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ART. I.—*The Iron Pillar of Delhi (Mihrauli) and the Emperor Candra (Chandra).* By VINCENT A. SMITH, M.R.A.S., Indian Civil Service.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE project of writing the "Ancient History of Northern India from the Monuments" has long occupied my thoughts, but the duties of my office do not permit me, so long as I remain in active service, to devote the time and attention necessary for the execution and completion of so arduous an undertaking. There is, indeed, little prospect that my project will ever be fully carried into effect by me. Be that as it may, I have made some small progress in the collection of materials, and have been compelled from time to time to make detailed preparatory studies of special subjects. I propose to publish these studies occasionally under the general title of "Prolegomena to Ancient Indian History." The essay now presented as No. I of the series is that which happens to be the first ready. It grew out of a footnote to the draft of a chapter on the history of Candra Gupta II.

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The great mosque built by Quṭb-ud-dīn 'Ībak in 1191 A.D., and subsequently enlarged by his successors, as well as its minaret, the celebrated Quṭb Minār, stand on the site of Hindu temples, and within the limits of the fortifications known as the Fort of Rāi Pithaura, which were erected in the middle or latter part of the twelfth century to protect the Hindu city of Delhi from the attacks of the Musalmāns, who finally captured it in A.D. 1191.¹ These buildings are situated about nine miles south of modern Delhi, or Shāhjahānābād, and lie partly within the lands attached to the village of Mihiraulī (Mehraulī).

"The front of the *masjid* [mosque] is a wall 8 feet thick, pierced by a line of five noble arches. The centre arch is 22 feet wide and nearly 53 feet in height, and the side arches are 10 feet wide and 24 feet high. Through these gigantic arches the first Musalmāns of Delhi entered a magnificent room, 135 feet long and 31 feet broad, the roof of which was supported on five rows of the tallest and finest of the Hindu pillars. The mosque is approached through a cloistered court, 145 feet in length from east to west and 96 feet in width. In the midst of the west half of this court stands the celebrated Iron Pillar, surrounded by cloisters formed of several rows of Hindu columns of infinite variety of design, and of most delicate execution."²

The presence of the infinitely various Hindu columns is explained by the fact that the mosque was constructed out of the materials of twenty-seven Hindu temples, of

¹ I use the conventional form Delhi for the name of the imperial city, though Dihli is the more accurate spelling according to Muhammadan usage. The ordinary Hindī spelling is Dillī.

The best account of the numerous cities now known collectively as Delhi is that given by the late Mr. Carr Stephen in his excellent work entitled "The Archaeology and Monumental Ruins of Delhi" (Ludhiana and Calcutta, 1876). A general sketch-map of the ruined cities will be found in that book and in Cunningham's "Reports," vol. i, pl. xxxv. The true date of the capture of Delhi by the Muhammadans is A.D. 1191 (*ibid.*, p. 160, note).

On several matters the guidance of Carr Stephen is to be preferred to that of Cunningham.

² Cunningham, "Reports," i, 186.

which some are known to have been Vaisnava and some Jaina.¹ These temples were, with slight exceptions, utterly overthrown, so that one stone was not left upon another. The exceptions are that the lower portion of the surrounding walls of the raised terrace on which the mosque stands is the original undisturbed platform of a Hindu temple, on the exact site of which, in accordance with the usual practice, the mosque was erected; and that the tall pillars immediately behind the great arch are in their original position.²

The floor of the mosque itself, the "magnificent room" above described, "consisted of two layers of well-dressed stone close set, nine and ten inches thick respectively, resting on a basis of rubble-stone of enormous dimensions and indefinite depth, the excavation having been carried down over fourteen feet without coming to the bottom of the layers of rubble-stone. These two layers of dressed stone extend throughout the entire area of *masjid* [mosque], courtyard, and cloisters of inner inclosure. In the courtyard, however, these layers are overlain by another layer of stones of irregular shapes and sizes, and evidently belonging to various portions of some ruined structure; the consequence of this is that the level of the courtyard is higher than the level of the floor of [the] *masjid* and cloister."³ It is, I think, impossible to doubt that Mr. Beglar is right in the opinion that the Muhammadans left intact the beautifully-constructed double flooring resting on its massive rubble foundation, and that they are responsible for the superficial layer of broken material which overlies the floor of dressed stone in the courtyard.⁴

¹ The fact of the destruction of the twenty-seven temples is stated in the inscription over the eastern entrance of the courtyard of the mosque, and is fully corroborated by an examination of the pillars, one of which bears the date 1124 (V.S.), equivalent to A.D. 1067-1068. (Cunningham, "Reports," vol. i, pp. 175, 177, 179; and vol. v, Preface, p. v; Carr Stephen, p. 41.)

² Cunningham, "Reports," vol. v, Preface, p. ii.

³ Ibid., p. 27. This passage is written by Mr. Beglar. By "inner inclosure" the writer means the original mosque of Qutb-ud-dīn, as distinguished from the later additions of Iltutmish (Iyaltamish, Altamsh) and of 'Alā-ud-dīn.

⁴ "Reports," vol. v, p. 32; Carr Stephen, p. 40.

The Iron Pillar stands in this courtyard at a distance of ten or eleven yards outside the great arches of the mosque.¹ Until Mr. Beglar, in 1871, excavated the base of the pillar, most exaggerated notions of its size were current. Sir Alexander Cunningham himself believed the total length to be not less than sixty feet, and the weight to exceed seventeen tons. Equally mistaken notions were current concerning the material of the pillar, which, probably on account of the curious yellowish colour of the upper part of the shaft, was commonly believed to be a casting of brass, bronze, or other mixed metal. An accurate chemical analysis made at Cunningham's instance, left no room for doubt as to the material.²

It is now established beyond the possibility of doubt that the material of the pillar is pure malleable iron of 7·66 specific gravity, and that the monument is a solid shaft of wrought iron welded together. Flaws in many parts disclose the fact that the welding is not absolutely perfect.

The total length of the pillar from the top of the capital to the bottom of the base is 23 feet 8 inches. Twenty-two feet are above ground, and only 1 foot 8 inches are below ground. The weight is estimated to exceed six tons. The lower diameter of the shaft is 16·4 inches, and the upper diameter is 12·05 inches, the diminution being 0·29 of an inch per foot. The capital, which is of the bell pattern, is 3½ feet high.

The base is a knob or bulb, slightly irregular in shape, 2 feet 4 inches in diameter, resting on a gridiron of iron bars, soldered with lead into the upper layer of dressed stone of the pavement. The bulb does not penetrate the lower layer of dressed stone. The column is, therefore, supported by the upper layer of the old Hindu floor, and the superficial layer of broken stone laid down by the

¹ "Reports," vol. i, pl. xxxviii.

² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Musalmāns.¹ It is now further steadied by a small stone bench or platform, which has been recently built round the base on the surface of the floor.

The capital consists of seven parts, namely, a reeded bell, like that of Budha Gupta's monolith at Eran, a thin, plain disc, three discs with serrated edges, another thin, plain disc, and a square block.² Judging from the analogy of the Eran monument, where a similar square block serves as pedestal to a statue, it is probable that the Iron Pillar was originally surmounted by an image of Viṣṇu, the god to whom it is dedicated. The block is now meaningless, and the absence of any trace of the image is easily explained by the fact that the monument stands in the precincts of a mosque. Reeded bell capitals, more or less similar, are found on other pillars both of the Gupta period and of the much earlier age of Aśoka.³

The style of the pillar and the form of the characters of the inscription, considered together, permit no doubt that the monument was erected in the Gupta period. Prinsep was of opinion that it should be dated in the third or fourth century A.D. Fergusson ascribed it to one of the Gupta emperors. Bhau Dāji was inclined to date it a little later. Dr. Fleet points out that the characters of the inscription closely resemble those of the panegyric on Samudra Gupta on the Allāhābād Pillar. The well-marked top lines of the letters on the Iron Pillar, which were once supposed to mark a later date, are also found in Kumāra Gupta's Bilsad inscription ("Gupta Inscriptions," pp. 43 and 140).

The bottom line of the inscription, which covers a space about 2 feet 9½ inches broad, by 10½ inches high, is at

¹ Cunningham, "Reports," vol. i, p. 169; vol. v, p. 28, pl. v. The plate gives a plan and section of the base of the pillar drawn to scale. See also Fergusson, "Eastern and Indian Architecture," p. 508; V. Ball, "Economic Geology of India," pp. 338, 339; Carr Stephen, p. 16.

² My description of the capital of the Delhi pillar is based on a good photograph and personal knowledge. The Eran pillar has been described by Cunningham, whose plate is lithographed from a photograph ("Reports," vol. x, p. 81, pl. xxvi). A facsimile of the Iron Pillar is in the Indian Museum at South Kensington.

³ E.g., the Kahāṃ and Bhitari pillars of Skanda Gupta's reign, and the Lauriyā pillar of Aśoka. (Cunningham, "Reports," vol. i, pls. xxv and xxix.)

a height of about 7 feet 2 inches above the stone platform in which the pillar is now fixed. The deeply-cut characters are in excellent preservation, and, with one exception, the engraving is correct.¹

The inscription is a posthumous eulogy in verse of a powerful sovereign named Candra,² concerning whose lineage no information is given, and may be translated as follows :—

Translation.

“ This lofty standard of the divine Viṣṇu was erected on Mount Viṣṇupada by King Candra, whose thoughts were devoted in faith to Viṣṇu. The beauty of that king’s countenance was as that of the full moon [*candra*³];—by him, with his own arm, sole worldwide dominion was acquired and long held;—and although, as if wearied, he has in bodily form quitted this earth, and passed to the other-world country won by his merit, yet, like the embers of a quenched fire in a great forest, the glow of his foe-destroying energy quits not the earth;—by the breezes of his prowess the southern ocean is still perfumed;—by him, having crossed the seven mouths of the Indus, were the Vāhlikas vanquished in battle;—and when, warring in the Vāṅga countries, he breasted and destroyed the enemies confederate against him, fame was inscribed on [their] arm by his sword.”⁴

¹ “ Gupta Inscriptions,” p. 140.

² The document consists of six lines, or three stanzas, of the *Āṇḍālavikṛīḍita* metre.

³ A pun, as usual in Sanskrit verse.

⁴ This translation is based on that of Dr. Fleet, who has been so anxious to secure verbal accuracy that his meaning is difficult to grasp. In order that my readers may not feel doubts as to the accuracy of my version, Dr. Fleet’s is here appended.

“ He, on whose arms fame was inscribed by the sword, when in battle in the Vāṅga countries, he kneaded (*and turned*) back with (*his*) breast the enemies who, uniting together, came against (*him*);—he, by whom, having crossed in warfare the seven mouths of the (river) Sindhu, the Vāhlikas were conquered;—he, by the breezes of whose prowess the southern ocean is even still perfumed;—

(Line 3.) “ He, the remnant of the great zeal of whose energy, which utterly destroyed (*his*) enemies, like (*the remnant of the great glowing heat*) of a burned-out fire in a great forest, even now leaves not the earth; though he, the king, as if wearied, has quitted this earth, and has gone to the other world, moving in (*bodily*) form to the land (*of paradise*) won by (*the merit of his*) actions, (*but*) remaining on (*this*) earth by (*the memory of his*) fame;—

(Line 5.) “ By him, the king—who attained sole supreme sovereignty in the world, acquired by his own arm, and (*enjoyed*) for a very long time; (*and*) who,

The only passage of which the rendering can be considered in the least doubtful is that rendered by Dr. Fleet "having in faith fixed his mind upon (the god) Viṣṇu," and by me, "whose thoughts were devoted in faith to Viṣṇu." The word *bhāvēna*, which we translate "in faith," is actually *dhāvēna*. The earlier translators regarded this word as a proper name, and supposed the name of the king commemorated to be Dhāva. But the construction of the sentence scarcely admits of this interpretation. The use of the two names Dhāva and Candra for the one person in such a brief record, without a word of explanation or amplification, would be intolerably harsh composition, and it is to my mind quite incredible that the writer intended to give the king two names. The correction from *dhāvēna* to *bhāvēna* appears to be both necessary and certain. The error is easily explained by the fact that a very slight slip of the engraver's tool was sufficient to convert the character used for *bh* into a form which may be read as *dh*.¹

The purport of the record is, therefore, known with certainty; and the difficulties of interpreting it are of a historical, not a philological, nature.

The facts recorded are, that the pillar was erected in honour of Viṣṇu on Mount Viṣṇupada (Viṣṇu's foot) by a monarch named Candra, who had long enjoyed world-wide sovereignty, but was deceased at the time when the inscription was engraved, and that this sovereign had

having the name of Candra, carried a beauty of countenance like (*the beauty of*) the full moon—having in faith fixed his mind upon (*the god*) Viṣṇu, this lofty standard of the divine Viṣṇu was set up on the hill (*called*) Viṣṇupada."

The translation of the words *abhiḥkhitā khaḍgēna kirttirbhuyē*, "fame was written on [his] arm by the sword," is plain enough, but the meaning is obscure. Prinsep, who used an inaccurate text, supposed the pillar itself to be referred to as "the arm," and that "the letters cut upon it are called the typical cuts inflicted upon his enemies by his sword, writing his immortal fame" (*J.A.S.B.*, vii, 630, quoted in Cunningham, "Reports," i, 170). The poet probably did intend to suggest that the pillar was the uplifted arm of Candra, as well as the standard of Viṣṇu. The Allāhabād Pillar is called "an arm of the earth" (*Gupta Inscriptions*, p. 10). I have suggested another interpretation in the text.

¹ "I read his name preferably as *Bhāva*, the letter *bh* having got closed by the accidental slip of the punching chisel. The letter is different from every other *dh* in the inscription." (Cunningham, "Reports," i, 171.) This observation is correct. The letter *dh* occurs in six other places.

defeated a hostile confederacy in the Vaṅga countries, and had, after crossing the seven mouths of the Sindhu, or Indus, vanquished the Vāhlikas.

The probable meaning of these statements will now be considered.

The *Brhat Samhitā* places the countries Vaṅga, or Vāṅga, and Upavaṅga, in the south-east division; and incidentally mentions several times the Vāhlika country and people, the name being variously spelled as Vāhlika, Vāhlika, Bāhlika, or Bāhlika. Dr. Kern translates the word as Balkh, but, as Dr. Fleet observes, that rendering cannot well be applied to the record of Candra's exploits (*Ind. Ant.*, xxii, pp. 174, 192, 193). The tribe vanquished by him should probably be located somewhere in Balūchistān.

"The Vaṅga countries" presumably mean Bengal, or Baṅga, including the Upavaṅga, or Bengal minor, of the *Brhat Samhitā*. The province of Baṅga, according to Cunningham, "was bounded by the Brahmaputra on the west, the Ganges on the south, the Megna on the east, and the Khasia hills on the north. It contained the old cities of Dhākka and Sunārgaon." ("Reports," xv, 145.) The expression "the Vaṅga countries" may, therefore, be fairly interpreted as meaning Lower Bengal generally.

The identity of the Candra who fought campaigns in Lower Bengal and across the Indus has not hitherto been conclusively determined. Dr. Fleet is inclined to identify him with Candra Gupta I, but this identification seems absolutely impossible. The list of Samudra Gupta's conquests proves that the dominions of his predecessor, Candra Gupta I, were of moderate extent, and it is incredible that his arms ever penetrated either into Bengal or Balūchistān. The fact that the Iron Pillar is situated in the village of Mihrauli, the name of which is a corruption of Mihrapuri, suggested to Dr. Fleet the alternative conjecture that the monarch commemorated might have been himself a Mihira. The Mihiras (or Maitrakas) were "a branch of the Hūṇas" (*Ind. Ant.*, xv, p. 361). Dr. Fleet,

therefore, thinks it possible that Candra may be an unnamed younger brother of Mihirakula (*circa* A.D. 515–544), whose existence is mentioned by Hiuen Tsiang.

This conjecture does not seem to fit the language of the record. The White Hun chief Mihirakula was a very powerful personage, but his younger brother could not have claimed the sole supreme sovereignty of the world.

The alphabetical characters belong to what Dr. Hoernle (who is probably now the greatest authority on Gupta palaeography) calls the Gupta variety of the North-Eastern alphabet. The Indian inscriptions in this character range from the time of Samudra Gupta (Farīdpur inscription of Dharmāditya) to the year A.D. 467 in the reign of Skanda Gupta (Garhwā inscription dated G.E. 148, No. 66 of Fleet). Dr. Hoernle points out that nearly all the inscriptions in the North-Eastern alphabet are crowded together in the home-provinces of the Gupta empire, and belong to the reigns of Candra Gupta II, his son, and grandson. The only inscriptions in this alphabet which come from western localities are the Udayagiri Cave inscriptions of Candra Gupta II (No. 6 of Fleet) and this Mihrauli inscription of Candra. Dr. Hoernle, therefore, unhesitatingly ascribes the Iron Pillar to Candra Gupta II, and assigns it the approximate date of A.D. 410 (*Ind. Ant.*, vol. xxi, pp. 42–4). In spite of the wording of the Iron Pillar record, which departs widely from the ordinary formula of the Gupta inscriptions, I am convinced that Dr. Hoernle is right, and that the mysterious emperor Candra can be no other than Candra Gupta II, in whose reign the Gupta empire attained its climax. But the date fixed by Dr. Hoernle is a little too early.

The latest dated inscription of Candra Gupta II (Sāñcī, No. 5 of Fleet) is dated G.E. 93, and the earliest inscription of his son and successor, Kumāra Gupta I, is dated G.E. 96 (Bilsāḍ, No. 10 of Fleet). The accession of Kumāra Gupta I and the demise of his father must, therefore, have taken place at some time during the years 93 to 96 of the Gupta era. The possible error is very slight if

the death of Candra Gupta II is dated in G.E. 95, equivalent roughly to A.D. 413.

The erection of the pillar by Candra Gupta II, assuming his identity with Candra, may be assigned to that year, and the posthumous inscription commemorating Candra's victories, which was presumably executed by order of his successor soon after Candra's decease, must be dated not later than A.D. 415.

The fact is unquestionable that Candra Gupta II professed a special devotion to Viṣṇu. One of his favourite titles was *paramabhāgavata*, "the most devout worshipper of the Divine." The term *Bhagavat*, or Divine, may be applied to any god or object of worship, but it is specially appropriate to Viṣṇu, and in this inscription of Candra is applied to that form of the Deity. Dr. Fleet has proved that *paramabhāgavata* must be regarded as an exclusively Vaiṣṇava title, and equivalent to *paramavaiṣṇava*.¹

This title was used by Candra Gupta in two inscriptions, and in the legends of four types of his varied and extensive coinage.² It continued to be used by his son Kumāra Gupta I, and his grandson, Skanda Gupta.

The erection of the Iron Pillar as "the lofty standard of the divine Viṣṇu" by Candra Gupta II, and its dedication by Kumāra Gupta I, both princes who professed a special devotion to the god honoured, are natural and appropriate acts.

The use of the name Candra alone in the Iron Pillar inscription instead of the full form, Candra Gupta, is easily paralleled. For instance, Candra Gupta II himself uses indifferently the titles Śrī Vikrama and Śrī Vikramāditya; and many other examples might be quoted.³ The name Candra standing alone actually occurs on a series of minute

¹ "Gupta Inscriptions," p. 28.

² Namely, the Mathurā and Gadhwā inscriptions (Nos. 4 and 7 of "Gupta Inscriptions"); the Javelin, Horseman to Right, and Horseman to Left types of the gold, and the Vikramāditya types of the silver coinage. The silver coins belong to a period subsequent to the conquest of Surāṣṭra.

³ "Gupta Inscriptions," p. 9, note, where instances are given.

coins, those of the vase type, which are certainly approximately contemporary with the Iron Pillar inscription. I have now no doubt that these coins must be assigned to Candra Gupta II.¹

When to all these arguments is added this, that it is impossible to indicate any other sovereign of the period to whom the language of the inscription could be applied, the conclusion is inevitable that the Candra who set up the Iron Pillar, and whose exploits are briefly commemorated in the inscription on that monument, was beyond doubt Candra Gupta II.²

This determination is of very considerable historical importance. It settles within a year or two the date of a very remarkable and interesting monument, which has always attracted the wonder of travellers, and has become the object of more intelligent admiration since the difficulties attending its construction have been understood. Many of the older travellers supposed the pillar to be a casting made of brass or bronze, but the discovery that the material is pure malleable iron, which must have been forged, has filled experts with admiration of the mechanical skill capable of accomplishing so great a work. "It is not many years since the production of such a pillar would have been an impossibility in the largest foundries of the world, and even now there are comparatively few where a similar mass of metal could be turned out."³

Another iron pillar, which may be of the same age, exists at Dhār, the ancient Dhārā, now the chief town of

¹ V. A. Smith, "Coinage," pp. 143, 144.

² I reject absolutely the suggestion of Bābū Nagendra Nātha Vāsu that Candra of the Iron Pillar is to be identified with the Mahārāja Candravarman, son of Mahārāja Siddhavarman, who recorded a brief dedicatory inscription in characters of the Gupta period on the Susunīā hill, seventeen miles SSW. of the Rānigānj railway station in the Bānkurā District of Bengal. That chieftain, who is styled "lord of the Puṣkara lake," was probably the Candravarman mentioned in the Allāhābād pillar inscription as one of the kings of Āryavarta conquered by Samudra Gupta (Proc. A.S.B. for 1895, p. 177). He may have been king of Kāmarūpa, or Assam. It is very improbable that the Puṣkara lake in Ajmīr can be that referred to in this inscription from Lower Bengal, as the Bābū assumes that it is.

³ Valentine Ball, "Economic Geology of India," p. 338.

the Dhār State in Central India.¹ So far as I know, these two are the only notable iron pillars in existence. The worldwide belief in the special power of iron to counteract demoniacal influence² probably recommended the use of that material for the Delhi and Dhār pillars.

The Mihrauli inscription is also of interest because it confirms the fact of the exceptionally long reign of Candragupta II, which had been inferred from a study of his extremely varied coinage. The inscription distinctly affirms that the emperor had enjoyed the sole sovereignty for "a very long time" (*suciram*), and the fact thus affirmed, which is fully in accordance with the other evidence, may be accepted without hesitation. The magniloquent phrase, "sole supreme sovereignty of the world," must, of course, be interpreted with due limitations, as meaning merely the suzerainty of India north of the Narbadā. Nothing yet discovered indicates that Candragupta II repeated his father's incursions into peninsular India. The campaigns in Bengal and west of the Indus are known only from the Mihrauli record, and probably occurred at a late period of the reign, subsequent to A.D. 400. The earlier years of the reign were fully occupied with the permanent subjugation of Mālwa and Kathiāwār, or Surāṣṭra, and the consolidation of the extensive territories acquired by Samudra Gupta.

The questions whether or not the Iron Pillar occupies its original position, and if not, where that position must be sought, and when the pillar was removed, remain to be considered, and, if possible, answered.

According to local tradition, Delhi was deserted from B.C. 57 until the year 792 of the Vikrama era, equivalent to A.D. 735-6, when a city was founded by a prince of the Tōmara clan, variously named Ānanga Pāla [I] and Bilan

¹ "Gupta Inscriptions," p. 140, note 2. No detailed description of this pillar is known to me. Dr. Fleet observes that "there is no ancient inscription on it; unless it is completely hidden under, and destroyed by, a Persian inscription that was engraved on it when the Musulmans conquered that part of the country."

² Crooke, "An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India," p. 191. Allāhābād, 1894.

Dē. Abūl Fazl, in his summary, gives the date as 429 of the era of Vikrama, which, if corrected to the Gupta era, is equivalent to A.D. 747; and an inscription on the Iron Pillar itself is said to state the date as 419, which, interpreted in the same way, is equivalent to A.D. 737.¹ The popular belief is that this Ānanga Pāla I set up the Iron Pillar where it now stands.² But the popular belief takes no account of the inscription of Candrarāja, the date of which has been ascertained to be approximately A.D. 415, and the pillar was certainly actually erected only a short time before that date. It is, therefore, more than three centuries older than the period assumed by tradition for Ānanga Pāla I. I confess I have the greatest doubts as to the reality of the existence of this personage.

The first Ānanga Pāla of whom we possess any real knowledge is the chieftain called by Cunningham Ānanga Pāla II. A contemporary inscription of his is recorded on the Iron Pillar itself. This brief record is engraved in three lines, in the Hindī language, in characters similar to those of the mason's marks on the pillars of the colonnade of the great mosque. One of these pillars, No. 12, bears on one face the word *Kacal* in Nāgarī letters, and on another the date 1124 (v.s.), equivalent to A.D. 1067–8. The record on the Iron Pillar in similar characters is as follows:—

Samvat Dihali 1109 Ang Pāl bahi—"In Samvat 1109 [A.D. 1052–3] Āng [Ānang] Pāl peopled [founded] Delhi."³

The date of this Ānanga Pāla, the so-called Second, is, therefore, known with certainty, and the pillars of a temple erected in his reign still remain.⁴ A tank near the Qutb

¹ These traditions are discussed by Cunningham, "Reports," i, p. 137 seqq., and Carr Stephen, p. 11 seqq. The inscription on the Iron Pillar, which is said to give the date for Ānanga Pāla I as Samvat 419, has not been published. Abūl Fazl (Gladwin's "Ayeen Akbari," ii, 96) refers the date 429 to the Vikrama era, but Cunningham is probably right in interpreting the date as referable to the Gupta-Valabhi era.

² Chand is said to connect the legends of the Iron Pillar with Ānanga Pāla II. (Carr Stephen, p. 17.)

³ Cunningham, "Reports," i, 151.

⁴ Cunningham assigns him a reign of thirty years, A.D. 1051 to 1081; but the exact limits are not known. (Ibid., p. 149.)

mosque also bears his name, and tradition has preserved the names of a number of his descendants. Cunningham shows that the building operations of this Ānanga Pāla at Delhi were almost contemporaneous with the conquest of Kanauj by the Rathōrs, and that it was probably in consequence of that conquest that Ānanga Pāla established himself in Delhi.

Not a single historical event can be connected with any of the names inserted by the genealogists between Ānanga Pāli I and Ānanga Pāla II. Cunningham, who believed in the reality of the first Ānanga Pāla, and laboriously endeavoured to extract facts from the fictions of Hindu bards, admits that, "with the solitary exception of the Iron Pillar," there are no existing remains that can be assigned with certainty to the old Hindu city of Delhi. He fancied that one pillar, bearing a figure either of Buddha or of a Jain hierarch, might possibly be old, but, after a minute examination on three successive days, came to the unwilling conclusion that there is nothing now existing older than the tenth or eleventh century. The natural inference, to my mind, is that nothing older ever existed on the site. Cunningham was firmly persuaded that the Iron Pillar stood in its original position, and that the existence of such a monument implied the existence of an ancient city. He also cherished the illusion that there must be some historical foundation for the fictions which Hindu bards love to pass off as traditions handed down from a remote past, and could not bring himself to admit their absolute worthlessness. Quṭb-ud-dīn prided himself on having used up for his mosque the materials of twenty-seven temples of the idolaters. He was perfectly indifferent whether the temples dated from the eighth or the eleventh century, and, if buildings of the eighth century were in existence in his time, traces of them would now be visible in the mosque cloisters. But everything to be seen there is in the late mediaeval style, and may be referred approximately to the time of Ānanga Pāla II in the middle of the eleventh century.

In short, the building of old Delhi, that is to say, a town in or near Rai Pithaura's Fort, including a group of richly decorated temples, by Ānanga Pāla in the middle of the eleventh century, is a verified, certain fact, and the supposed foundation of a city on the same site by an Ānanga Pāla, in or about A.D. 736, is an unverified myth, unsupported by evidence and opposed to archaeological facts.

The reasonable inference from the known facts seems to be that when Ānanga Pāla, in A.D. 1052-3, recorded on the Iron Pillar his foundation of the city, he himself set up the pillar, and that the homonymous ancestor, with whom so many foolish legends are sometimes associated, is as fictitious as the legends. Chand's version, which associates the foolish legends with Ānanga Pāla II, is more reasonable, if the epithet reasonable may be applied to fiction. It is extremely improbable that Ānanga Pāla in the eleventh century found the Iron Pillar standing in a waste, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that any buildings of the fifth century, from the beginning of which the pillar certainly dates, ever existed on the spot. From these premises the conclusion necessarily follows that Ānanga Pāla brought the pillar from somewhere else, and set it up to adorn his new city, and to add sanctity to his temple of Viṣṇu. He acted, in fact, in the same way as kings have acted in all ages. Fīrōz Shāh Tughlaq took immense pains to move Aśōka's monoliths from Meerut and Topra to Dehli, and from Kauśāmbi to Prayāg, just as long afterwards Napoleon and other princes have thought no trouble too great to obtain possession of Egyptian obelisks for the decoration of their capitals.

The manner in which the Iron Pillar is fixed into the pavement is not, as Dr. Fleet fancied, an argument against the theory of the removal, but a strong argument in its support. The pavement, as has been proved above, is the eleventh-century pavement laid down by Ānanga Pāla, and covered over by a layer of rubbish due to Quṭb-ud-dīn. Into the surface layer of that pavement the Iron Pillar

is clamped by an iron grating secured with lead solder. The pavement certainly does not, like the pillar, date from the fifth century. It seems obviously to be the flooring of the great mediaeval group of temples destroyed by the Musalmāns. These iconoclasts were eager to overthrow the superstructure of the idol-covered temples, but had no motive for interfering with the massive flagged pavement resting on well-tried foundations of unknown depth. There is no reason to suppose that the pillar was ever disturbed since it was set up in that pavement, and it seems to my mind evident that it was set up at the time when the pavement was laid down.

These arguments are in themselves sufficient to prove that the pillar cannot occupy its original position. They are confirmed by an equally cogent argument drawn from the language of Candrar's inscription. That document expressly states that the pillar was erected on the lofty standard of the divine Viṣṇu, on a mount or hill (*giri*), known by the name of Viṣṇupada. This language necessarily implies that the monument was erected in a conspicuous, commanding position on the summit of a hill sufficiently isolated to bear a distinctive name. The pillar now stands in a practically level courtyard, situated in a depression with rising ground on each side. No violence to language could possibly justify the application of the term "hill" to the present site of the monument, and when the writer of the inscription said that the pillar was set up on the hill, it is impossible to doubt that he stated an obvious fact. Consequently the pillar must have been moved from its original site on a hill to its present site in a hollow.

The hill on which it was originally set up bore the name of Viṣṇu's Foot, presumably because it boasted of a rock bearing impressions reputed to be the footmarks of the god. The place where the hill known as Mount Viṣṇu's Foot existed must have been a well-known spot frequented by Vaiṣṇava pilgrims, within the Gupta dominions, and not very remote from Delhi. All the

conditions of such a position are satisfied by Mathurā. That city is less than eighty miles from the Quṭb Mīnār, was within the boundary of the Gupta empire, has many hills and mounds in or adjoining the city precincts, is one of the most ancient cities of India, and has been from time immemorial the site of famous temples of Viṣṇu, and a centre of Vaiṣṇava worship. Inscriptions both of Candragupta II, who erected the Iron Pillar, and of his son, Kumāragupta I, who inscribed it, have been found at Mathurā.¹ For these reasons it seems to me to be extremely probable that the Iron Pillar was originally erected at Mathurā. The Katra mound, where the magnificent temple of Viṣṇu, under the name of Kēśava, once stood, may very probably prove to be *Viṣṇupadagiri*, the Mount of Viṣṇu's Footmark, mentioned in the inscription.

To sum up, my conclusions are—

1. The tradition that Delhi (that is to say, a city near the Quṭb Mīnār) was founded or refounded by Ānangapāla I in or about A.D. 736, is untrustworthy, and not supported by evidence. It is probable that Ānangapāla I is a myth.
2. Delhi (in the sense stated above) was certainly founded, or refounded, by a prince named Ānangapāla in A.D. 1052–3, who then constructed a group of temples. The floor of the platform of that group still exists as the floor of the Quṭb mosque and courtyard. The Iron Pillar is clamped into that floor, and was set up when the floor was laid down.
3. The Iron Pillar was moved from its original site by Ānangapāla in or about A.D. 1050.
4. The original site of the pillar was at or near Mathurā, on the top of a hill or mound known as Viṣṇupada.
5. The pillar is a solid mass of pure malleable iron weighing over six tons, not cast, but constructed by a welding process.

¹ Mathurā Stone Inscription of Candragupta II (No. 4, "Gupta Inscriptions"); Inscription dated G.E. 113 (No. 39, *Epigraphia Indica*, ii, 198).

6. It was originally surmounted by a statue, which was probably removed by the Muhammadans.
 7. It was set up by Candra Gupta II, at the close of his reign, in honour of his favourite divinity Viṣṇu.
 8. Candra Gupta having died before the inscription could be prepared, the pillar was inscribed by order of his son and successor, Kumāra Gupta I, in or about the year A.D. 415.
 9. The inscription establishes the historical facts that Candra Gupta II enjoyed a very long reign, and that he waged successful wars against a confederacy in Lower Bengal, and against the Vāhlikas, west of the Indus.
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