having fairly well-defined functions. The *pradeṣṭṛ* is mentioned in a list of ministers occurring in the *Tantrākhyāyika* (p. 109, l. 2 of Dr. Hertel's edition); it is found in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, where the interpretation given by Böhtlingk & Roth (no doubt from the Tibetan version, which I have been unable to consult) is "judge"; and the *Mahābhārata* has it in a list to be found in ii, 5, 38.² All these sources depend, no doubt, upon the *Arthaśāstra*, which in the work ascribed to Kauṭilya supplies rather more explicit information. The passages which I have noted (in addition to the list of officials on p. 20) are the following :—

p. 142. *gopasthānikasthāneṣu pradeṣṭāraḥ kāryakaraṇaṃ balipragrahaṃ ca kuryuḥ.*

"In the stations of the *Sthānika* and *Gopa*³ the *Pradeṣṭṛs* are to execute orders and attend to the collection of taxes."

p. 200. *pradeṣṭāras trayo vā 'mātyāḥ kaṇṭakaśodhanaṃ kuryuḥ.*

"The *Pradeṣṭṛs*, or three councillors, are to attend to the suppression of offenders."

¹ As an adjective joined to *rājan*, *īśvara*, in the sense of a local king, it occurs in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, iv, 126; cf. *Vinaya-piṭaka*, iii, p. 47 (= *Pārājika*, ii, 3), *rājāno nāma paṭhavyā rājā padesarājā*, etc.

² Quoted by E. W. Hopkins, JAOS. xiii, p. 129, note.

³ Heads respectively of a *Sthānīya*, "Thānā," and of a group of five or ten villages.

p. 209. *dharmasthaṃ pradeṣṭāraṃ vā viśvāsopagataṃ sattrī brūyāt.*

“A spy should say privately to a judge or a *Pradeṣṭr* [or ‘a judging *Pradeṣṭr*’].”

p. 215. *sagopasthāniko bāhyaṃ pradeṣṭā coramārgaṇaṃ kuryāt . . .*

“In the country districts the *Pradeṣṭr* along with the *Sthānika* and *Gopa* should attend to the tracking of thieves.”

p. 220. *samāhartṛpradeṣṭāraḥ pūrvam adhyakṣānām adhyakṣapurūṣānām ca niyamanam kuryuḥ.*

“In the first instance the *Samāhartṛ* and the *Pradeṣṭrs* should hold in check the superintendents and their subordinates.”

p. 223. *dharmasthaḥ pradeṣṭā vā hairaṇyam adaṇḍyaṃ kṣipati kṣepadvigaṇam asmai daṇḍam kuryāt.*

“If a judge or *Pradeṣṭr* [or ‘a judging *Pradeṣṭr*’] inflicts an unmerited fine in gold, he shall be mulcted in double the amount of the fine.”

p. 226. *uttamāparamadhyatvaṃ pradeṣṭā daṇḍakarmani . . . kalpayet.*

“The *Pradeṣṭr* should in punishments distinguish highest, lowest, and middle.”

These passages are sufficient to prove that the *Pradeṣṭr* was an officer attached to the several grades of councillors and of local governors, and charged with executive duties of revenue collection and police, a combination so constant in India. No doubt they were all subject to the orders of a chief having the same title, the *Pradeṣṭr* who is named as a member of the royal ministry.

It will be conceded that officials having duties so defined would be appropriately mentioned by Aśoka as accompanying the *Lājūkas* and their suites in the quinquennial circuits. But, no doubt, the linguistic form which he employs calls for some justification. That *deśika* would be a probable equivalent for *destr* needs no

demonstration: the two suffixes are commonly associated as equivalents (e.g. in *Pāṇini*, ii, 2, 15, *tr̥jakābhyāṇ kartari*). The long vowel in the first syllable of *Prādeśika* might be explained, like that in *vānaprastha*, as occasioned by the technical application of the term: or we might suppose that the modification in form is due to the intrusion of the preposition *ā* (as in *ādeśa*, “command”) without affecting the equivalence in sense.

This proposed explanation is dependent upon the generally accepted interpretation of *Rājuka* as derived from *rajju* and meaning some kind of high official. If, after all—which is so improbable as to be practically impossible (see Bühler’s article in ZDMG. xlvii, 466–71)—the word should prove to be derived from *rājā* and denote minor (subordinate) *kings*, then in that context the explanation as a derivative from *pradeśa* and equivalent in meaning to *maṇḍalika* would have a preference. In any case the functions of the *pradeśtr* deserved to be considered.¹

2. MAHĀMĀTRA

That the term *mahāmātra* is, as M. Senart has stated (pp. 279 sqq.), a generic designation for high officials,² may be taken as an accepted fact. It belongs to the order of polite periphrases (*mahatī mātṛā yasya* = “a person of high standing”), and is quite analogous to *priyadarśana* and the like. But there seems to be still room for providing against misunderstanding, since Dr. Neumann, while furnishing the exact rendering “Grosswürdenträger”, adopts as equivalent the term “Marschall” (*Dīghanikāya*, trans. ii, p. 219), and explains the meaning as “königliche Minister”. That the *mahāmātras* of the Edicts are not, in fact, “councillors”, but officials, such as “governors”,

¹ The *Prasāṣṭṛ* of *Arthaśāstra*, p. 20, etc., is perhaps the *Śāsanādhikārin*, superintendent of correspondence, of c. 28.

² “Fonctionnaires de tout ordre, mais de rang élevé.” Bühler gives “verschiedene hohe Beamten” (ZDMG. xxxvii, p. 267).

may be taken as self-evident, since they are generally provincial and local authorities; moreover, in the "separate Edicts" of Dhauli and Jaugada we have certain of them distinguished by the term *viyohālaka* = *vyavahārika*, "legal *mahāmātras*"; and these are nothing but judges. It will be worth while to adduce some further evidence in substantiation of these facts.

In the *Arthasāstra* I have noted the following occurrences: p. 16 (perhaps = "minister"); p. 20 (probably "local official"); p. 58 (*prthag dharmasthīyaṃ mahāmātrīyaṃ . . . bandhanāgāraṃ* = "a prison with separate places for judges and officials"); p. 213 (uncertain); p. 235 ("local official"); pp. 236-7 ("local official").

In the books of the Pali canon the word *mahāmatta* is of quite common occurrence; and, as the Pali Text Society's editions of these texts are furnished with indexes, it seems unnecessary to dwell at length upon the fact. The *vohārika mahāmatta* ("legal officials") are mentioned several times, for example in the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, which has also *gaṇakamahāmatta* ("financial official"), *senānāyakam*° ("military official"), *upacārakam*° ("court official"), and *sabbatthakam*° ("Prime Minister"). Here the general sense seems to be that of "minister"; but the matter is open to doubt.

In consideration of these facts it seems expedient still to prefer the general term "official" or "dignitary" to any limiting translation, such as "councillor" or "marshal".

3. YUKTA (YUTA)

That *yukta* denotes a subordinate official I endeavoured previously (JRAS., 1909, pp. 466-7) to prove by the aid of the *Arthasāstra*. A passage in the *Mānava Dharma-sūtra* (viii, 34) might also have been quoted:—

*pranaṣṭādhigataṃ dravyaṃ tiṣṭhed yuktair adhiṣṭhitāṃ |
yāms tatra corān grhṇīyāt tān rājēbhena ghātayet |*

“Lost property when come by should remain in charge of the *yuktas*: any of them (*tatra*; or ‘in that respect’) detected in theft the king should put to death by an elephant.”

The similarity of this passage to the caution against thievish *yuktas*, which was quoted from the *Arthaśāstra* (p. 70, *yuktās tathā kāryavidhan niyuktā jñātum na śakyā dhanam ādadānāḥ*), is surely unmistakable. Chapter xxvi of the *Arthaśāstra* is entitled “Recovery of funds embezzled by *Yuktas*”.

The reason for returning to this topic is that Dr. Neumann in dealing with a familiar passage of Rock Edict III (ZDMG. lxvii, pp. 345–6) reverts to the view of M. Senart and Bühler, according to which the *yutā* are “the faithful” (Senart, i, p. 78) or “the dutiful” (Bühler, ZDMG. xxxvii, pp. 106–8). The passage and the three translations are as follows:—

*parisā pi yute āñapayisa[m]ti gaṇanāyaṃ hetuto ca vyamjanato ca.*¹

Senart: “Then to the clergy to instruct the faithful in detail as regards substance and expression.”

Bühler: “Also (the teachers and monks of all) schools shall in the service give point to what is proper, both as regards the text as also with reasons.”²

Neumann: “The Boards shall give the proper orders among the people, according to the reality and according to the terms”³ (loc. cit.).

¹ It is unnecessary to quote the other versions.

² “Auch die (Lehrer und Mönche aller) Schulen werden beim Gottesdienste das Geziemende einschärfen, sowohl dem Wortlaut nach als auch mit Gründen.” Here Bühler takes the word adjectivally, as meaning what is proper, whereas in the earlier passage of the same inscription it is “loyal”, “earnest”, or “dutiful”. Bühler’s own English version may be seen in *Epigraphia Indica*, ii, pp. 466–7.

³ “Die Behörden aber werden das Gebührende veranlassen unter den Leuten, der Wirklichkeit nach und dem Worte nach.”

But if, as seems to be now the general consensus (Bühler, ZDMG. xxxvii, pp. 107–8; Vincent Smith, op. cit., p. 50), the quinquennial *anusamyāna* mentioned at the beginning of this Edict is a tour or circuit, it is clear that neither “the faithful” nor “the people” can accompany the Rājūkas and Prādeśikas on such tours. Therefore, in the earlier part of the Edict, and consequently in this passage also, *yuta* cannot bear either of these senses. Let us then turn to *gaṇanāyaṃ*. M. Senart (i, pp. 84–5) interprets the word as equivalent to “going into detail”, and he quotes *Jātaka*, i, 29, *gaṇanāto asaṃkhiyā*, which, however, we should naturally interpret “as regards counting, numberless”. Bühler’s view (ZDMG. xxxvii, p. 108) is that the word is a synonym of *kīrtana* in the sense of “recitation”. Dr. Neumann’s interpretation is not perhaps quite clear; but apparently he would understand the word as meaning the assigning to each person or thing its due weight.

But surely the facts are too strong for any such expedients. The primary and regular sense of *gaṇanā* is counting; *gaṇanāpati* is a “reckoner”; *gaṇakamahā-matta* (Vinaya - piṭaka, Mahāvīyutpatti) is “Finance Minister”; *gaṇanaṃ sikkheyya* (Vinaya-piṭaka) is “learn reckoning”; in the *Arthaśāstra* the chapter dealing with the establishment of the Treasury is entitled *Akṣapaṭale gānanikyādhikāra*. Moreover, it is clear that the functions of the *yuktas* were prevailingly clerical. Let us add that the previous sentence in the Edict recommends *alpabhāṇḍata* and *alpavyayaṭā*, “economy in furniture and expense” (*Indian Antiquary*, 1908, pp. 20–1). How, then, can we resist the conclusion that the true translation is “let the (religious) parishads also appoint clerks for keeping accounts”?

As regards the *yutāni* or *yutā* (n.pl.), which in some of the versions is substituted for *yute* (acc. pl. masc.),

there is no difficulty in understanding it as a collective neuter = "clerical staffs".¹

Now, if here the word follows the usage of the *Arthaśāstra* in denoting subordinate, chiefly clerical, officials, it can hardly mean anything else in the earlier passage (quoted above, p. 388) of the same inscription. And in particular it cannot be adjectivally applied to such dignitaries as the *Rājūka* and *Prādeśika*. Therefore *yutā ca rājūke ca prādeśike ca* cannot mean "the faithful, the *Rājūka*, and the governor of the district" (Senart), nor "the loyal *Rājūkas* and vassals" (Bühler). We shall translate "the secretariat staffs, the *Rājūka*, and the *Prādeśika*".

The use of the root *yuj* to denote "employing" is not confined to the form *yukta* (or *āyukta*). In the *Arthaśāstra* we have both *yogapuruṣa*—

p. 245: *yathā ya yogapuruṣair anyān rājādhitīṣṭhati*,

"And as by his employees (agents) the king governs others,"

and *yugyapuruṣa*—

p. 334: . . . *yudhyeta na parikṣīṇayugyaparūṣam*,

"Let him not fight one whose servants are wasted away,"

in the sense of "servants". *Yoga* is, in fact, "practical work," and *Sāṃkhya-yoga* is the *Sāṃkhya* view put into practice.²

The order of mention of the *yukta*, *rājūkas*, and *prādeśikas* is somewhat surprising; it is certainly not order of dignity. Perhaps it may be explained by supposing

¹ I leave this as it was written. But the reader should consult an important article by Professor Lüders in the Berlin *Sitzungsberichte*, 1913, pp. 988 sqq., where it is proved that *yutā* is nom. and *yutāni* acc. pl. *masc.*

² Part v of the *Arthaśāstra*, cc. 89–94, dealing with the personnel of the administration, is entitled *Yogavṛtta*; and the last chapter in the book, entitled *Tantrayukti*, contains directions for using the book (*tantra*).

the *yuktas* to belong to the imperial establishment, while the *rājūka* is the Governor. Then we should have "the secretariat staff, the Governor, and the *Prādeśika*".

As concerns the concluding words of the edict, *hetuto ca vyamjanato ca*, which previously (*Indian Antiquary*, xxxvii, p. 21) I rendered by "with regard to the dictates of reason and the prescriptions of actual texts", treating the word *vyamjanena* in another occurrence (Rūpnāth inscription) as denoting "with the text of a royal instruction" or simply "according to a royal intimation, or command", I observe that, while this last view has been followed by Professor Hultzsch (*JRAS.* 1912, pp. 1058–9), who adopts the former of the two alternatives, Dr. Neumann applies the same sense to the former passage. It will be seen that the difference is very slight, since Dr. Neumann speaks of the definite prescriptions of the king, whereas I had thought of the definite prescriptions of religious books. Perhaps, however, it is neither of these, but definite prescriptions generally. In any case the *hetu* is the general reason for a proceeding (cf. *Arthaśāstra*, p. 28, where the abilities of ministers in giving reasons is mentioned), and the *vyamjana* is the special circumstance, whether royal order or other stimulus to action.

4. AṬHABHĀGIYA

Asoka, when in the 21st year from his coronation he visited the Lumbini Garden, made the village of Lumbini *ubalika* and *aṭhabhāgiya* (*Lumminī-gāme ubalike kaṭe aṭhabhāgiye ca*). That *ubalika* = (*ud* + *bali* + *ka*) means free from *bali*, which last word means "tax", or especially religious cess, we have already seen (*JRAS.* 1909, pp. 466–7). It is proposed by Dr. J. F. Fleet (*ibid.*, p. 761) to take *bhāga* in the sense of the proportion of the grain harvest accruing to the king, and *aṭhabhāgiye* accordingly as = *aṣṭabhāgya*, not *arthabhāgya*.

It seems to me that the view of Dr. Fleet must in the main be accepted. Since *bhāga* is a regular technical term for the royal portion (note, for instance, in the *Arthaśāstra*, p. 60, the list of sources of revenue, beginning with *sītā* (harvest of royal demesnes), *bhāgo*, *balih*, *karo*, etc.), it can hardly here, by the side of *bali*, be taken in any other sense; on the other hand, if *bhāga* is used in the technical sense, the first member of the compound *aṭhabhāgiye* can be nothing but *aṣṭa*, "eight." Dr. Neumann's argument to the contrary (*Dīghanikāya*, trans. ii, p. 238) seems to me quite invalid.

Where I am unable to follow Dr. Fleet is in regarding the "eighth part" as relinquished in the case of the village of Lumbinī (JRAS. 1908, pp. 479–80). When we remember that according to the Brahmanical books the king is *ṣaḍbhāgin*, his share being a sixth—the testimony of Megasthenes (see E. W. Hopkins, JAOS. xiii, pp. 86–8; Vincent Smith, *History of Ancient India*, p. 134) fixes it in his day at one-fourth—we can see that what Aśoka did was to remit *half of* the *bhāga*, or share-tax, of the Lumbinī village, and thereby to fix its contribution as one-eighth.

5. SAMĀJA

As the uncertainty with regard to *samāja* (Edict I) does not seem even yet to have quite disappeared, a further attempt may be ventured, even though in some small part it involves a conjecture.

The word is interpreted as denoting a "festival" (*festins*, Senart, i, p. 50), or "fair" (*melā*, Bühler, ZDMG. xxxvii, pp. 93–4), or "merry festival" (Vincent Smith, *Edicts of Aśoka*, p. 48); and the difficulty is to explain why the thing denoted should be condemned in an edict directed against the slaughter of animals. M. Senart conceives that *samāja* may have acquired the sense of *prāṇārambha*, while Bühler suggests that the fairs might be attended by a certain amount of riotousness.

Now, since the two words *utsava* and *samāja* are commonly found in combination (e.g. *Arthaśāstra*, p. 45, *yātrāsamājotsava*; inscription of Khāravela, l. 5; *Rāmāyana* (Görresio), ii, 48, 21, etc.), it follows that the latter has a sense akin to, but not identical with, that of the former. If we consult the dictionary (B. & R.) we shall see further that a *samāja* is a thing to be viewed by spectators, since we have the word *prekṣāsamāja* also *samājamāñca*, "a platform for a *samāja*," and *sāmājika*, "a spectator"; further, that it has an enclosure, *samāja-vāṭa*. Moreover, if we turn to actual passages, we find that the *samāja* of *Mbh.* i, 185. 29, is the bow contest of the Pāṇḍavas, which accompanied the marriage of Draupadī, while in the *Harivaṃśa*, 4537 sqq., 8189 sqq., it is attended by wrestling contests.

It is, I suppose, needless to consult further passages, such as will be found numerousy cited in Böhtlingk and Roth's dictionary. The *samāja* is plainly a celebration of games, or rather contests (in view of the derivation; cf. *ājī*), taking place in an arena (*samājavāṭa*), or amphitheatre, surrounded by platforms (*māñca*) for spectators (*prekṣā*-). And, if we inquire what there may have been in them to offend the humanity of Aśoka, we have only to call to mind the contests of animals described by the Greeks and implied in the Sanskrit literature (see E. W. Hopkins, *JAOS.* xiii, pp. 122, 124; Vincent Smith, *Early History of India*, p. 120).

As regards those *samājas* of which Aśoka expresses in the same edict his approval, we may doubtless think of the edifying shows (*vimānadaśana*, etc.) mentioned in Edict IV.

If it is asked why the Pāli literature fails to shed light upon the meaning of the word *samāja*, we are fortunately able to render a satisfactory answer. The fact is that the thing is well known, but under a synonym, namely, *samajyā*, *samajja*, often in the phrase *giraggasamajja*.

It is unnecessary to quote passages, as a considerable number of them has been cited by E. Hardy in a paper contributed to *Album Kern* (pp. 61–6).¹ Most of them deal with dramatic and musical entertainments; but in *Jātaka*, iii, 541²⁰, we have a club-fight—

daṇḍehi yuddham pi samajjamajjhe.

The most telling passage is, however, one from the *Dīghanikāya*, i, 1, 14 (not mentioned by Hardy), where we have actual mention of fights between elephants, buffaloes, etc. We can easily, therefore, see why attendance at such gatherings (*samajjābhicaraṇa*) is in the *Dīghanikāya* (iii, 182) stigmatized as a sin.

It will be noted that the *samajja* is frequently regarded as taking place on the top of a hill (*giragga*), concerning which it will be sufficient to refer to the paper of Hardy and the writers whom he quotes. As Hardy remarks (p. 65), the sense of *giri* eventually evaporated. Curiously enough, a theatrical meaning of the word may be traced in comparatively late times: for commenting upon an anthology verse from the *Mālatīmādhava* (*Kavīndra-vacanasamuccaya*, p. 185), while still ignorant of the history of the matter, I have remarked, “Has this word also a theatrical signification?”

Very possibly in *girigudaka*, “polo,” the same weakened force (= “theatre”, “arena”) of the word is to be traced.

6. AGNISKANDHA

Some doubt concerning this word seems still to be felt by Professor Hultsch (JRAS. 1913, pp. 651–2), although previously (ZDMG. xxxvii, 555) he had himself quoted the explanation of Bühler (ZDMG. xxxvii, 260), according to which it denotes illuminations or “fire-trees” (“Feuer-bäume”), such as are sometimes represented in modern temples. M. Senart had thought (i, p. 101) of lamps,

¹ Cf. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, ii, pp. 7–8, n. 4.

torches, or feux de joie, accompanying a festival. Professor Hultzsch now considers that the word may denote "radiant beings of another world".

That *agniskandha* means simply a "mass of fire" can be proved by a considerable quantity of evidence. In the *Saddharmapundarika* (ed. Kern & Nanjio), pp. 72-3, it denotes a conflagration: so also in the *Āṅguttaranikāya*, iv, p. 128, and *Paṭisambhīdāmagga*, p. 125. And, if this sense is sufficient for the passage, it is hardly necessary to go further.

That a "mass of fire" was in India an auspicious object we can see from the fact that one of the dreams of Trisālā, the mother of Mahāvīra, was of just such an object: "And a fire. She saw a fire in vehement motion, fed with much shining and honey-coloured ghee, smokeless, crackling, and extremely beautiful with its burning flames. The mass of its flames, which rose one above the other, seemed to interpenetrate each other, and the blaze of its flames appeared to bake the firmament in some places" (*Kalpasūtra*, trans. Jacobi, Sacred Books of the East, xxii, p. 238; cf. the article of Dr. Hüttemann in the *Bäessler Archiv*, iv, 2, where the dreams are illustrated from miniatures).

Another of the dreams was of an elephant. We can hardly, therefore, go wrong in rendering Aśoka's *Aggikhaṇḍha* by "bonfire". Another use of fires, namely for signalling ("beacon-fires"), is mentioned in the *Arthaśāstra*, p. 141; this perhaps is the origin of the famous *Nyāya* illustration *vahnivyāpyadhūma*°.

(To be continued.)