

KĀLAYAVANA,
A Key to Mathurā's Cultural Self-perception,

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Once upon a time, says the Harivaṃśa, all of Mathurā's most dreadful enemies fell upon that pleasant city from east and west and laid siege to her together.¹ From the east came Jarāsandha king of Magadha with his auxiliaries the uncouth Kirātas and all the barbarian peoples of his region. Among Jarāsandha's intentions was the capture of additional chieftains so that he could sacrifice a full one hundred kings, like animals, in an atrocious primitive rite. From the opposite direction, at the same time, the rapacious hordes of Kālayavana were swarming across the plains like grasshoppers--the Śakas, Tuṣāras, Daradas, Pahlavas and all the terrible dasyus of the snowy mountains. They darkened the sun with their dust, and from the excrement of their innumerable mounts such a stream flowed that it was called the Horsemanure River.

Kālayavana was of wholly Indian parentage, but he had been born in the harem of a Yavana king who had no son of his own. A wife of that king, an apsaras, had given birth to Kālayavana with the assistance of the sage Gargya. And the old yavana king was pleased by this event--in fact, had planned it, because he heard that the sage had obtained from Śiva the promise that he would sire a son who would be a mighty conqueror. The child was raised as a Yavana, and when he became king, he looked for lands to conquer, according to his bellicose nature, and his eye fell upon fair Mathurā. Thus it was that he too arrived before the city. Seeking personal combat with

¹Harivaṃśa, ed. P.L.Vaidya (Poona, BORI, 1969), 25:8-27, 80:1 to 85:52. All citations will refer to this edition.

Mathurā's chief, Kālayavana ran after Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield, and when Kṛṣṇa took refuge in a cave he plunged in after him. Lying asleep in that cave was the royal sage Mucukunda, who had begun his rest ages before with a divine promise that any who molested his repose would be destroyed. Coming upon the form of the sleeping ṛṣi the surly Yavana kicked him. Awakening angrily, Mucukunda used his special power and burned the Yavana to ashes with a glance of his fiery eye. Thus goes this famous story's first literary telling which, thanks to P. L. Vaidya and his skilled associates, we can understand to have been written about 300 A.D.²

This attack upon Mathurā is Kālayavana's one action, his total story. "Kālayavana" occurs on no coin, in no inscription or other firm historical record. It appears to be an epithet rather than a personal name. Kālayavana's storied participation in the attack on Mathurā is a heightening element added to the Mahābhārata's older tale of a siege of Mathurā by Jarāsandha alone.³ In the history of Mathurā's relations with Yavanas and with dynasties of Magadha there were surely such attacks--at least one from either side--but we know of no such coalition of the two. A joint attack by Jarāsandha and any Yavana is ruled out by the best chronological standards of the purāṇas themselves, which make Jarāsandha the first progenitor of all kings of Magadha, belonging to a primeval

²Vaidya, op. cit., intro., p. XXXIX.

³The Mahābhārata, vol. 2 (Poona, BORI, 1944), 2:13.34-43.
All MBH references below will refer to this edition.

time, and place the Yavana kings after Nanda and Maurya rule, correctly.⁴ The Harivaṁśa's coalition against Mathurā is not the chronicle of an event but a construction in the writer's mind. Many would call it a myth and turn it over to scholars of religion for scrutiny of its religious teachings. This particular professor of religion accepted that assignment, but returns now to the court of historical scholarship with a respectful claim that the Kālayavana myth can clarify and deepen historians' understanding of great issues in the public life of Mathurā in the third century A.D.

We do not know the name of the author of the Harivaṁśa, nor that he was born in Mathurā or even resided there, but the work itself reveals him as a lover of the city and a sharer in its traditions. In his opening adhyaya he says he is continuing the Mahābhārata's literary effort, to give due attention to the neglected history of the Vṛṣṇis and of the family of Hari. He is a promoter therefore of Mathurā's own special religious tradition, and he devotes much of his composition (adhyayas 47-75) to narration of the deeds that Kṛṣṇa performed as a child in local neighborhoods, never related in literature before. His mind is full of the lore of the region, which through his feeling will begin to gain the aura of a holy land. That aura is already perceptible to some extent in his description of the beauty of Vṛindāban (53f.), and of the charm of the countryside near Govardhana (49:15-30),

⁴Pargiter, F.E., The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age (Varanasi, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 2nd ed., 1952), pp. 14, 45, 67f., 72.

and in his famous panegyric of Mathurā in which he describes the city itself as

"The crown of Madhyadeśa, Lakṣmī's sole abode,

(Madhyadeśasya kakudam, dhāma Lakṣmyaś ca kevalam)

Earth's evident perfection, rich in money and grain,

Full of noble wealthy folk, a town of highest excellence."

--85:2f.

The author of the Harivaṃśa is an adopted son, at least, of Mathurā, and we can trust him to reflect the outlook of that city when dealing with its struggles with surrounding powers.

The author of the Harivaṃśa did not spin the figure of Kālayavana entirely out of the phantasmal stuff of the persons of fairytales. The first hint that his fiction is historical fiction is given when he gives us a glimpse into the royal stables of King Kālayavana. He says in 25:11b,

vr̥ṣapurvārdhakāyās tam avahan vājino rane,

"stallions with the fronts of bulls bore him in battle."

Now, the excellent horses and horsemanship of the Yavanas is, in the Mahābhārata, the most mentioned of their characteristics. Bhagadatta comes with Yavanas to the palace of Yudhiṣṭhira bringing a tribute of "speedy horses of good breed, swift as the wind" (Mbh 2.47.12f.). It is always as mounted warriors--sādinah, "riders," Mbh 8.64.16c) that Yavanas appear in battle. In Mbh 7.95.43 they gallop by in a swift getaway and the bard mentions that they are mailed men, damśitah; and 7.95.35 mentions their fine damascened steel and brass armor. (That armor was necessarily a product of India, not of Greece, incidentally--as the great horses themselves were

an acquisition from Central Asia.)⁵ The heavy arms and armor of the Indo-Greek cavalry could be carried in battle only by horses of exceptional strength. We see these muscular beasts in the design of many Indo-Greek coins. On the obverse of all the coins of Eukratides, for instance, two such massive horses carry their riders in furious charge with long lances at the level.⁶ They were a spectacular military actuality, in the use of which the author of the *Harivaṃśa* shows himself to be making up his picture of Kālayavana out of genuine Yavana characteristics. These touches of Yavana ways may include the kicking of holy ṛsis, and the effluvial odor of horse manure, and a geneology that includes a loose and low-class woman, and an almost indecent eagerness for war (yuddhābhikāmo, 85:16a). For the *Mahābhārata* classes Yavanas with "the frightful mleccha races," (Mbh 6.10.64a), "skillful smiters" (7:95.12b), too seriously devoted to all the arts of killing. Kālayavana is a representative Yavana, and the question arises: has he been created to express Mathura's deep concern and apprehension about Yavana power in actual life?

The suggestion that the Kālayavana myth veils and expresses an uneasiness about relations of Mathurā with hostile and

⁵F.E.Adcock, The Greek and Macedonian Art of War (Berkeley, U. of California Press, 1957), pp. 47-52; W.W.Tarn, Hellenistic Military and Naval Developments (Cambridge U. Press, 1930), pp. 72-78.

⁶Raoul Curiel and Gérard Fussman, Le Trésor monétaire de Qunduz (Paris, C. Klincksieck, 1965), Pl. IX-XXI. For the association of this horse with later kings see R.B. Whitehead, Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore (Varanasi, Indic Academy, 1971), Pl. IV no. 215, VIII no. 614; Curiel, op.cit. Pl. LIII no. 626; with Śaka kings, Percy Gardner, The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings in the British Museum (New Delhi, Sagar Publications, 1971), Pl. XXIII-XXIV.

threatening Yavana forces appears to be ruled out at once by a prohibiting historical fact: using yavana in the usual sense, Indo-Greek persons were at most a very faded presence in the India of 300 A.D., and their power, if any, was beneath all notice and concern. Three hundred years and more before, the Śakas had wiped out the last remnant of Greek rule, never to be revived again. Even a century before the Harivaṃśa, the narrators of the Mahābhārata did not remember the Greek invasions, nor any Greek rulers, nor any leaders who were Greeks. Groups of Yavanas appear in the epic, rarely, as detachments in the hosts of the Kauravas, unimportant auxiliaries like those supplied to great rulers by the wild tribes. These Mahābhārata references of perhaps the second century A.D. are India's last witness to the existence of Indo-Greek social groups. Familiarity with Greek as a living language seems to have ended in the time of Kanishka, judging by the inscriptions on coins, and we hear of no persons having Greek proper names after the reign of Huvishka.⁶ A certain Palamedes named in an inscription at Surkh Kotal appears to be the last of his kind.⁷ If in 300 A.D. there were any families that still felt a Yavana identity, they had no living contact with Greece or its culture, no Greek heritage that exceeded that of their neighbors, and no place as a separate faction in public life. The threatening figure of Kālayavana could not have arisen out of any disturbance that Indo-Greeks might pose. We must look elsewhere in Mathurā's environment for the root of this concern.

⁶W. W. Tarn, The Greeks in Bactria and India (2nd ed., Cambridge U. Press, 1951, 1956), pp. 355, 389f.

⁷Daniel Schlumberger, "Le Temple de Surkh Kotal en Bactriane," Journal Asiatique 242 (1954), pp. 177, 194.

A look at Mathurā's situation at the end of the third century finds the city enjoying an interval of autonomy. In the early decades of the century the satraps of the Kuṣānas gave way to regional kings. "Seven Nāgas shall enjoy the fair city of Mathurā," says the Vayu Purāṇa.⁸ Little more is known save that the city flourished and its artists prospered. There must have been in Mathurā the usual degree of satisfaction in local rulership, and many citizens must have joined the ruling classes in viewing with some alarm the spectre of the Gupta Empire expanding westward from Prayāga. The brahmins and the Bhāgavatas--now in strong agreement--could not have drawn much reassurance from their recollections of Magadha's past. Even the élite classes of Magadha were thought to be impure, and the Nanda and Maurya monarchs were remembered as hostile to brahmins and to kṣatriyas.⁹ The author of the Harivaṃśa looked eastward with no foreknowledge that the great Guptas would become parama-bhāgavatas and champions of his own faith. It was out of unhappy social memories that he created the figure of Jarāsandha, primal king of Magadha, as a religious primitive, a supporter of the wicked Kāṃśa, and archetype of sub-brahmanical eastern rule. In Jarāsandha Mathurā expressed its feelings and its fears about coercion by heterodox powers then looming up in the east.

Looking north and west, the Mathurā of 300 A.D. looked out upon an even more alien array. Directly westward dwelt

⁸Pargiter, op. cit., p. 53.

⁹H. C. Raychaudhuri, An Advanced History of India (London, Macmillan & Co., 1953), p. 58; Pargiter, op. cit., pp. 25ff.

the Mālavas, a tribal people whose coins bear foreign-sounding names, and whose kings are described in old purāṇas as very unrighteous sūdras.¹⁰ To the northwest lay a cordon of newly-arisen buffer states, and beyond them the remaining lands of the once-mighty empire of the Kuṣāṇas. After almost five hundred years of the rule of Indo-Greeks, Śakas and Kuṣāṇas, the control of northwest India by dynasties of foreign origin was fragmented and greatly reduced. But the successor states to the Kuṣāṇa empire were often controlled by houses of remembered immigration, still. A firm bastion of Scythic power lay to Mathurā's southwest where the Western Satraps had survived the retreat of their Kuṣāṇa overlords and ruled prosperously over Mālwa and Gujarāt and all the coastal lands from northern Mahārāṣṭra to Sindh. In the absence of any great indigenous state westward from Mathurā, the divided remnants of the Kuṣāṇa tradition, surrounded by imperial memories, remained an awesome power.

In this examination of Mathurā's western vista we have found no Yavanas, in the old sense of that word. But we should not conclude that Kālayavana is not there. To demonstrate that he is, we shall have to sketch the history of the western ethnic melting-pot, and of the changing use of the word yavana.

Those who know only the intense cultural self-consciousness of the Greeks of the Mediterranean world can fail to notice the flexibility and openness of the Greeks of middle Asia. Their interpretation of Hellenism came to them via

¹⁰Fargiter, op. cit., pp. 54f.

the liberalism of Alexander the Great, who dreamed of a world culture, promoted international marriage and took Iranian nobles into his administration. His successors in the middle east preserved the satrapal structure and other features of Achaemenian government. We have noticed the revolution in the military methods of the eastern Greeks as they responded to the resources of Asian lands. The Greeks of Bactria appear to have developed ties of mutual respect with the Iranian-speaking peoples of Bactria, and when they moved into the Indian highlands they absorbed old communities of Greek exiles that had been living there for centuries in intimacy with settlements of quite different ethnic origin. In India, Greek rulers began early the use of the Indian vernaculars and moved freely into Indian religious groups. When Śakas and Tocharians overwhelmed the Greek kingdoms in Bactria and India the wounds of conquest healed quickly. An early positive relationship can be seen in the fact that the Scythic conquerers soon reduced their language to writing for the first time with the help of the Greek alphabet and no doubt with the help of Greeks. The seniority of the Greeks in literacy and in the governing of agricultural lands brought them soon into the military and civil service of Śaka and Kuṣāṇa monarchs, who continued many of the patterns of public life that had been developed earlier by the Greeks. The provinces of northwest India kept their old boundaries and names, satraps continued to govern them with the help of meridarchs, the Seleucid calendar continued in official use and military commanders continued to be called strategos. The cultural melting-pot over which Greeks had once presided continued to simmer now and produced the composite culture of the Kuṣāṇa

Empire. The heterogeneous nature of that culture is seen in a nutshell in a coin of the Śaka ruler Azes which reads on the reverse, Indravarmaputrassa Aspavarmassa strategasa jayatasa, "(Coin) of Indravarma's son Aspavarma, the victorious general."¹¹ The issuer's name is partly Iranian, his title is Greek, his father's name is Indian, his overlord is a Śaka who uses an Indic language on the reverse and on the obverse proclaims himself basileus basileon megaloy Azoy! These last words, in the position of honor, are Greek, and illustrate the face that in matters of coinage, where governments project ideal identities and assert the special traditions to which they belong, these Scythian newcomers used Greek civic emblems and wished to be seen as continuers of the line of the Indo-Greeks who had laid down the hybrid social patterns of their public life.

The limited Greek identity that these northwestern ruling peoples felt, India observed. Their close relations with remaining Greeks, and their preservation of Greek customs and Greek alphabet and Greek numismatic designs made them look like Greeks to casual eyes. The old and the new intruders differed little, by brahman standards, in behavior and in function. The word "Yavana" in time became a comprehensive term for the partially Hellenized northwestern peoples, an alternative to the use of their many particular ethnic names. The rise of this submersion of individual identities can be observed in the history of the word Yavana, or Yona in its Prakrit form.

Alexander the Great's incursion brought Indians into contact with a body of Greeks substantially Mediterranean in type.

¹¹R. B. Whitehead, Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore, vol. I (2nd ed., Varanasi, Indic Academy, 1971), p. 130, No. 310.

Aśoka in his inscriptions speaks of Yonas with excellent understanding of their identity and of the particularities of their language and of their world. When the Yavana presence on the Indian scene becomes that of the Bactrian Greeks, the term Yavana begins to lose its sharpness, reflecting the Yavanas increasingly mixed composition and associations. Already in Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya (2.4.10) the compound śakayavana is found, reflecting an impression that these two peoples participate in a wider identity in which their individualities merge. The Rāmāyaṇa in its first book seems to explain the experience of contact out of which the compound grew: we see the two there as śakān yavanamiśritān, "Śakas mixed with Yavanas."¹² The joining of ethnic identities is perceived also in the perfunctoriness of the long ethnic lists that occur in epic literature when mention is made of the peoples of the borderlands. These lists show little interest in particular folk-traits and are so repetitious as to become formulas equivalent in function to long compounds. In Harivaṃśa 10:38, for instance, we read that Sagara annihilated the troublesome Hehayas and then turned northwest to do the same to all the other disorderly peoples, "the Sakas along with the Yavanas the Kāmbojas the Dāradas and also the Pahlavas," Tatāḥ śakān sayavanān Kāmbojān Pāradāns tathā, Pahlavāns cai 'va... No communication is intended that a single ethnic term would not cover. Yavana became that term.¹³

The absorption of other peoples into the Yavana identity can be traced in the expansion of an Indian myth of the origin

¹² The Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa, ed. G.H.Bhatt, vol. I (Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1950), 1:53.20f.

¹³ Other lists of the sort include Mbh. 7:6.5, 7:19.7, 8:31.15, 9:2.18, 13:33.19.

of the Yavanas. Mahābhārata 1.65.35ff tells how hosts of barbarian warriors came forth out of the body of the sage Vasiṣṭha's wish-giving cow when she was threatened with abduction by the covetous Viśvāmitra. The Pahlavas emerged from her tail (puccha), the Śakas from her dung (śakṛt), other peoples from whatever part of the bovine body alliteration with their names allowed, and the Yavanas sprang from her urine (mutra). For mutra a persistent alternative reading is yoni. One should grant that the story was originally told in Prakrit, and that the Yonas with perfect alliterative logic, which is the only logic involved, issued forth from the yoni or vagina of the cow. The yonas are the only people who could come convincingly from the yoni. But, surprisingly, in some developments the other barbarians begin to spring from that same yoni. Mahābhārata 7.68.41f. makes the Pāradas, Śakas, Sunikas, Dārābhisāras, Daradas and Pundras along with the Yavanas, alike, "deadly barbarians sprung from the cow's womb," goyoniprabhava. And Mbh. 7:87.36f. recognizes as goyonayas a whole class of fighting peoples coming from the mountain fastnesses of the north. To include them goes against all principles of alliterative science, there is no sound reason for deriving them from the yoni--unless there was a sense that these other barbarians were somehow Yonas or Yavanas too, at least in origin and fundamental nature.

At last we find "Yavana" used in just this representative sense in a geographical saying found in several old purāṇas.

In his Viṣṇu Purāṇa H. H. Wilson translates 2:3.8 thus:

"On the east of Bharata dwell the Kirātas, on the west, the Yavanas; in the centre reside Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Śudras, occupied in their respective duties of sacrifice, arms, trade and service."¹⁴

¹⁴ Purve Kirāta yasya syuh, naścime Yavanah sthitah, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, ed. J. Vidyasagar (Calcutta 1832); Garuḍa Purāṇa 55:5 (Varanasi, Chowkhamba, 1964); Markandeya Purāṇa tr. Fargiter 47:8.

Every hearer of this adage knew that many outlandish peoples dwelt in the borderlands and that each name represented many others. "Yavana," here, is a symbol for all the western frontier people of the culture we have described. We can assume this meaning, also, because that stage of meaning necessarily existed at a point in the transition from "Greek" to the word's final meaning: any foreigner, especially a Muslim now, who lives in or comes from a westerly land. About 400 A.D. the word is acquiring that meaning: Kālīdāsa in his Raghuvamśa 4:64 refers to the women inhabiting Persia as Yavanīs. In an essential preceding step it meant the quasi-Hellenized people of the Indian northwest. Kālayavana stands for Yavanas of such identity. He does not represent the Indo-Greek imperialism of the age of Demetrius but the continuing pressure of its partly-Hellenized successor culture, against which the Indian heartland is in full reaction.

If Kālayavana represents a contender in a conflict of cultures, only an understanding of the issues in that struggle will reveal the full significance of the figure. What was the content of "Yavanism," and how did its ideals threaten Mathurā? The recovery of the picture is difficult because the Yavanas share the silence of history's losers: their own literature is not extant. What we do have is Sanskrit literature's anti-Yavana polemic, which we shall sift.

Because it was India's warrior class that had greatest exposure to Yavanas, it is on their military qualities that we have fullest information. The topic is marginal to our interests. We have already seen some of these reports, and will introduce others incidentally. Beyond that, we need only to summarize the Mahābhārata's criticisms: the Yavana side are fearless, but they do not fight by the rules of gentlemen. "Terrible and of cruel deeds are the

Tocharians and Yavanas and Khasas," ugrās ca krūrakarmāṇas
tukhārā yavanāḥ khaśaḥ, says Mahābhārata 8.51.18a. They do
not observe the code of chivalry of ancient Indian warfare.¹⁵
As in matters of state in general, they have rules of their own.

When one observes these "Yavanas" in their activities as
rulers, one finds in the report of their politics, again,
the writers' sense of a root-difference with regard to the
very principles of their action. Pargiter's collation of old
purāṇic texts describes in prophecy how Yavanas shall rule,
when times come to their worst in the Kali Age:

"In this world there will be unconsecrated kings,
Yavanas in their social rules, their purposes and policies.
These kings will practice evil in accord with the wicked-
ness of the age,
Killing each other, and also women and children.....¹⁶
Utterly wanting in regard to dharma, kāma and artha."

The Yavana harshness in war is mentioned here again, but the
matter of particular interest is the report that they follow
their own deficient norms of behaviour. Theirs is a system
of regulation of some sort, out of which come the evil practices
in which they are entrenched. The origin of their degradation
lies in the fact that brahmins have not anointed them to king-
ship; they rule therefore without sanctification, without
guidance and without restraint. The point will often be made
elsewhere that the Yavanas separate themselves from the very
source of culture by their non-participation in vedic ritual.

Where such untutored kings rule, the behavior of the
subjects is contaminated, like that of the sovereigns. The

¹⁵Sketched in Sarva Daman Singh, Ancient Indian Warfare
(Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1965), pp. 156-157.

¹⁶Pargiter, op.cit., p. 56:
bhaviṣyanti 'ha yavana dharmataḥ kāmato 'rthataḥ
nai'va mūrdhābhiṣiktās te bhaviṣyanti narādhipāḥ
yugadosadurācārā bhaviṣyanti nṛpas tu te
strīnām bālavadhenai 'va hatvā cai 'va parasparam...
vihīnās tu bhaviṣyanti dharmataḥ kāmato 'rthataḥ.

life of both in such dark kingdoms is pictured in Mahābhārata 3:186.29ff.:

"There will be wicked overlords punishing wrongly, lying deliberately--
 Andhrās, Śakas, Pulindas and Yavanas,
 Kāmbojas, Aurnikas, Sūdras and Abīras, O Excellency.
 None will survive by a brahman's proper work.
 Even śatriyas and aiśyās will be in unlawful occupations.¹⁷

In the matter of personal religion, "Yavanas" are not criticized as followers of false faiths. All historical evidence points to their early Indianization in matters of religion, but it is non-brahmanical cults that are most favored. The Greek Heliiodorus of the Besnagar pillar inscription, who was a Bhāgavata, stands alone as such, as far as available information goes. Some Greek and Kuṣāṇa rulers were patrons of Buddhism, without doubt, and Buddhism was surely possessed of great following among people of this culture. When Hindu deities appear on Kuṣāṇa coins, Śiva is the usual choice, and Śiva appears to have been the favorite deity of the Western Satraps judging by the prevailing character of their personal names.¹⁸ Kilakila, capital of the Kilakila Yavanas, bears a name that occurs in the Śivasahasranāma¹⁹ And in Harivaṃśa 85:10f. Kālayavana's father Gargya is made a worshipper of Śiva, a deity whose connection with the vedic cult and with brahmanical orthodoxy is late and incomplete. Yavanas are pictured as having quite negative relations, not with Hinduism as such, but with

¹⁷ mithyānuśāsinaḥ pāpā mṛṣāvādaparāyanāḥ
 āndhrāḥ śakāḥ pulindāś ca yavanāś ca narādhipāḥ
 kāmbojā aurnikāḥ sūdrāś tathā 'bhīrā narottama'
 na tadā brāhmaṇaḥ kṣcit svadharmam upajīvati
 kṣatriyā api vaiśyāś ca vikarmasthā narādhipa.

¹⁸ Richard Salmon, "The Ksatrapas and Mahāksatrapas of India," Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Südost Asiens, vol. 18 (1974), pp. 5f.

¹⁹ Mbh vol. 16 App. I, no. 28, line 221a, Kalakala and y.l.

with brahmans in particular. Mahābhārata 13:33.19 reveals that rupture openly at the end of a lecture on the need for kings to cherish brahmans if they hope for political success. Certain bad examples are then mentioned as a warning: "The Śakas, Yavana-Kāmbojas and various kṣatriya groups came to the state of śūdras (vṛsalatvam) by disregarding brahmans (brāhmaṇam adarśanāt). The Harivaṃśa in 10:38-45 says that Yavanas are persons who are separated from the study of the Veda and from participation in the sacrificial rites (niḥsvādhyāyavaśatkārāḥ), and that this deprivation was one of the punishments settled upon them by Sagara for certain disruptive behavior. As a description of Yavana practice this story seems to state the truth: one hears of no Yavana prince who proclaims his performance of any yajña, even in an age when they were frequently done by down-country kings and recorded with much pride. Kings are asked in Mbh. 12.65.13ff. to bring into conformity the Yavanas, Kirātas, Gāndhāras and others who live in their realms, yet neglect brahmanical religious practices. The vedic observances (vedadharmakriya's) and the sacrifices to the Manes and the associated gifts and fees to brahmans are to become obligatory for such people, who are to be required also to be pure and non-violent and calm and charitable, and to be respectful toward kings, parents, gurus, ācāryas and such authority-figures.

Any adequate characterization of this "Yavana" culture will require much wider searches, but the censures we have just examined provide clear outlines of "Yavanism" on its negative side. The Yavana rejection of the ritual services of brahmans was the external token of a deeper rejection of

brahman social guidance and brahman social vision. Yavanas who attained rulership ignored the incipient dharmaśāstra tradition and official brahman advice in governing, and felt no obligation to enforce the four-varṇa division of society. Their attitude toward the rising brahmanical social order was like that of Buddhists--and of course many of them were Buddhists. Any positive ideals that they may have cherished are not recorded in Sanskrit literature. The medieval purāṇas continue to remember them solely by what they were not, in the summary term nāstika.²⁰

That "yavanism" carried with it a positive tradition in political theory is suggested by the mention, in purāṇic passages we have just quoted, of kings who are Yavanas in dharma and in artha but presumably not in biological descent. One could make one's self a Yavana by the way one ruled. A comparable pointer to the existence of a Yavana political philosophy is seen in the long voluntary continuation in northern and western India of Indo-Greek coin types and of the use on coins of inscriptions in the Greek language or alphabet. This symbolic continuity of the tradition of the Indo-Greek kingdoms extended to about 400 A.D. and the complete destruction by Candragupta II of the last of the Kuṣāṇa successor states. The persistence of Indo-Greek numismatic models must have had some of the significance of the persistence in Europe, even today, of Roman coin types and Latin numismatic inscriptions.

With regard to the ideational content of these coins of the Greek tradition in northwestern India, the glorification

²⁰ Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa 1.9.7 (Bombay, Vankatesvar Press, n.d.); Garuḍa Purāṇa 55.15a (Vārāṇasī, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1934).

of rulership is conspicuous. On the honorific obverse side the coins display the idealized portrait of the issuing king, along with the high titles that he bore or claimed. In the context of the earlier history of Indian coinage this focus on the individual person of the ruler was revolutionary. It suggests a revolution in theory of kingship as well, and the clinging to the pattern indicates an aspiration to maintain a type of monarchy established by the Indo-Greeks. The passing use by the emperor Kanishka of the imperial title Kaisara or Caesar evidences a similar attraction toward a non-Indian style of leadership.²¹ As to the positive content of this northwestern thinking on monarchy, it may have involved theories of the divinity of kings. Certain Indo-Greek rulers, on their coins, assumed titles that implied a divine nature or a divine function.²² The coins of Kadphises II show that monarch seated on the clouds or emerging from the clouds with flames radiating from his shoulders--a celestial being!²³ Thus far the magnification of the ruler went in some cases at least, but in all cases, the king and his supporters wished to make it clear that the king was an independent and unrejectable source of social guidance. The idea that the voice of the people was the voice of God was not available in any accessible tradition of the time. Those who resisted the social message of the revealed Vedas and the sacred śāstras made do with the counter-vailing authority of the decrees of a divine king. The freedom

²¹S.Konow, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum II.1 (1929) p.162.

²²M.-Th. Allouche-le Page, L'Art Monétaire des royaumes Bactriens (Paris, Didier, 1956), pp. 70-72.

²³Percy Gardner, The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum (New Delhi, Sagar Publications, 1971), pp. 174f., Plate XXV.

or lack of freedom of monarchs to regulate society without reference to the dharmaśāstras and their official interpreters appears to have been the point at issue, in which the Yavana tradition attempted to sustain the independence of the authority of kings. The details of India's experience with autocracy do not appear to be available in history. Absolute monarchy can be used and has been used to break up old forms of society and to facilitate the flexible and rational handling of social problems. But it facilitates also the foreclosure of debate, the corruption of decisions by royal whim and self-indulgence, and the exercise of tyranny, and in the end it brings disorder. The outcome of this struggle between social theories in India seems to tell us that India in the long run experienced more of sorrow than of liberation from the Yavana type of kingship. In the third century A.D. India was reaching out for the kind of stability and security that was offered by the justice of the dharmaśāstras. In the time of the Harivaṃśa the country was about to turn decisively to brahmanical regimes.

The twentieth century is likely to see this ancient contest with "yavanism" as another struggle with autocratic foreign rule, and thus miss its dimension as a titanic internal contest. The "Yavana" rulers of the north and west were not any longer, in the third century A.D., foreigners in any modern sense of the word. Their forbears had been in India for at least three hundred years, adopted Indian languages, intermarried with Indian ruling houses, adopted Indian forms of religion, and they did not, like the Muslims and the British, continue to draw cultural sustenance from civilizations centered elsewhere in the world. The polemics against the Yavanas do not charge them with

foreignness, but with barbarity. The cultural cosmology of the time did not envision a plurality of great world civilizations occasionally colliding and injuring each other, but a single central civilization surrounded by its uncultured borderers representing retardation rather than radical cultural difference. The Cīnas are seen as a still-unbrahmanized forest tribe of the northeast, and the Yavanas, comparable to them, have no known home other than the wild northwestern mountains. Mahābhārata 1:80.26f. sketches for the Yavanas a fairly respectable Indian geneology in which they are descended from Yayāti's son Turvasu, who is the brother of Yadu the ancestor of the Yādavas, and of Druhyu the ancestor of the Bhojas and of Puru the ancestor of the Pauravas. The Laws of Manu 10:43 says that the Yavanas before their degradation were ksatriyas; and as such, one supposes that they were derived ultimately from the arms of Puruṣa as stated in R̥gveda 10:90. We have noticed the myth according to which the Yavanas issued forth from Vasiṣṭha's marvellous cow. We need not try to reconcile these accounts: the remarkable thing about them that is significant for us now is that none of them trace the Yavanas to an extra-Indian origin. The struggle with the Yavanas was not an effort to drive intruding foreigners back to their own land, but the familiar effort to subdue and subject and civilize impertinent dasyus. From a less partisan point of view, it was a matter of alternate social orders, one indigenous and one syncretistic.

To realize that the faction called the Yavanas was favored by some substantial element of the Indian population

we need only to remember the long survival of the government of the Western Satraps, who maintained themselves against the power of the Guptas in the midlands for a century after the departure of the representatives of the Great Kuṣānas from Mathurā. This resistance to the tide of the times could not have continued without a following. Another kingdom that was of the Yavana school by Indian choice was that of the Kilakila Yavanas mentioned in Matsya Purāṇa 273.24f. The Kilakila dynasty apparently ruled some region along the Narmadā in the interlude between Kuṣāna and Gupta times. The account of them mentions first the Indo-Greek line and next the Tuṣāra or Kuṣāna monarchs and then goes on:

"These having been removed by time,
there will then be Kilakila kings.
They will be Yavanas here
in their social rules, their purposes and their policies
(dharmataḥ kāmato 'rthataḥ)²⁴

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa mentions in the same terms the "Kailakila Yavanas" and adds the names of the rulers of the line: Vindhyaśakti, Puranjaya, Rāmacandra, Dharma, Varāṅga, Kṛtānanda, Śasinandi, Nandiyaśas, Sisuka and Pravīra.²⁵ The family appears to be totally Indian. The Matsya Purāṇa in fact rules out a Greek genealogy: these princes are Yavanas in dharma, kāma and artha but not, apparently, in every respect. The author has just mentioned the historic Bactrian line and calls them Yavanas without qualification. These Kilakila rulers are Yavanas in the respects mentioned: social regulation, personal drives, and politics. They belong to the cultural category that the author of the Harivamśa must have had in mind in his figure of Kālayavana.

²⁴Matsya Purāṇa (Poona, Anandāśrama S.S., 1907), p. 505.

²⁵Viṣṇu Purāṇa, ed. Vidyāsāgara (Calcutta 1882), 4.24.14.

The first chapter of the Milindapañha, a Buddhist work of about the first century A.D., yields further evidence that Yavana kingship was looked upon favorably in some Indian circles.²⁶ The Indo-Greek king Menander or Milinda is pictured there as a wise and tolerant ruler, living in a well-ordered capital and presiding over a very prosperous domain. The author of the book intends, obviously, to present this Panjāb kingdom as ideally ruled. There may have been a Buddhist view of Yavana statecraft that was more positive than the brahmanical opinion.

How one of the Great Satraps himself looked back upon Yavana kingship is revealed in a phrase employed by the Mahā-kṣatrapa Rudradāman in an inscription found near Junagarh in Kāthiāvār. The inscription, of 150 or 151 A.D., celebrates the completion of the restoration of a dam that had been constructed originally by Candragupta Maurya. Rudradāman says that the hydraulic work had been improved in the reign of Aśoka by Aśoka's provincial governor, the yavanarājā Tuṣāspa, who completed the project by the addition of conduits "constructed in a manner worthy of a king," rājānurūpakṛta.²⁷ Rudradāman evidently felt admiration for that Yavana predecessor's work, seeing in it an appropriate model of grandeur in royal action. The Great Satrap wishes to be seen as belonging, himself, to that imposing tradition^{of kings} who did things in a first-class manner.

Finally, an interesting partisanship toward Yavanas can be seen in the transmission of the text of a Sanskrit work called

²⁶ Milinda's Questions, tr. I.B. Horner (London, Luzac & Co., 1963), 1.3f., p. 5.

²⁷ F. Kielhorn, "Judagadh Rock Inscriptions of Rudradaman: the Year 72," Epigraphia Indica, vol. 8 (Jan. 1905), p. 43, lines 9f. In yavanarāja Tuṣāspa (an Iranian name), note the Yavanas' ethnic diversity, already in Aśoka's time.

the Yugapurāṇa, a part of a larger work entitled Gargī Saṃhitā. The Yugapurāṇa is regarded as a work of the first century B.C.²⁸ The variae lectiones come of course from unknown times, but their partisan spirit points to an age not later than the third century A.D., when Yavanas were still a significant reality in Indian awareness. One can infer from the author's hostility toward śūdras and bhikṣus and from his geographical interests that he was a brahman of Magadha. In the Yugapurāṇa he chronicles the events of the evil Kali age in usual prophetic style, and he includes a futuristic account of the Yavana raid upon Pātali-putra at the beginning of the Greek incursions from Bactria. These are the lines of his narrative that are relevant, as edited and translated by D. C. Sircar in an article that is generally available:²⁹

"The viciously-valiant Yavanas will reach (or seize) Kusumadhvajam.

(Yavanā dustavikrāntāḥ prāpsyanti Kusumadhvajam). (A.2)

Prospering under the protection of Dhamamīta (Demetrius), the Yavanas will eat up (i.e. oppress) the people [unafraid].

(Dhamamīta-tayā vṛddhā janam bhokṣa(ksya)nti nirbhayāḥ). (B.1).

(And) will burn (alive) five rulers at Nagara (i.e. Pataliputra)."

(Yavanā(h) kṣāpayisyanti Nagare pañca pāṛthivā(n)). (B.2).

To construct the above Sanskrit text Professor Sircar has depended heavily upon the agreement of two eastern manuscripts in the possession of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and of the Government Sanskrit College, Vārāṇasī. A third complete manuscript in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris has long been known, and several fragments are held elsewhere. A fourth was found rather recently by D. R. Mankaḍ at Jodiyā in Surāṣṭra. Professor

²⁸P. V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, vol. 5 Pt. 2 (Poona, B.C.R.I., 1952), p. 828.

²⁹D.C.Sircar, "The Account of the Yavanas in the Yuga-Purāṇa," J.R.A.S. 1953, pp. 17f.

Mankad made much use of this West India manuscript in editing his Yugapurāṇam (Vallabhvidyanagar, Charutar Prakashan, 1951).

The Surāṣṭra manuscript's readings and other readings that Sircar rejected are of interest as revealing a textual tug-of-war over the pejorative elements in the passage we have just quoted. Consider first the term duṣṭavikrānta, "villainously valiant," of the Calcutta and Banāras manuscripts. It expresses a stock Sanskrit view of the Yavanas as atrocious in war. It was probably the original reading. But the Surāṣṭra manuscript and Mankad (line 95) make it suvikrāntāḥ--the very valorous Yavanas took the city of the Flower-standard! The Paris manuscript reads puṣṭavikrāntāḥ--a term that is not very clear to me but it is pleasant, and it does blunt the sharp edge of duṣṭavikrāntāḥ. Our perception continues to clear as we observe what some copyists have done with the half-line, "the Yavanas will eat up the people unafraid," janam bhoksyanti nirbhayāḥ. From his sources Mankad reads "fearless, they will liberate the people," janam mo(ksy)anti nirbhayah (line 111), on the basis apparently of moksanti and bhosyanti in the Surāṣṭra and Paris manuscripts. Mankad and Sircar report differently on what the respective readings of the various manuscripts are, and continue to do so with regard to our final line, where Sircar understands that in Pātaliputra the Yavanas "will burn (alive) five rulers," ksāpayaṣyanti, and Mankad reads jñāpayiṣyanti, the Yavanas will proclaim five as rulers. All that is clear is that some manuscript justifies each reading. We need not decide which reading is original. Each is the expression of someone's sentiment, and each is a deliberate statement. Not even the sleepest copyist could change moksanti into bhoksanti or vice versa, and the

Yavanas from cannibals into liberators, without being jarred awake. In the course of its circulation the Yugapurāṇa came into the hands of Sanskrit-knowing people, apparently in Western India, who did not like to see the Yavanas represented as vicious in war and rapacious in rule, and they made them into brave liberators! With this I rest my case that India in the third century A.D. was divided into two camps, each supported by the conviction of some. One force was called "the Yavanas," still powerful enough to be feared and resented. It is lampooned in Sanskrit literature as the camp of Kālayavana.

The legend of Kālayavana places the camp of the defenders at Mathurā. It is Mathurā that Kālayavana attacks, it is at Mathurā that he meets his doom. This picture of Mathurā as stronghold of the way of the Vedic ṛṣis may shock some who think of Mathurā--to the extent that it was Hindu at all--as the center of a heterodox Kṛṣṇa cult whose early tensions with the vedic tradition are well-known. The Harivaṁśa itself records old conflicts of Kṛṣṇa's devotees with the vedic Indra (adhyayas 60-61), and we are well acquainted with the charges of heresy that were levelled for a thousand years against the Bhāgavatas who were Pāñcarātrins.

In the Mathurā of 300 A.D., however, such tensions between Bhāgavatism and the vedic tradition were long gone, or far away, or not yet arisen. The Pāñcarātra ritual and theology were not in evidence in Mathurā. Early Kṛṣṇaism's tensions with the Sanskritic tradition had been adjusted long ago. For about four hundred years the healing influence of the Bhagavadgītā had been at work, reconciling Bhāgavatas to the Vedas, the Sanskrit language, brahmanical leadership, the social guidance of the dharmaśāstras, and the vedic ritual. The substantial

trace of hostility toward vedic ritual that one finds even in the Bhagavadgītā had been softened. Already in the second century B.C. in an inscription at Ghosundi in nearby Rājāsthān a king calls himself a Bhāgavata and at the same time proudly records his performance of an aśvamedha sacrifice.³⁰ In the Mathurā Museum there is an elaborate stone yūpa or sacrificial post, carved and inscribed in the second century A. D. for a client who used it in the performance of a twelve-night sacrifice.³¹ Mathurā pioneered in the use of Sanskrit; it was there that the inscriptional use of prakrits first gave way to a mixed form of that brahmanical language par excellence,³² and inscriptions in pure Sanskrit begin to be made in the first century B.C.³³ In the Harivaṃśa the Bhāgavata acceptance of brahmanism is obvious and complete. The practices of good kings are described in Harivaṃśa 41:1-11: they heed the Vedas, sacrifice to gods and ancestors, give generous fees, know the dharmaśāstras, and appease Indra to insure rain. Bhīma is counselled in 15:49f. to launch war only after a brahmanical rite of blessing and after worshipping fire and brahmins. Brahmanism and Bhāgavatism have become one in Mathurā.

This coalescence with brahmanism was not part of a general syncretism in all aspects of culture. Mathurā's posture in her relations with other centers of art is instructive. For

³⁰J.N.Banerjea, Religion in Art and Archaeology (Lucknow, University of Lucknow, 1968), p. 9.

³¹J. Ph. Vogel, Archaeological Museum at Mathura, 1910; reprint Delhi, Indological Book House, 1971. P. 189, No. Q13.

³²Th. Damsteegt, Epigraphical Hybrid Sanskrit (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1979), chap. 1.

³³Kṛṣṇadatt Vājpeyī, Mathurā Paricay (Mathurā, Lok Sāhitya Sahayogī Prakāśan, 1950), p. 107.

several hundred years there were two great equally-vital centers of artistic activity in India, at Gandhāra and at Mathurā. The Gandhāra art was characteristically Yavana in its syncretism, drawing its impulses from far reaches of the world. The artists of Mathurā were quite aware of the Gandhāra techniques and themes, and acknowledged them in rare or minor matters in their representation of a type of garland or the fold of a garment. But any of Mathurā's ties that were substantial were with inner India. In all fundamental aspects of her art she remained indigenous. That was her stance in life in general. Mathurā was the place where Yavana influence stopped.

Important circles of brahmanical India looked up to Mathurā as a model of the same staunch adherence to brahmanical dharma. We have seen how important the four-varṇa division of classes and of their social duties was, in the eyes of the writer of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, in marking off the Yavanas and other barbarians from cultured people. Conformity to this rule was an aspect of Mathurā's acknowledged social rectitude. At least three manuscripts of Valmīki's Rāmāyaṇa make special note of the fact that when Śatrughna finished the construction of the original city of Mathurā he peopled it (rightly!) with settlers composed of the four varṇas.³⁴ It is a passage in the Mānavadharmasāstra, however, that shows how prominent Mathurā was as an acknowledged standard-bearer in the propagation of the brahmanical life. These Laws of Manu present the Aryan world as a concentrum in which impurity recedes as one moves from the borderlands toward the center. The widest region in which decorous life can be hoped for is

³⁴The Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, crit.ed. (Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1960ff.), vol. VII, variant readings on 7:62.12.

Āryavarta. It extends from Himalaya to Vindhya and from sea to sea. But its eastern and western extremes are inhabited by people of corrupted life. More select, morally, is the Middle Country, ranging from Prayāga in the east to that place in the west where the River Sarasvatī disappears. That Madhyadeśa's life is not blameworthy, but for true models of excellence in behavior and moral teaching one should turn further inward to two exemplary regions. Brahmāvarta, just west of modern Delhi, is the abode of people whose life is the highest model of virtuous conduct (sadācāra). For authoritative moral instruction, however, the ultimate resort is to the brahmans of Brahmārṣideśa. That land of the vedic ṛsis consists of the country of the Matsyas, the Pañcālas and the Śūrasenas. Śūrasena, the region around Mathurā, is the middle of that region that is supreme in the teaching of dharma. "From a Brāhmans born in that country let all men on earth learn their several usages," says The Laws of Manu 2:20.³⁵ It is not the enthusiasts of Mathurā herself that have awarded her this central position, but the first of the Dharmaśāstras.

To lead the resistance against Kālayavana, then, what city could be more suited than Mathurā: heart of the land of the vedic ṛsis, crown of Madhyadeśa, old imperial city with a tradition of leadership, full of noble and wealthy folk, and, above all, commissioned by scripture to teach dharma to the world??

³⁵The Laws of Manu, tr. G. Bühler, SBE XXV (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1885), p. 33.

The Kālayavana myth provides no chronicle of even one hitherto-unknown event of that dark third century that historians would so much like to penetrate. It does yield insights that help us understand the meaning of the great developments of that age. The story reveals to us how important actors on that scene understood the basic issues of their time. The story not only reveals historical forces, it is itself a historical force.

In the telling of this story, ancient people not only clarified their position, but also their mission. Myths can reflect what happens, they can also make things happen. It is possible that the Guptas, pausing for a generation with Mathurā as their advanced center, acquired there the orientations that gave them their final acceptance, and a rationale for their triumphant drive to the Arabian Sea.

The professionals in my own field will debate whether the Kālayavana story is or is not a myth. I have not found a more suitable term. I am content to describe it. It is a social reverie, a collective daydream in which personifications are used to make possible a clearer understanding of current perils and helpful powers, to define the future that is wished for, and to draw encouragement from the anticipation of the successful solution. If such powerful constructions of the human mind are myths, they are myths that are full of the life-blood of history. Historical study is essential to their interpretation and more profitable than many esoteric keys to myth-analysis.

Are they historical documents? Argue that as you wish. I will only say: they are documents for historians, definitely!

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