

## ŚAKA ERA

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The *Śaka era* has been adopted for the national reckoning by the Government of India and was the most popular for dating texts and inscriptions, especially in Deccan and South India. But there were differing traditions about the circumstances surrounding its origin. The earliest tradition traced it to the coronation of Śaka king(s) which was followed by another tracing its commencement to commemorate the termination of the Śaka rule, while the latest one associated it with Śālivāhana = Sātavāhana. Modern scholars have also been debating this problem for over a century, and the most popular view at present is that the Kuṣāna king Kanīṣka I ascended the throne in 78 AD when the *Śaka era* commenced. After critically analysing all the relevant data it has been established that the era was started by or was counted from the accession of the Śaka king Caṣṭana.

**Key words** : Caṣṭana, Kanīṣka I, *Śaka era*.

The *Śaka era* happens to be one of the two ancient Indian eras still current in India and Nepal, the other being called *Vikrama samvat*. An added feature about it is that it has been adopted by the Government of India after independence as the official era alongwith the Christian one both of which are employed for all official purposes and are mentioned and shown daily on the All-India Radio and the Doordarshan respectively. It commenced in 78 AD, 135 years later than the *Vikrama era*.

As indicated by its very name, the *Śaka era* has an undoubted extraneous origin. However, since there exists a great divergence of opinion on the question of its exact origin and originator, it would be advisable to have at one place all the evidence, epigraphic, numismatic and literary, which should help provide an adequate perspective for a proper appreciation of the problem and its satisfactory solution.

In epigraphs the reckoning is referred to variously. It is well known that the inscriptions and coins of the *Śaka Kṣatrapas* of western India (viz. Gujarat and the Malwa region of the present state of Madhya Pradesh) form the earliest known documents dated in this era; but in these records the years of this reckoning are mentioned without any specification of its nomenclature simply as *varṣa* or 'year' as if it were a year of the reign of the concerned ruler, and this is quite natural as the era was in all probability not started consciously by the beat of a drum<sup>1</sup> but resulted from the continuation of the

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regnal reckoning of a king by his successors uninterruptedly. In the inscriptions of these rulers the dates range from the year<sup>2</sup> 6 to the year<sup>3</sup> 203 and on their coins from the year<sup>4</sup> 100 to 337. It appears that the era had already got formally associated with the Śaka because of its continuous employment by them and come to be known as *Śaka-kāla* (or by some similar names) during, if not earlier than, the later part of the rule of the Kardamaka Śaka Kṣatrapas of western India towards the close of its second century. For, the *Yavana-jātaka* of Sphujidhvaja,<sup>5</sup> said to have been completed in its expired year<sup>6</sup> 191, mentions it as *samānāmī Śakānām*<sup>7</sup> ('of the years of the Śakas' or 'of the years of the reckoning called Śaka') and *kālamī Śakānām*<sup>8</sup> ('the era of the Śakas'), the latter at least being the same as our *Śaka-kāla*<sup>9</sup> respectively found employed only slightly later in inscriptions. In inscriptions the era is first formally referred to the Śaka kings in the Wālā (Thāṇe district, Maharashtra) or the Bhoja-Maurya king Suketuvarman recording the consecration of the god Koṭīśvara on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha in Śaka 322 current<sup>10</sup>. In the *Hisse-Borūlā* inscription of the time of the Vākātaka king Devasena (of the Wāsim branch) its date is expressed as the year 380 of the Śaka (*Śakānam* 380)<sup>11</sup>, which is apparently the same as the *Śakānām samānām* of the *Yavana-Jātaka*. It gets regularly associated with the Śakas in inscriptions from the time of the Cālukyās of Badāmī, and the earliest known inscription of the dynasty, Badāmī Rock inscription of Vallabheśvara (Pulakeśin I), is dated *Śaka-varṣa*<sup>12</sup> 465. In a few other inscriptions of the Cālukyās of Badāmī it is referred to as *Śaka-nṛpati-rājy-ābhīṣeka-saṃvatsara*,<sup>13</sup> *Śaka-nṛpati-kāla*<sup>14</sup> and *Śaka-bhūbhujā-kāla*<sup>15</sup>. In Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscriptions it is mentioned by such names as *Śaka-nṛpa saṃvatsara*<sup>16</sup> and *Śaka-nṛpa-kāla*.<sup>17</sup> In other Cālukya (Badāmī) and Rāṣṭrakūṭa records it is referred to only as *Śaka-kāla* or *Śaka-varṣa*. In later inscriptions it is mentioned merely as *Śaka-saṃvat*, *Śaka-saṃvatsara*, *Śaka-kāla*, *Śaka-kāla-saṃvatsara*, *Śaka-varṣa*, *Śakābda*, *Śaka*, etc. The derivative form *Śaka* is also met with quite frequently. As for, literature, next to the evidence from the *Yavana-jātaka* of Sphujidhvaja cited above, its earliest known association with the Śaka is met with in Siṃhasūri's *Loka-vibhāga* composed in the thirty - second year of the reign of Siṃhavarman, the Pallava king of Kāñcī, corresponding to the Śaka year 380.<sup>18</sup> However, what we now have is only a revised and enlarged Sanskrit version of the Prakrit work of Sarvanandin,<sup>19</sup> and there is at present no means to ascertain if the original Prakrit work composed in Śaka 380 also contained the expression *Śakābda* though there is nothing impossible in it. However, the earliest definitely datable mention of the era together with its association with the Śakas or Śaka king/kings in so far as literary sources are concerned is to be encountered in Varāhamihira's writings. In his *Bṛhat-saṃhitā* he refers to it as *Śaka-kāla* (XIII. 4), *Śakendra-kāla* (VIII. 20) and *Śaka-bhūpa-kāla* (VIII. 21) and in *pañca-siddhāntikā* (I. 8) as *Śakākāla*.<sup>20</sup> Next the well-known astronomer Brahmagupta in his *Brāhma-sphuṭa-siddhānta* (composed in Śaka 550=628 AD) refers to its years as of the Śaka kings,<sup>21</sup> and Vaṭesvara (Śaka 702) calls it *Śakendra-kāla*.<sup>22</sup> There are several such expressions as well as the usual names known from inscriptions that are mentioned in numerous other contemporary and later texts.<sup>23</sup>

The foregoing hurried survey of the extant literary and epigraphic evidence would show that initially its years are mentioned without naming it. But from the beginning of the last decade of its second century we find it associated with and named after the Śakas or Śaka king/kings. It was regarded to have come into existence from the coronation of a Śaka king. In any case, this should suffice to prove its initiation by some Śaka king. Later, however, a very strange development took place, and the era came to be seen as commemorating the end of the Śaka power. Its culmination is to be noticed in the Arabic polymath Abu al-Raihan ibn Ahmad, better known as alberuni, observed in his *Kitab-ul-Hind*, composed early in the second quarter of the eleventh century AD, on the basis of the beliefs then current in India and conveyed to him by his informers and found elaborated in some earlier works consulted by him, as follows: "The epoch of the era of Śaka or Śakakāla falls 135 years later than that of Vikramāditya. The here-mentioned Śaka tyrannised over their country between the river Sindh and the ocean after he had made Āryāvarta in the midst of this realm his dwelling place..... The Hindus had much to suffer from him, till at last they received help from the east, when Vikramāditya marched against him, put him to flight and killed him in the region of Karur, between Multan and the castle of Loni. Now this date became famous<sup>24</sup>. The only problem that puzzled him and made him not to accept it unhesitatingly was long gap of 135 years between the reckonings known after Vikramāditya and the Śakas, he tried an explanation of the traditions concerning these eras in his own way.<sup>25</sup> Its beginnings are, however, noticed much earlier. Beginning in a descending order, Udayana in his *Lakṣaṇāvalī*, a work on logic, says at the end that he completed his work when 906 years had elapsed from the end of the Śakas<sup>26</sup> Āmarāja, in his gloss on the *Khaṇḍa-khādyaka* of Brahmagupta, states that the Śakas were foreign (*mleccha*) kings and the time when they were killed by Vikramāditya, which is connected with the Śakas, is known as Śaka.<sup>27</sup> Another commentator on this work, Pṛthūdaka, (*circa* 864 AD), also says the same thing when he observes that the Śakas were foreign (*mleccha*) rulers and the epoch of their being killed is very famous<sup>28</sup>. Bhaṭṭa Utpala (830-31 AD<sup>29</sup>) also observes in his scholium on the *Brhatsamhitā* (VIII. 20) that time when the foreign rulers known as Śaka were destroyed by the illustrious Vikramāditya is well-known in the world as Śaka or Śakendra-kāla.<sup>30</sup> Another astrological writer, Vaṭeśvara (Śaka 702), also states that his work was completed when 702 years had elapsed since the conclusion (i.e. destruction) of the Śakas<sup>31</sup> The famous astronomer, Brahmagupta (born Śaka 520), states in his *Brāhmasphuṭa-siddhānta* that 3179 years of the *Kali-yuga* had passed when the Śakas came to an end<sup>32</sup>. This is also echoed in the following stanza where the expression is Śka-ṛṇp-ānte.<sup>33</sup> Thus from about 628 AD people believed and writers echoed the popular notion that the Śaka era then current commemorated not coming into power. of the Śakas or Śaka kings. This belief seems to find some support from a few inscriptional allusions as well. It is well-known that normally expired (*atīta*) years of the Śaka era are specified, and the expression Śaka-ṛṇpa-kāl-āṭita-saṃvatsara (expired years of the Śaka king/kings) is of quite frequent occurrence in inscriptions, but when

another *atīta* or *gata* is used after specifying the number of years, this wording assumes extraordinary significance and must be understood to refer to the 'expired years counted from the end of the time of the Śāka king/king's. Thus, the Sūrat plates of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler Karkarāja Suvarṇavarṣa, dated Śāka 743, contain the expression *Śāka-nṛpa-kāl-ātīta-saṃvatsara-śateṣu saptasu tri-catvāriṃśad = adhikeṣu (ṣv-a) tīteṣu*,<sup>34</sup> while in the Kauṭhem plates of the Kalyāṇa Cālukya king Vikramāditya V we are encountered by the phrase *Śāka-nṛpa-kāl-ātīta-saṃvatsara-śateṣu navasu triṃśad = adhikeṣu gateṣu 930*.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Somadevasūri, in the colophon of his work *Yaśastilaka-campū* says that it was completed in the expired year 881 since the end of the time of the Śāka kings.<sup>36</sup> There are numerous other indications of the prevalence of this unfounded notion.<sup>37</sup> This was undoubtedly due to an uncalled for confusion of this reckoning with that of king Vikrama commencing in 57 BC as we have shown elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> What is strange is that such a belief was current regarding the circumstances leading to the origin of the Gupta era also as we are told by Alberuni<sup>39</sup> and we need not attach undue importance to these notions.<sup>40</sup>

A still more astonishing development took place during the early medieval period when this reckoning of foreign origin came to be associated with and regarded as initiated by king Śālivāhana (= Sātavāhana) of Pratiṣṭhāna (modern Paiṭhan, Jalna district, Maharashtra). There came into vogue various traditions regarding the circumstances leading to its foundation. According to the *Muhūrtamārtaṇḍa* composed in Śāka 1493, it commemorates the birth of king Śālivāhana.<sup>41</sup> An earlier text, *Kalpa-pradīpa* by the Jaina author Jinaprabhasūri (circa 1300 AD), tells us that Śālivāhana was born of a Brāhmana widow living at Pratiṣṭhāna. He defeated king Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī and became sovereign of the entire region up to the river Tāpī with Pratiṣṭhāna for his capital and started his own era.<sup>42</sup> These references emanate from texts dating from thirteenth-fourteenth century AD, while it is found mentioned by the name Śālivāhana-Śāka much earlier. The earliest known such literary work is the Kannaḍa poem entitled *Udbhaṭa-Kāvya* by Somarāja completed in the expired Śāka year 1144 (1222 AD),<sup>43</sup> whereas in inscriptions it appears at least a couple of centuries earlier. The earliest yet known reference to it as Śālivāhana - Śāka comes from Madhya Pradesh. An inscription at Udayagiri (Vidiṣā district) speaks of the construction of a temple of Śiva by the Paramāra King Udayāditya in the Vikrama year 1118 corresponding to the expired year 981 of king Śālivāhana.<sup>44</sup> The next reference, this time from Maharashtra, is met with in a Marathi epigraph at the Viṭhobā temple at Paṇḍharpur dated Śālivāhana-Śāka 1110 = 1188 AD<sup>45</sup>. The next known reference is found in the Tāsgāon plates, dated Śālivāhana-Śāka 1172 expired = 1251 AD, of the Yādava king Kṛṣṇa,<sup>46</sup> followed by the Ṭhāṇe plates of Ramacandra, of the same dynasty dated Śālivāhana-Śāka 1212.<sup>47</sup> It becomes more common during the period of the Vijayanagara rulers.<sup>48</sup> These allusions are indicative of the spread and growing popularity of this strange notion. It is noteworthy, however, that while the number of such references grows gradually, the era continues to be referred to as *Śāka-nṛpa-kāla*

simultaneously and the number of such records is much larger<sup>49</sup>. When the name Śālivāhana came to be employed as that of the era itself, the original name - Śaka, which still clung to it, became a general term meaning any era as such, so that the general expression is Śālivāhana-Śaka. The word *Śaka* thus became synonymous with *saṃvat* or *saṃvatsara* and is found used by itself sometimes for Vikrama era also just as very often *saṃvat/saṃvatsara* alone stands for Vikrama Saṃvat.<sup>50</sup>

The genesis of this strange development cannot be ascertained at present. However, as the era was current primarily in the Deccan and western India where the Śālivāhana tradition was still quite popular and the rule of the Śakas was almost forgotten with the passage of time, it was attributed to the former, of course quite against known historical facts. This tradition appears to have been developed in Maharashtra.<sup>51</sup> While other regions, especially Karnataka, might have contributed to it to some extent.<sup>52</sup> According to some scholars, this purely fictitious development was due to competition with king Vikramāditya. D.C. Sircar observes, "The association of king Vikramāditya, originally of North Indian tradition, with the Vikramasaṃvat led to the people of the South to fabricate the relation of Śātavāhana or Śālivāhana, with the other popular in the South."<sup>53</sup> "The association of the Scytho-Parthian (viz. Vikrama) era," says he, "with the name of another popular hero of Indian tradition and folklore, viz. Vikramāditya, should not therefore be looked upon as a unique case in the history of India."<sup>54</sup> However, there was in reality no question of any such competition as the Vikrama era, as we have shown elsewhere,<sup>55</sup> had nothing to do with the Scytho-Parthians and was purely indigenous to India. Some other scholars feel, "unhesitatingly" though quite unreasonably, that "the Śaka era was rechristened as Śālivāhana Śaka historically by the Śātavāhanas themselves", most probably by Yajña, "the last and most powerful Śātavāhana ruler... who fully avenged Kārdamaka Śakas" though they themselves never called it by this new name even as the Kṣatrapas did not call it Śaka themselves.<sup>56</sup> We have as of now no evidence absolutely dating back to such an early age and its earliest document is separated from the end of the period of Śātavāhana rule by over eight centuries.

Ever since the era came to scholarly notice, attempts have been made to detect its founder or initiator, and various theories which are no better than surmises have been proposed in the absence of any definite information of this point. Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji at first identified its founder with the Śaka king Vonones known from an extensive series of silver and base metal coins.<sup>57</sup> but he changed this position in favour of the Kṣaharāta Mahākṣatrapa Nahapāna who, he now said, inaugurated the era to commemorate his victory over the Śātavāhana king Sātakarṇi and named it after his Śaka overlord.<sup>58</sup> D.R. Bhandarkar felt that Nahapāna could not be its founder who must have belonged to the imperial Śaka dynasty who could only have been Vonones<sup>59</sup>. Sten Konow was the first scholar to attribute its foundation to a Kuṣāṇa king, though he favoured for this honour Vima Kadphises,<sup>60</sup> not Kaniṣka I as usual among the

scholars supporting a Kuṣāṇa origin theory. He makes a reference to the story of the Jaina *ācārya* Kālaka (*Kālakācārya-kathānaka*) according to which there were two, not one, Śaka conquests, viz. one a few years prior to the beginning of the Vikrama era of 58 BC and the other 135 years there after, which he treats trustworthy. The reckoning in question was, according to him, in commemoration of the second conquest by Vima Kadphises whom he is at great pains to prove to be a Śaka.<sup>61</sup> He calls it the second Śaka era. The western Kṣatrapas of Saurāṣṭra and Mālwā whose records are dated in this reckoning were, according to him, his viceroys in these regions. These theories, though propounded with great efforts, are no longer taken seriously in scholarly circles. The most popular view now is that originally propounded by James Fergusson attributing the foundation of this reckoning to the Kuṣāṇa emperor Kaniṣka I.<sup>62</sup> This view has been followed or championed by additional arguments by several European and most of the Indian scholars who have written on the subject. They include, *inter alia*, E.J. Rapson,<sup>63</sup> A.M. Boyer,<sup>64</sup> J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw,<sup>65</sup> A.L. Basham,<sup>66</sup> H.C. Ray Chaudhuri,<sup>67</sup> J.N. Banerjee,<sup>68</sup> V.V. Mirashi,<sup>69</sup> D.C. Sircar,<sup>70</sup> B.N. Mukherjee<sup>71</sup> and several others. These scholars rightly point out that Kaniṣka I had initiated a reckoning, viz. his regnal years were continued by his successors resulting in the evolution of an era. We have for Kaniṣka I records dated in years 2-23, Vāsiṣka (or Vājheṣka or such other variants), dated in years 24-28, for Huviṣka, dated in years 28-60, for Kaniṣka, son of Vāsiṣka, dated in year 41, and for Vāsudeva I, dated in years 67-98. Thus it is obvious that from Kaniṣka I started a reckoning running at least for 98 years, and it is proposed to identify this reckoning with the Śaka era, for during the period they propose to place Kaniṣka I's reign there is no other era except that known as Śaka. But this by itself does establish that Kaniṣka I was the founder of the Śaka era of 78 AD. It is, of course, suggested that the Śaka Kṣatrapas of Western India (Gujarat and Mālwā), who used this era for dating their inscriptions and coins up to the year 337, were viceroys or provincial governors of the Kuṣāṇas and consequently were obliged to employ the era of their masters and because of a long association with them it got the name *Śaka-kāla*. However, there are some weighty objections against this equation. First, there is absolutely no evidence to prove that the Śaka Kṣatrapas were in any way connected with, not to speak of their being subordinates to, the Kuṣāṇas. Even after their immigration to Saurāṣṭra and Mālwā they continued the use of the gubernatorial titles Kṣatrapa and Mahākṣatrapa as a matter of habit without implying any kind of subordination to any other power even as Puṣyāmitra remained content with the military title *senāpati* even after killing the last Maurya king and throwing off the Maurya authority and performing the horse sacrifice symbolising supreme sovereignty. And even if one were to concede, for argument's sake, on the basis of the titles that the Śaka Kṣatrapas were subordinates, there is absolutely no indication that their overlords were the Kuṣāṇas. As of now there is nothing whatever to prove that they had brought far-flung Deccanese areas under their authority and the Kṣatrapas were their representatives there. The latter issued their own distinctive series of silver and base metal coins which are quite independent of any Kuṣāṇa gold coins which are not

known to have been found in any noticeable quantity anywhere in the Deccan despite numerous excavations and explorations at several ancient sites<sup>71</sup>. It is no doubt true that an inscription of Nahapāna's time at Nāsik mentions a denomination of gold coins called *suvarṇa* and value vis-a-vis *kārṣāpaṇa*,<sup>72</sup> but, as we have shown elsewhere,<sup>73</sup> it refers to the Imperial Roman *aureus*, and not the gold coins of the Kuṣāṇas, as commonly believed.<sup>74</sup> We now have a large number of stone inscriptions of the Śaka Kṣatrapas,<sup>75</sup> but none of them contains any indication of their being subservient to the Imperial Kuṣāṇas and they don't name any Kuṣāṇa emperor at all<sup>75a</sup>. It is sometimes argued that they did not assume imperial titles.<sup>76</sup> This argument carries one nowhere as the Śaka Kṣatrapas assumed the title *rājan*, which was the usual title for sovereign rulers in those early days, on their numerous coins and in inscriptions<sup>77</sup>. Till the early centuries AD, in the Deccan at least, *rājan* by itself was borne as the regal title by all the sovereign rulers, and even the Sātavāhana emperors were happy with this title only and it is met with in all their inscriptions and coins. It is only in some of their *praśasti* (eulogy) type inscriptions like the Nasik cave inscription of the nineteenth year of the reign of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Puḷumāvi that the somewhat bombastic-looking title *rājarāja* is employed for his father Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi<sup>78</sup> while he himself (Puḷumāvi) is denied this sobriquet. Unfortunately, except the solitary Jūnāgaḍ inscription of Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman I<sup>79</sup> we have no other inscription eulogising any Kṣatrapa ruler, all the rest being only in the nature of matter-of-fact statements. And this inscription eulogises Rudradāman I in hyperbolic terms like 'one who had acquired the title *mahākṣatrapa* by himself' (*svayam=adhigata-mahākṣatrapa-nāmnā*), 'one who had acquired by his own valour all the people'<sup>80</sup> (of the countries named thereafter), 'the extirpator (forcefully) of the *Yaudheyas* who had become arrogant by their title 'hero' among all the *Kṣatriyas*' (*sarvva-āviṣkṛta-vīra-śabda-jāt-otsek-āvidheyānām yaudheyānām prasahy-otsādakena*), 'one who had obtained fame by not extirpating Sātakarṇi, the lord of Dakṣiṇāpatha, whom he had completely defeated twice because of closeness of relations' (*Dakṣiṇāpatha-pateḥ Śatakarṇer=dvir=api nirvyājan=avajity-āvajitya sambaṃdh-āvidūratayā anutsādanāt prāpta-yaśasā*), etc.<sup>80a</sup> Even for Candragupta Maurya only the simple title *rājan* alone is used, and in the Deccan and South India the same title continued to be employed by the sovereign rulers at least up to the Vākāṭaka period<sup>81</sup>. Then again, it was not absolutely essential for a subordinate ruler to employ the reckoning adopted or initiated by his suzerain in ancient India, though most subordinates did so as a matter of convenience. Thus, even though early members of the Aulikara dynasty of Daśapura (modern Mandasor) were vassals of the Imperial Guptas who had their own era, they continued to employ the MalavāVikrama era in their inscriptions without any hitch<sup>82</sup>. Moreover, while we have absolutely no indication of the continuation of the Kaniṣka era beyond its year 98, the Śaka era continues even now. Then, the era, as we have seen above, though probably resulting from the continuation of the initiator's regnal years by his successors, came very much within the period of the Kṣatrapas, to be called after the Śakas as early as its year 191, as indicated by the evidence furnished by the *Yavana-jātaka* of Spjuhijdhvaja. Moreover,

the Indian tradition made a clear distinction between the Śakas and the Kuṣāṇas. In later times they were believed to belong to the Turuṣka stock as suggested by the description of Kaniṣka in the *Rāja-tarangiṇī* (I. 170) of Kalhaṇa (1149-50 AD).<sup>83</sup> This statement seems to be supported by the Jain author Hemacandra who in his *Abhidhāna-cintāmaṇi* (verse 959) describes the Turuṣkas as *śākhis* which is evidently an error for *śāhi* which was employed as a title by the Kuṣāṇas on their numerous coins and in Brāhmī inscriptions. The regal title *yavuga* or *yaua* (chief) used in the Kharoṣṭhī-Prakrit legend on the reverse and *zaouu* in the Greek legend on the obverse of the copper coins of Lujula Kadphises, one of the earliest Kuṣāṇa monarchs, is sought to be explained as an Indianised form of the Turkish title *jabgu*.<sup>84</sup> A few other earlier authorities would have us believe that Kaniṣka belonged to the Kuṣa or Tukhāra (or Tuṣāra) Stock. The Chinese translation of the *Kalpanā-maṇḍatikā* of the Buddhist writer Kumāralāta, which was composed shortly after Kaniṣka's time, informs us that Kaniṣka (Kia-ni-cha) was born in the family (*kula*) of Kiu-ṣa (Kuṣa).<sup>85</sup> The late Tibetan tradition, based on Maṛceta's original Sanskrit text entitled *Mahārājaj-Kani* (*ś*) *ka-lekha*, of which only a Tibetan rendering is now available, refers to king Kanika (Kaniṣka) as a northern king of the Kuṣa race.<sup>86</sup> Some scholars believe that the dynastic name Kuṣāṇa is a derivative from Kuṣa,<sup>87</sup> while others hold that both the forms were prevalent.<sup>88</sup> In Tibetan sources, it has been pointed out, the family or race to which Kaniṣka I belonged is mentioned both as Kuṣa Kuṣāṇa, *kuṣa* and *kuṣana* Tibetan meaning 'a kind of sacred grass' and 'a class of flower respectively'.<sup>89</sup> The reason for substituting Kuṣa and *Kuṣana* for the Indian Kuṣa and *Kuṣāṇa* respectively in the Tibetan sources, as suggested by Mukherjee,<sup>90</sup> might have been due to the Tibetans' desire to replace apparently meaningless names by names intelligible to them. In fact, the name Kuṣāṇa appears to be an Indianised form of the Chinese Kuei-shuang, one of the five sects into which the Yueh-chih people got divided in Bactria and established themselves in rule over a large part of the Indian subcontinent in due course. Sten Konow has taken great pains to show that the Kuṣāṇas were Śakas by culture and nationality,<sup>91</sup> but as demonstrated convincingly by Mukherjee, there exists enough evidence to prove that the Yueh-chih from whom the Kuṣāṇas sprang were in no way Śaka by nationality.<sup>92</sup> It has been pointed out that certain Chinese texts tend to suggest that the name Yueh-chih = Tou-ch'u-lo was rendered in India as Tukhāra or Tuṣāra,<sup>93</sup> a people who are mentioned by this name in Indian literature.<sup>94</sup> It is of no great consequence to us in the present context whether the Kuṣāṇas were actually Turuṣka (Turkish), Kuṣa or Tukhāra (or Tuṣāra). In any case, this much is absolutely certain that in ancient Indian tradition they were never called Śaka,<sup>95</sup> whereas the Śaka Kṣatrapas of western India were definitely known as Śaka. Thus, the reckoning of Kaniṣka could not have been known as *Śaka-kāla*. Moreover, there is a perceptible difference in the mode of dating the Kuṣāṇa and the Śaka Kṣatrapa inscriptions.<sup>96</sup> It is sometimes argued that a reckoning need not always be known after its initiator but could also derive its name from those other powers with whom it was associated because of its use by them over a long period, and since the Śaka Kṣatrapas employed



it for centuries for dating their inscriptions and coins the reckoning in question came to be called Śaka even though it was initiated by the Kuṣāṇa king Kaniṣka I.<sup>97</sup> But this argument does not cut much ice. For it is not after its use for a long time by the Śakas, but just after, and perhaps before, the passage of just one century and nine decades of its initiation that we find it clearly associated with and called after the Śakas.<sup>98</sup> It would indeed be surprising if at such an early date the memory of its association with the Kuṣāṇas had been forgotten if the reckoning were really initiated by Kaniṣka I. To add to it, there is a wide divergence of opinion on the question of the date of Kaniṣka I himself who is supposed to have initiated this era starting in 78 AD. His accession has been dated variously from the first century BC to the third century AD. While the first century BC date is no longer taken seriously by any scholar at present, most of the Indian historians favour 78 AD for this purpose while most of their occidental counterparts would prefer a date in the second or third century AD. Most of the European scholars are inclined to place this event in 128 or 144 AD, some scholars dating in a few year's this or that side.<sup>99</sup> Mukherjee, the latest scholar to give us an exhaustive treatment of the Kuṣāṇa History,<sup>100</sup> though himself favouring 78 AD,<sup>101</sup> is cautious in his concluding remarks: "It is not maintained that the above arguments (in favour of 78 AD<sup>102</sup>) are absolutely conclusive. Nevertheless, they seem to be more forceful than the arguments in favour of a later or earlier date for Kaniṣka I. so we *Should at least provisionally accept*<sup>103</sup> A.D. 78 as the inaugural year of his reign."<sup>104</sup> As pointed out earlier, there is absolutely no doubt that he did initiate a reckoning apparently from his accession the date of which is quite uncertain. What happened to this reckoning after his successors (the latest known year is 98) cannot be ascertained now. But there should be absolutely no doubt that it was different from that called Śaka-kāla or by such other names.

As against this, there is absolutely no doubt that there were two lines of rulers in Western India which were definitely known as Śaka. These were Kṣaharāta and Kārdamaka. Of these, the Kṣaharātas are represented by Bhūmaka and Nahapāna, the former known exclusively from his copper coins<sup>105</sup> and the latter from his numerous inscriptions,<sup>106</sup> silver and copper coins<sup>107</sup> and indigenous<sup>108</sup> and foreign<sup>109</sup> literary evidence and certainly much more powerful than the former. The Kārdamakas, represented by Caṣṭana and his successors, on the other hand, are known from their numerous inscriptions,<sup>110</sup> and an extensive series of silver and base metal coins.<sup>111</sup> An analysis of the inscriptional, numismatic and literary evidence should leave no doubt that the Kṣaharātas preceded the Kārdamakas. Those who credit Kaniṣka with the initiation of the Śaka era starting in 78 AD regard both these lines as vassals of the Kuṣāṇas. But, as we have seen above, this view lacks supporting evidence and is consequently not sustainable. We must therefore find out the initiator of this reckoning from amongst these rulers. And there are scholars who have suggested Nahapāna and Caṣṭana for this honour. Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji, as we have seen above, later<sup>112</sup> gave this credit to Nahapāna who, according to him, started this era in commemoration

of his victory over the great Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi and christened it after his *Scythian* overlord. Let us see how far this view is feasible in the present state of our information. We have as of now six inscriptions of Nahapāna ranging in years 41 to 46.<sup>113</sup> These years are generally referred to the Śaka era commencing in 78 AD and accordingly are supposed to correspond to the period 199 to 124 AD.<sup>114</sup> However, there are valid reasons to doubt and even dismiss this theory. It goes against the evidence furnished by the anonymous text *Periplus Tes Erythras Thalassaes*, commonly known to English-reading people as *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*<sup>115</sup> which was most probably composed in the latter half of the first century AD,<sup>116</sup> which speaks of a ruler named Mambarus or Mambaros holding sway over the region round Barygaza (Bharuch) in modern Gujarat.<sup>117</sup> The name is almost unanimously emended to Nambanus or Nambanos which again is equated with the name Nahapāna known from above-mentioned inscriptions and coins.<sup>118</sup> This should leave no doubt regarding the fact that Nahapāna held power at the time of the completion or at least during the period of the visit of the unknown Egyptian Greek trader-sailor in the first century AD when he must have collected his information. Thus the years of his records cannot be referred to the Śaka era as that would involve his being placed late in the first quarter of the second century AD. We are therefore left with no option but to regard these years as referring to another era or regard them as the years of his reign. And as there is no other reckoning known as yet that would meet all the requirements during this period,<sup>119</sup> we have got to treat these as regnal years of Nahapāna.<sup>119a</sup> There are in addition some other data supporting such a hypothesis. As we have seen above, the dates of the records of Caṣṭana are the earliest known years of the Śaka era. And it is held by the supporters of the theory referring Nahapāna's dates to the same era that Caṣṭana was the successor of and later than Nahapāna. This position could have been somewhat feasible earlier when the earliest inscriptions of Caṣṭana were the four Andhau inscriptions dated in the year 52, evidently of the Śaka era,<sup>120</sup> so that it could have been possible to argue that after the death of Nahapāna Caṣṭana came to power. But now when Caṣṭana's inscriptions dated in the years 6 and 11 have come to be known, if the years of both Nahapāna and Caṣṭana are assigned to the same reckoning, we would have to regard the latter as earlier than the former in rule over the same region which is just impossible as we have a continuous line of Caṣṭana's successors till the year 337 at least. Moreover, even otherwise Nahapāna's inscriptions have an earlier, but not much earlier, look<sup>121</sup>. So we have absolutely no alternative in the present state of our information but to regard these years as referring to his reign. It may perhaps be argued that a reign lasting forty-six years is very long, but some reigns as long as this or even much longer are not quite unknown. The Pāṇḍuvaṃśin king Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna of South Kosala had as long a reign as fifty-seven years at least,<sup>122</sup> and to add to it we actually have some evidence in the form of traditions from some later Jaina texts that lend support to this view. Thus the *Tilovāpaṇṇatti* (IV. 1507) and the *Paṭṭāvali-gāthās* assign to Naravāhana (= Nahapāna) a reign of forty years while Jināsena's *Harivaṃśa-purāṇa* (LX. 491) credits him with even a longer reign of forty-

two years. Of course, these are confused traditions but rightly serve the purpose of indicating a long reign for him; the actual length of the reign was still greater: at least forty-six years as vouched by his inscriptions. His long reign is also vouched for by his portraits on his extensive white metal coins which depict him variously as a very young, young, middle-aged, old and very old man.<sup>123</sup> The upshot of the entire discussion is that the year's of Nahapāna's inscriptions cannot be assigned to any era and must be treated as his regnal years.<sup>124</sup>

Then who was the initiator of the Śaka era? And the definite answer is that it was the Kārdamaka king Caṣṭana. Till recently the earliest inscriptions of his reign were the four Andhau inscriptions of the year 52 of his joint reign with Rudradāman I,<sup>125</sup> and it was to some extent possible to say that he had succeeded Nahapāna (latest known year 46) in the rule of the Western Indian territories of the Imperial Kuṣāṇas as their viceroy or vassal. But now we have inscriptions of his own reign alone dated in much earlier years. The earliest of these recently discovered inscriptions is the Daulatpur *yaṣṭi* record dated in the sixth year<sup>126</sup> and the next one is another similar inscription from Andhau put up in the eleventh year of his reign.<sup>127</sup> So his earliest record is only 5 years later than the initiation of an era. we may therefore regard Caṣṭana as the founder of the reckoning known as Śaka era with its epoch in 78 AD. Thus the inauguration of this era marks the accession of the Kārdamaka king Caṣṭana on the Śaka throne of Ujjayinī. The Indian tradition also seems to support this conclusion. According to the Jaina *Paṭṭāvalis*, 135 years after the initiation of the era by king Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī the Śakas once again captured the city and started their own reckoning. That the tradition actually refers to the line of Caṣṭana is vouched for by the geographer Ptolemy who mentions in c. 140 AD Tiastenes (Caṣṭana) as ruling from Ozene (Ujjain).<sup>128</sup> This surprising coincidence between the indigenous and European traditions is what is most remarkable and proves unmistakably that the era was actually initiated by Caṣṭana and by none else and that the Indian tradition, though quite late, is substantially correct.<sup>129</sup>

The Kārdamakas were very powerful and influential. Their kingdom comprised almost the whole of Gujarat, the adjoining area of Madhya Pradesh including Ujjayinī which happened to be their capital. Sindha province of Pakistan and at times a large portion of coastal Maharashtra called Aparānta and some other regions only. Their influence backed by their matrimonial relations and popularity of their silver coinage which was highly valued and stored as bullion was quite widespread. The hoards of their silver specie have been found over a large area comprising southern Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and stray finds of these coins have been reported from so many places and moulds for forging them from places situated as distantly as Mathurā, Sāncī, Vidiṣā, Kauṇḍinyapura, Ārambhā, Bhokardan and Vaḍḍamānu in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, to name only a few places, indicating the great demand for Kṣatrapa silver specie over a wide area comprising far-flung localities.

They had matrimonial alliances with the Śatavāhanas and had become great patrons of Indian culture and literature and as such were acceptable to the Indians. Their era also appears to have spread over a wide area along with their popularity and influence and the taint of extraneous origin had almost disappeared. The not quite infrequent migrations of people from the Śaka era using zones to other regions also contributed to the spread of the era. Apart from the territories under the Śaka Kṣatrapas where the use of the era, though generally without the specification of its name, was in vogue from the very beginning, its earliest yet known employment for dating purposes in inscriptions is met with in the Wākā (Thāṇe district, Maharashtra) inscription of the Mauryā Bhoja chief Suketuvarman dated in the current year of the Śaka kings 332,<sup>130</sup> and the next one is encountered inscription from Vidarbha in the Hisse-Borālā (Akola district, Maharashtra) inscription of the time of the Vākāṭaka king Devasena of the Vatsagulma branch dated in the Śaka year 380,<sup>131</sup> the same as the date of the *Lokāvibhāga* of Siṃhasūri, which is one of the oldest literary references to the era. As we have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>132</sup> the use of this era in this inscription which is quite unique in view of all the other Vākāṭaka records being dated in the regnal years of the individual kings, was probably due to the fact that the royal officer whose pious act is recorded in it most probably hailed from Saurāshṭra. The next specific reference comes from coastal Andhra where in the Tummalaguḍem plates of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin king Vikramendravarman II which are dated in the year 488 of the era of the Śaka king,<sup>133</sup> which again is the only instance of the era being used in the records of the dynasty whose other records specify only the years of the reigns of individual rulers and must have been apparently due to some similar reason. In this connection it is worthwhile noting that the Ikṣvākus, who preceded the Viṣṇukuṇḍins in the rule over coastal Andhra, had close relations, including matrimonial ones, with the Kārdamakas.<sup>134</sup> Slightly prior to it, the well-known astronomer-astrologer Varāhamihira, who had settled at Ujjayinī made references of the reckoning of the Śaka kings in his *Bṛhat-saṃhitā* besides specifying *Śaka-kāla* year 427 in his *Pañca-siddhantikā*, as we have seen above. Hence on this era appears to have been favoured by astronomers of various regions which contributed quite a lot to its diffusion. Then the Cālukyās of Badāmī dated all their records in this era, the earliest known record being the Badāmī rock inscription of Pulakeśin I, dated *Śaka-varṣa* 465.<sup>135</sup> In Andhra Pradesh also the establishment of the Vengi branch of the Cālukyās greatly contributed to the entrenchment of this era which, as we have just seen, was already known and used, though sporadically. Once this era was popularised in the Kannada-and Telugu-speaking regions by the Cālukyās, the succeeding ruling families not only continued the practice but also carried it to the areas which came under their rule in the South. The migration of the Kanarese dynasties like the Gangas and Senas to Bengal and Bihar resulted in the spread of this era to eastern India also. In this way the Śaka era became an all-India phenomenon. But it must be stressed that it is not quite popular in northern India and is generally not found mentioned in inscriptions while the Vikrama era is the era *par excellence* there. Its use is confined to astronomical-astrological works and the almanacs.

The Śaka era began when 135 years of the Vikrama era were over as well as 3179 years of the *Kali age*. Therefore one has to add 3179 to Śaka year to get a Kali equivalent, 135 to get a Vikrama era equivalent, AD 78 or 79 (for the last about three months) to get a Christian era date. The year of the era uniformly begins on the first day of the bright half of the month of Caitra, and its months are *amānta* (ending on the fifteenth *tithi* (day) of the dark half or *amāvasyā*) in South India and *pūrṇimanta* (ending on the full-moon day or *purnimā*) in North India. Its expired years are mostly used in inscriptions and literature, the current years being few and far between. But in those areas of the South where the Saura system is current, its year begins on the meṣa *saṅkrānti*.

The British had introduced and used only the Christian era for all official purposes and the government of independent India also allowed it to continue as such for nearly ten years after independence. In November, 1952 the government appointed an expert committee to study the different eras current in different parts of the country and recommend an accurate uniform calendar for the entire country, and following the committee's recommendations the Government adopted and introduced the Śaka era alongside the Christian era and introduced a reformed calendar with effect from March 22, 1957. Following this reformed calendar the year commences on Caitra 1, and its twelve months have, like the year of the Christian era, a fixed number of days: 30 or 31. The first six months from Caitra to Bhadra have 31 days and the remaining six months 30 days each, with Phālguna having 31 days in a leap year.<sup>136</sup>

#### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BL	Bhandarkar's List, <i>EI</i> , XIX-XXIII, Appendix.
BMC, AWK	<i>Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum: Coins of the Andhra Dynasty, the Western Kṣatrapas, the Traikūtaks Dynasty and the "Bodhi" Dynasty</i> by E.J. Rapson.
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i> , London University.
CII	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i> .
EI	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i> .
HISWK	<i>The History and Inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas and the Western Kṣatrapas</i> by V.V. Mirashi.
IA	<i>Indian Antiquary</i> .
IHQ	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i> .
IMB	<i>Indian Museum Bulletin</i> .

JA	<i>Journal Asiatique.</i>
JBBRAS	<i>Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.</i>
JOI	<i>Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda.</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.</i>
KL	Kielhorn's List, <i>EI</i> , VII, Appendix.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. According to the tradition recorded in the Jaina *Paithavālis*, however, the era was formally launched by the Śakas after their second occupation of Ujjayini (the first occupation was during the reign of Gardabhilla, the father of Vikramāditya) 135 years after the epoch of the Vikrama era. It is quite possible that though the era emerged as a natural consequence of the continuous use of the regnal reckoning of the first ruler by his successors, the credit of its formal inauguration was given to the former.
2. Daultapur inscription of the year 6 of the reign of Caṣṭhana is the earliest record dated in this era as well as of the Kāradamaka Śakas. Vide *JOI*, pp. 237ff.; XXVIII, pp. 34ff.; *HISWK*, no. 63, pp. 153-56. Another inscription of the year 11 of the same ruler was published by Shobhana Gokhale in the *journal of Ancient Indian History*, II, pp. 104-11. See also *HISWK*, no. 45, pp. 115-16. Before the publication of both these inscriptions by Shobhana Gokhale, the Andhau inscriptions of the year 52 of the same king were regarded as the earliest inscriptions of the Kāradamaka Śakas.
3. *Ibid.*, no. 61, pp. 143-48. All the inscriptions of the Kāradamaka Śakas have been brought together by V.V. Mirashi in his *HISWK*, nos. 45-61 and 63, pp. 115-48 and 153-56.
4. For a list of these dates, see Dilip Rajgor, "An Inventory of Dates on Coins and Inscriptions of the Western Kṣatrapas", *Numismatic Studies*, II (ed. Devendra Handa), New Delhi, 1992, pp. 89-104.
5. Pingree, David *The Yavana-jātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, I, Cambridge (mass), 1978.
6. *Ibid.*, Ch. 79, verses 61 and 62.
7. *Ibid.*, Ch. 79, verses 14.
8. *Ibid.*, Ch. 79, verses 15. What we have now is the enlarged version of the text, but it is quite likely that these expressions referring to its date were contained in the original work as well.
9. Mukherjee, B.N. who has studied this problem at some length, however, expresses his scepticism about it when he observes, "These expressions, however, may refer only to the system of counting of dates as followed by the Śakas, and do not necessarily mean the regular use of the name *Śakakala* as an appellation of the reckoning in question". See *IBM*, XX, p. 14. However, as pointed out by him (*ibid.*), its association with the name Śaka, alluding to the popular notion of the ethnic affiliation of the Śaka-Pahlava Kṣatrapas of Western India, should have begun at least in the academic circle by AD. 269-70 if the versified form of the *Yavanajātaka* was actually competed with the Śakas either during the rule of the "Śaka" Kṣatrapa family in question or shortly after that and before the fading of the memory of the strong connection between these rulers and the reckoning concerned."
10. *Śaka-varṣe dvātriṃṣaty-adhike sata-traye vrajati Śaka-nara-nāthānām* Ramesh, K.V. *Indian Epigraphy*, I, Delhi, 1984, p. 80. However, see *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, 1950-51, no. B36, p. 13, where it is reported to have been found at Vāla in Saurāstra and to refer to Suketuvarman as Dharmamahārāja and referred to about the sixth century AD on paleographical grounds. There are some spurious inscriptions of the Western Gaṅgas dated in the year 188 ff., presumably of

the Śaka era (see for one such inscription dated year 188, K.V. Ramesh, *Inscriptions of the Western Gāṅgas*, Delhi, 1984, pp. 10 ff.), which appear to be spurious. There are also some Maitraka (A List of the Inscriptions of Northern India in Brāhmī and its Derivative Scripts from about 200 A.C., *EI*, XIX-XXIII, Appendix, nos. 1078-1079) and Guṛjara, (*ibid.*, nos. 1080-1081) dated in the expired years 400 ff, of the Śaka king (s) which are likewise later forgeries by people not aware of the period of the rule of the dynasties concerned.

11. Shastri. Ajay Mitra "New Vakataka Inscriptions", *The Age of the Vākātakas*, ed. Ajay Mitra Shastri, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 246-47 and 265, notes 139-46. This is the only Vākātika inscription dated in the Śaka era probably because the person whose pious act is perpetuated by it hailed from Saurāṣṭra where the era was prevalent.
12. *EI*, XXVII, pp. 4-9.
13. Kielhorn, F. A List of Inscriptions of Southern India from about A.D. 500, *EI*, VII, Appendix, no. 3, dated year 500 of Maṅgaleśa.
14. *Ibid.*, no. 9: Hyderabad pls. of Pulakeśin II, year 534.
15. *Ibid.*, no. 10: Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II, dated Śaka 556 = 634 AD, the actual reference being to the years of the Śaka kings: *Pañcāsatsu Kālau Kāle satāsu pañca-satāsu ca, samāsu samatītāsu Śakānām=api bhūbhujām*.
16. *Ibid.*, No. 66: Kaḍaba pls. of Rāṣṭrakuṭa Govinda III, dated Śaka 735.
17. See *Ibid.*, nos. 54, 61-65, 67-70, 74-75, 77-78. etc. *Śaka-nṛpa-kāl-ātītā-saṃvatsara* is the usual expression.
18. *Samvatsare tu dvātrimśe Kāñc-īśa-Siṃhavarmanah. Aśīty-agre Śakābdānām siddham=cetac=chata-traye. Lokavibhāga*, XI.4.
19. See Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha, *Bhāratiya Prācīna Lipimālā*, Ajmer, 1918, p. 171, fn. 3, for details.
20. For discussion, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Śaka Era of Varahamihira", *Prof. V.A. Narain commemoration Volume. The Journal of the Bihar Purāvid Parishad*, IX-X, pp. 145-56; *Varāhamihira and his Times*, Jodhpur, 1991, pp. 31-42.
21. *Śaka-nṛpānām* preceding the specification of the number of years is the actual expression. See Shankar Balakrishna Dikshit, *Bharatiya Jyotiṣa*, Hindi translation by Shivanath Jharakhandi, Lucknow, 1957, p. 300.
22. Quoted by Satya Srava, *The Śakas in India*, Lahore, 1947, p. 40.
23. For some references, see G.H. Ojha, *op. cit.*, p. 171; Satyashrava, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-45.
24. Sachau E., *Alberuni's India*, II, London, 1910, p. 6.
25. He says "since there is a long interval between the era which is called the era of Vikramaditya and the killing of Śaka, we think that the Vikramaditya from whom the era has got its name is not identical with that one who killed Śaka, but only a namesake of his." *Ibid.* It is curious that an inquisitive scholar that Alberuni undoubtedly was succumbed to this popular but erroneous notion instead of the correct position, viz. it marked the establishment (or rather re-establishment) of the Śaka rule. It is curious to note in this context that during the early part of the eleventh century AD when Alberuni wrote his account of India a similar notion was current about the situation leading to the beginning of the Gupta era, viz. the commencement of the Gupta era commemorated the end of the Gupta rule. See *ibid.*, p. 7.
26. *Tark=āmbar-āñka-pramīteṣv-añteṣu Śak-āntataḥ, Varṣeṣ-Ūdayanaś=cakre subodhām Lokṣaṇāvāṭim*. Cited by Satya Srava, *op. cit.*, p. 42, no. 5.

27. *Śakā nāma mlecchā rājanās=te yasmin kāle Vikramādityena vyāpādītāḥ sa Śaka-sambandhī kālah Śaka ity-ucyate. Khaṇḍa-khadya* with Vāsanā-bhāshya, ed. by P.C. Sengupta, Calcutta, 1925, p. 2.
28. *Śakā nāma mlecchā rājanās=te yasmin kāle Vikramādityena vyāpādītāḥ sa Kāle=ty arthaṃ prasiddhaḥ. Khaṇḍakhadyaka*, ed. by P.C. Sengupta with Pṛithūdaka's gloss, Calcutta, 1941, p. 3.
29. For a discussion of his date, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Varāhamihira and his Times*, pp. 201-05.
30. *Śakā nāma mlecchā jātayo rājanās=te yasmin kāle Vikramāditya devena vyāpādītāḥ sa Kālo loka Śaka iti prasiddhaḥ, tasmāc=Cāhakra-kālāt Śaka-nṛpa-vadha-kālāt.*
31. *Kaler=nav-āg-aika-guṇāḥ Śak-āvadheḥ, Catalogue of Panjab university Library Sanskrit Manuscripts*. Acc. no. 3784, śloka 10. Cited by Satya Srava, *op.cit.*, p. 43, no. 7.
32. *Trīṇi kṛt-ādīni Kaler=go-g-aika-gūnāḥ Śak-ānte=bdāḥ. Brāhma-sphuṭa-siddhānta*, I 26.
33. *Ibid.*, I. 27.
34. *EI*, XXI, p. 144, text-lines 49-50.
35. *IA*, XVI, p. 21, text-line 61; Kielhorn's List, *EI*, VII, Appendix, no. 150, p. 27.
36. *Śaka nṛpa-kāl-ātīta-saṃvatsara śataṣv aṣṭasv-ekāsīty-adhikeṣu gateṣu*. Cited in Satya Shrava, *op. cit.*, p. 45, no. 2.
37. Bhāskara-chārya, *Siddhānta-śiromaṇi*, I. 28 (*Nand-ādr-īndra-guṇās=tathā śaka-nṛpasy-ānte Kaler=vatsarāḥ*); Sripati, *Siddhānta-sekhera*, I. 25 (*Yatāḥ Kaler=nava-nag-endu-guṇāḥ 3179 Śak-ānte*).
38. "Śaka Era of Varāhamihira", *op. cit.*, pp. 153-54; *Varāhamihira and his Times*, p. 37.
39. "As regards Guptakāla, people say that the Guptas were wicked powerful people, and that when they ceased to exist this date was used as the epoch of an era." E. Sachau, *op. cit.*, II, p. 7.
40. While Satya Shrava has produced substantial evidence in support of his contention that the Śaka era actually commemorates the end of the Śaka rule as stated in a few inscriptions and texts and it points to an earlier Śaka era, in our opinion the references cited by him only point to the erroneous notion prevalent in later times.
41. *Try-ānk-endra-pramīte varṣe Śālivāhana-janmataḥ, Kṛtas=tapasi Mārtaṇḍo=yam=alam jayat=udgātaḥ.*
42. *JBBRAS*, X, pp. 132-33. *Mūhurta-mārtaṇḍa*, Alāṅkara, verse 3.
43. This reference is later than the earliest inscriptional reference by over a century and a half, as will be seen in the sequel.
44. *Nava=śata ekāsīti Śaka gata Śālivāhana ca nṛpadhīsa Śake 981*, BL, No. 134, p. 22.
45. Tulpule, S.G. *Prāchīna Marāṭhī Korīva Lekha (Marāṭhī)*, Pune 1963, p. 91 (*Salavana or Salahana*).
46. *EI*, XXVII, p. 210, text-line 1. The expression is preceded by the honorific *śrīmat* in locative singular (*śrīmati*).
47. *JRAS*, V, p. 178; KL, No. 379. J.F. Fleet (*EI*, XIII, P. 199), however, was suspicious that the date of these plates, of which the originals were lost, did not probably contain any reference to king Śālivāhana, and V.V. Mirashi supported it as the same king's Purushottampuri plates of a later date also do not contain such a reference and the tow dates are expressed simply as *Śaka-nṛpa-kāl-ātīta-saṃvatsara* as in several other records (*ibid.*, XXV, p. 201). But these views need not be taken seriously now as we are aware that several other Yādava and Vijayanagara inscriptions are dated by both these terminologies simultaneously.



48. *Vide* KL nos. 455, 465, 475, 492, 503, etc. A much larger number of inscriptions of the Vijayanagara dynasties contains the usual expression, viz. *Śaka-nṛpa-kāl-ātīta-saṃvatsara*.
49. We would perhaps not be exaggerating if we say the ratio is 10 for 1. In North India we have as of Bhandarkar's List a couple of late examples of the mention of Śālivāhana Śaka along with the Vikramaditya saṃvat dating from seventeenth century AD. See BL. Nos. 1005 and 1010.
50. For some examples, see J.F. Fleet, IA, XIX, 41-43.
51. All the earliest (Paṇḍharpur and Yādava) inscriptions referring to the Śālivāhana association of this era come from Maharashtra. The lone still earlier example from Udayagiri is an exception and may have been composed by a person hailing from the Marathi-speaking region. Later we have such instances from elsewhere, especially Karnataka.
52. The most important other contributor must have been Karnataka where it is found mentioned in a Kannada poem as early as Śaka 1144 expired (=1222 AD) and is referred to in a large number of records of the Vijayanagara rulers. We cannot subscribe to D.C. Sircar's observation (*IE*, p. 263) that the Śālivāhana tradition developed in the Kannada-speaking areas of the Deccan.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 262-63. See also R.B. Pandey, *Indian palaeography*, I, second ed., Varanasi, 1957, pp. 191-92 for a comparison.
55. See our paper on the Vikrama-saṃvat under publication.
56. Sarma, I.K. *Coinage of the Śātavāhana Empire*, Delhi, 1980, p. 12.
57. *Bombay Gazetteer*, XIV, p. 617.
58. *JRAS*, 1890, P. 645.
59. *JBBRAS*, XXII, p. 272.
60. Sten, Konow, *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions with the Exception of those of Aśoka*, CII Vol. II, Part I, London, 1929, Introduction, pp. lxvii-lxviii.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. lxi ff.
62. *JRAS*, 1880, P. 259.
63. *BMC*, AWK, Introduction, pp. cv-cviii; *Indian Coins*, Strassburg, 1897, p. 22, 83; *JRAS*, 1899, P. 365; *Cambridge History of India*, I, Cambridge, 1922, p. 528.
64. *JA*, 1897, pp. 120 ff.
65. *The 'Scythian' Period - An Approach to the History, Art, Epigraphy and Palaeography of North India from the 1st Century B.C. to the 3rd Century A.D.*, Leiden, 1949, p. 65.
66. *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, Calcutta, 1964, pp. 115-19.
67. *Political History of Ancient India*, sixth edition, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 469 ff.
68. *A Comprehensive History of India*, II, second edition, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 235 ff.
69. *IHQ*, XXVI, pp. 216 ff.; *studies in Indology II* Sholapur, 1961, pp. 95 ff.; IV, Varanasi, 1966, pp. 112 ff.
70. *The Age of Imperial Unity (The History and Culture of the Indian People, II)*, second edition, Bombay, 1953, pp. 143-44; *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, I, second edition, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 136 ff.; *Indian Epigraphy*, pp. 258 ff.

71. "The Vikrama and Śaka Eras - Observations on their Beginnings and their Early Use in Eastern India", *IMB*, XX, 1985, pp. 13 ff.
- 71a. A recent analysis of coin-finds in excavations has shown that "the Kuṣāṇa coins are absent in the sites situated at southwestern extremities of this region (Gujarat) where coins of the Western Kṣatrapas predominate in cultural phases belonging to second century A.D. onwards. *Vide* Sunil C. Ray, *Coins and Culture: An Archaeological Approach*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 44. The parenthesis is ours
72. *HISWK*, p. 99, text-line 5.
73. "Roman Contacts and Early Currency Systems of the Deccan", *Mañjūṣā* (Dr. S.R. Rao 60th Birthday Felicitation Volume), ed Satyavrat Shastri, Bangalore, 1985, pp. 132-33; "Early Tamil Economy and Currency System", *Numismatic Studies*, II, ed Devendra Handa, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 129-30; "Imperial Roman Coins in Early Deccanese Inscriptions", *Studies in South Indian Coins*, II, ed A.V.N. Murthy, Madras, 1992, pp. 80-81.
74. See Rapson E.J., *BMC. AWK*, pp. *clxxv* and 226; *D.C. Sircar*, *Select Inscriptions*, I, p. 165, fn. 5. Elsewhere in the same work (p. 167, fn. 1), however, he cites it as Rapson's view.
75. In all 27. See *HISWK*, nos. 38-63.
- 75a. A Nāsik inscription of Nahapāna's son-in-law Ushavadāta (Rishabhadata) contains the expression *kuṣāṇa-mūla* (*ibid.*, pp. 98-99, text-lines 3-4). It was taken by D.R. Bhandarkar (*Carmichael Lectures on Ancient Indian Numismatics*, Calcutta, 1922, p. 199) to mean 'the value of the kuṣāṇas'. Likewise, he took *suvarṇa* mentioned in the same inscription as referring to Kuṣāṇa gold coins. But as shown by V.V. Mirashi (*HISWK*, pp. 171-76), it is an error for *kuṣāṇa-mūla* which occurs frequently in early inscriptions in connection with the Buddhist monks and means the 'cause of wellbeing' medicine.
76. Sircar, D.C. *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 261 (with reference to Rudradāman I primarily).
77. It is met with on the coins and in inscriptions of all the Śaka ruler of both the lines, viz. Kṣaharāta and Kārdamaka.
78. *HISWK*, p. 45, text-line 1. For no other Satavāhana king this title is employed anywhere.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-27.
80. *Svāvīrya-ārjitānām=anuraktāsarvva-prakṛtānām*, *ibid.*, p. 126, text-line 11. No other Śaka Mahākṣatrapa lays such a claim
- 80a. Attention in this connection may be drawn to the adoption of the title *Bhātāraka* by Nahapāna (*HISWK*, p. III) and of *Mahārāja* by the father of *Rudradharabhaṭṭarikā*, queen of the Ikshvāku king Vīrapurushadatta (D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, p. 231), who must have been a daughter of a Kārdamaka king.
81. All the Vakaṭaka kings with the solitary exception of Pravarasena I, who assumed the title *samrāt*, remained satisfied with the simple title *rājan* even when they employed the title *mahārāj ādhirāja* for the Gupta emperor Chandra Gupta II.
82. On this basis alone V.V. Mirashi felt that the Aulikaras at no stage accepted the Gupta suzerainty (*Indological Research Papers*, I, Nagpur, 1982, p. 95; *Studies in Ancient Indian History*, Bombay, 1984, pp. 103-05) which is against the explicit epigraphic evidence as we have shown elsewhere (*Varāhamihira and his Times*, pp. 43 ff.).
83. *Taraṣka-ānvayāsambhūtā* is the relevant portion of the stanza. In an earlier verse (I. 168) he mentions Huṣka (Huviṣka), Juṣka (Vājheṣka) and Kaniṣka in this order which is not the correct one.
84. However, Sten Konow is at pains to disprove it. See *CII*, II (i), Introduction, pp. 1 ff., but without much success.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 1xxv; *A Comprehensive History of India*, II, p. 236.
86. *CII*, II (ii), Introduction, p. 1xxv. The late Tibetan writer Tārānātha (16th century AD) distinguishes this Kanika from the famous Kaniška whom, however, he places among the miscellaneous rulers. See Tārānātha, *Bhārata meṃ Bauddha-dharma kā Itihāsa* (Hindi translation by Rigzin Lundup Lama), patna, 1971, pp. 2 and 51; vide also F.W. Thomas, *JA*, XXXII, p. 349. For details of Chinese evidence, see M. Levi, *JA*, IX (viii), pp. 144 ff.; IX (ix), pp. 526 ff.; *JA*, XXXII, pp. 381 ff.; XXXIII, pp. 110 ff. For some aspects of this problem, see also J.N. Banerjee, *A Comprehensive History of India*, II, pp. 22425.
87. For a discussion of some such suggestions, vide *CII*, II (ii), pp. xlix ff. However, it is clear that Kushāna has been formed by adding the suffix *ān* whatever may be its significance.
88. Mukherjee, B.N. *Studies in Kuṣāna Genealogy and Chronology*, I: *The Kuṣāna Genealogy*, Calcutta, 1967, ch. I, part 5
89. *Ibid.*, p. 30, note 40. In Sanskrit and allied Indian languages also *kuśa* denoted a kind of grass which was regarded sacred
90. *Ibid.*
91. *CII*, II (ii), pp. li-lxi.
92. *The Kuṣāna Genealogy*, p. 27.
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-27. Vide also *BSOAS*, VIII, pp. 887-89; Konow, *CII* (ii), pp. lvii, where the connection of the Kuṣānas with Tokhāristān and Tokhārian people is stressed.
94. *Mahābhārata*, Bhīṣmaparvan, 75.21 and Karnaparvan, 94.16, where the Śakas and Tuṣāras are distinguished from each other. Also see *Bhāgavata Purāna*, II, 47.26. F.E. Pargiter, *The Purāna Text on the Dynasties of the kali Age*, London, 1913, pp. 45-47; Satya shrava, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
95. As we have seen, Sten Konow's view that the Kuṣānas were Śaka is not at all convincing and goes against all the extant evidence. The observation of D.C. Sircar that "the family name Kuṣāna is unknown to Indian literary records, while the name Śaka is known to have been often applied to foreigners including the Muslims who were not Scythians. It is therefore not impossible that the Indians often confused the Kuṣānas with the Śakas, the Kuṣāna emperors being known to have ruled the provinces of their empire often through provincial governors of Śaka nationality" (*Indian Epigraphy*, p. 262) need not be taken seriously in view of the abundant evidence cited above showing that the ancient Indians of the period in question did distinguish the Kuṣānas and the Śakas. The same is true of the Yavanas who were Greeks but in later times the word *Yavana* came to be used in the sense of Muslims. But this is a very late, medieval, phenomenon.
96. In the inscriptions of Kanishka and his successors the date is specified by mentioning the years of the era introduced simply as *samvatsare* or its abbreviation *sam* and followed by the name of season or month, Indian or Greek. See for some examples. R.B. Pandey, *Indian Palaeography*, I, pp. 196-98. As against this, the dates in the inscriptions of the Śaka Kshatrapas of both the lines are given as years introduced by the word *vase* or *varshed* and followed by the specification of an Indian Month and often its fortnight. See *HISWK*, nos. 38 ff.
97. Sircar, D.C. *Indian Epigraphy*, pp. 259-62.
98. The date of the completion of Sphujidhvaḥja's *Yavana-Jataka* is, as we have shown above, given as Śaka year 191.
99. For various views on this problem, see A.L. Basham, ed., *Papers on the Date of Kanishka*, Liden, 1968, pp. 1 ff.; H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, pp. 465-74; *A Comprehensive History of India*, II, pp. 235-36; B.N. Mukherjee, *Rise and Fall of the Kuṣāna Empire*, Calcutta, 1966, 64-71.

100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*, pp. 64 ff.
102. parantheses are ours.
103. Italicising is ours.
104. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.
105. *BMC, AWK*, pp. cviii-cxiii, pp. 63-64.
106. *HISWK*, nos. 38-44. pp. 95-114.
107. *BMC, AWK*, pp. cviii-cxi, 65-70. After its publication in 1908 numerous coins of this ruler giving a variety of types have been published; vide also Amiteshwar Jha and Dilip Rajagor, *Studies in the Coinage of the Western Kṣatrapas*, Anjaneri, 1994, pp. 85-109.
108. References to Nahapāna under various forms of the name are met with in a number of Jaina texts including *Tiḷoya-pañnatti*, *Āvaśyaka-sūtra-niryukti*, Jinasena's *Harivaṃśa-purāṇa*, Merutinga's *Vicāra-śrenī*, *Tapāgaccha-paṭṭāvalī*, etc.
109. These include the *Periplus of the erythraean Sea* and Abul Fazl's *Ain-e-Akbarī*.
110. *HISWK*, nos. 45-61 and 63.
111. *BMC, AWK*, pp. cxiii ff., 72 ff.
112. Earlier he had attributed its foundation to Vonones.
113. *HISWK*, nos. 38-43, pp. 95-114.
114. Rapson, E.J. *Cambridge History of India*, I, pp. 521 and 577; *BMC, AWK*, p. cx; H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 485; D.C. Sircar, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 180; *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 261; *Select Inscriptions*, I, pp. 164 ff. where inscriptions of Nahapāna are said to be dated in the Śaka era; V.V. Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, IV, pp. 112-19; *HISWK*, p. 62, etc.
115. Translated under this title by W.H. Schoff, London, 1912. It is also called *Periplus Maris Erythraei*.
116. Majumdar, R.C. (*Classical Accounts of India*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 228, introductory paragraph) states that it was composed sometime between 73-77 AD which is not his personal opinion but only a view generally held by scholars, while he himself would favour a date sometime in the late third century AD (*HQ*, XXXVIII, 1962, pp. 89-97). Mc Crindle favours 80-89 AD as the period of its composition *JA*, VIII 1979, p. 108. Others who favour a first century AD date include E.J. Rapson (*Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 495), D.C. Sircar (*The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 112, 126, 128, 178, 179, 216) and V.A. Smith (*Early History of India*, 1924, p. 245 n.). The last two scholars support a date between 70-80 AD, and the former is opposed to the equation of the name Mambarus (Supposed to be a mistake for Nambanus) with Nahapana on the supposed ground that the latter ruled in the period c. 119-24 AD (*The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 179) which is due to referring his dates to the Śaka era. H.C. Raychaudhuri (*ibid.*, p. 287) assigns it to the first century AD. J.N. Banerjee also places its composition to the same period in general (*A Comprehensive History of India*, II, p. 237), but at the same time tries to detect portions composed at different times during this general period. He feels that the portion Mentioning Malichus (Malichus II) might have been written during his reign, viz. 41-72 AD, to which might have been added the later portion referring to Mambaros-Nambanos who was, according to him, no other than Nahapāna (*ibid.*, p. 241, fn. 1). K.A. Nilakanta Sastri *ibid.*, p. 516), on the other hand, cites with approval the view of Rostovtzeff (*Social and Economic history of the Roman Empire*, p. 91) that the work was written during the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD.), while G.C. Mendis (*A Comprehensive History of India*, II, p. 599) dates it in c. 80 AD.

117. Majumdar, R.C. *Classical Accounts of India*, p. 288.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 309, fn. 26. Most of the historians mentioned in note 116 above are favourably inscribed to this view. But D.C. Sircar, as pointed out there, is inclined to dismiss this equation only as pointed out there, is inclined to dismiss this equation only because the work was composed sometime in the latter half of the first century AD while Nahapāna ruled in c. 119-24 AD assuming that the dates of his records are referable to the Śaka era.
119. Cunningham A. *Coins of Medieval India, Indian Reprint Varanasi*, 1967 p. 3) J. Dubreuil (*Ancient History of the Deccan*, Pondicherry, 1920, pp. 20 ff.) and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (*JRAS*, 1925, pp. 543 ff.) are in favour of referring these years to the Vikrama era of 58 BC. But now nobody takes this opinion seriously.
- 119a. Earlier the same opinion has been held by some scholars including R.D. Banerji (*JRAS*, 1917, pp. 285 ff.), Stya Shrava (*op. cit.*, p. 62), A.S. Altekar ("The Date of Nahapāna", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 13th Session, 1950, pp. 35-42), Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya, *The Śakas in India*, Santiniketan, 1955, p. 41-48) rasesh jamindar (*Kṣātrakālanu Gujarāta* (Gujarati), Ahmadabad, 1975, p. 61; *Gujarātano Rājākīya ane Sāmskritika Itihāsa* (Gujarati), II: *Mauryakālathī* Guptakāla, Ahmadabad, 1972, p. 107) and B.N. Mukherjee (*Kaṇiṣka and the Deccan*, pp. 101-104).
120. *HISWK*, nos. 46-49, pp. 116-19.
121. Inscriptions of the Kārdamakās look more Sanskritic than Nahapāna's, the Jūnāgadh inscription of Rudradāman I (*ibid.*, no. 51, pp. 124-27) being admittedly an excellent specimen of classical Sanskrit prose-poem.
122. Shastri, Ajay Mitra *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapūrīyas, Pāṇḍu-Vaṃśins and Somavaṃśins, Part I*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 169 f.
123. For these coins, see *BMC*, *AWK*, pp. 65-67. PL IX. 24347
124. V.V. Mirashi's spirited criticism (*Stu-dies in Indology*, IV, pp. 112-19) of A.S. Altekar's well-argued view that the years of Nahapāna's inscriptions are the years of his reign and cannot be referred to the Śaka-era is quite unconvincing.  
The Purānic evidence also seems to support a pre-Cāṣṭana date for Nahapāna is mentioned under the name Nakhavān or Nakhapāna in the *Vāyu Purāna*. He is referred to along with miscellaneous kings of various regions and times prior to Vindhyaśakti Vākātaka. But as after him the end of the Śunga family is mentioned an early pre-Cāṣṭan date for him is quite warranted though we must admit that there is a great confusion in the chronology of these kings in the Purāṇas. See F.E. Pargiter, *op. cit.*, p. 49, text-line 5 and fn. 11.
125. *HISWK*, nos. 46-49, pp. 116-19.
126. *Ibid.*, no. 63, pp. 153-56.
127. *Ibid.*, no. 45, pp. 115-16.
128. *Classical Accounts of India*, pp. 373 and 381.
129. Earlier some scholars held the same view, eg. A. Cunningham, *Coins of Mediaeval India*, Indian Reprint, Varanasi, 1967, p. 3; G.J. Dubreuil, *Ancient History of the Deccan*, pp. 36 ff.; R.N. Pandey, *Indian Palaeography*, I, p. 190; Rasesh Jamindar, *Kṣtrapa-kālanu Gujarāta*, pp. 39-42; I.K. Sarma, *Coinage of the Sātavāhana Empire*, p. 10, etc. However, several of our reasonings, especially the astonishing coincidence between the insigenous tradition and European contemporary evidence, are quite new.
130. Ramesh, K.V. *Indian Epigraphy*, I, p. 80; Ajay Mitra Shastri, *The Age of the Vākātkas*, p. 247 and p. 265, note 145.

131. *Ibids*, p. 247.
132. "Some observations on the Hisse-Borālā Inscription of Vākātaka Devaseā Dr. *Umesha Mishra Commemoration Volume*, Allahabad, 1970, pp. 626-27.
133. Sankaranarayanan S., *The Viṣṇukuṇḍis and their Times*, Delhi, 1977, p. 17, text-lines 43-44 (*s-āṣṭāṣṭi-catuḥ-śate Śaka-pateṣsamvatsarūṇṃ gate*); Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 122 ff.
134. Rudradharabhaṭṭarika of Ujjayinī, queen of the Ikṣvāku king Vīrapuruṣdatta, mentioned in an inscription from Nāgarjunakoṇḍa, apparently hailed from the Kārdamaka line. She is described as the daughter of a *mahārāja* (great king) of Ujjayinī. Vide D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, p. 231, text-lines 3-4.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 482, text-line 1 (*Śaka-varṣa*).
136. Sircar, D.C. *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 267.