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Daṇḍin, the *Daśakumāracarita*, and the *Avantisundarīkathā*

*Introduction*¹

The *Daśakumāracarita* (*DKC*), or “The Adventures of the Ten Young Men”, by the seventh-century South-Indian author Daṇḍin is one of the better known of classical Sanskrit texts. For all that, its study is riddled with problems, some of which I intend to tackle here. The first concerns the patchwork nature of the text. The complete text in the “standard” version, available in, for instance, Onians (2005),² consists of fifteen *ucchvāsas*, or “breathing pauses”, which have been distributed over three parts, namely a central part (*ucchvāsas* 6-13), hedged in between a *pūrva-* (1-5) and an *uttarapīṭhikā* (14-15), or an “opening” and “final ‘pedestal’” respectively. For the beginning and ending alternative versions are available, some published, some as yet unpublished.³ Furthermore, the three fragments would show different hands.⁴ It is generally assumed that the original beginning and ending by Daṇḍin were lost, which had resulted in various attempts to fill in the gaps.⁵ However, on closer consideration the junctures between the different parts of the text appear to coincide with important turning points in the story, which would show that we are not dealing with arbitrary breaks caused by the loss of pages of the manuscript. Secondly, the *Daśakumāracarita* proves to be a text, or story, well planned from

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to David Shulman for his comments on an earlier version of the present paper.

² Throughout this article the text edition referred to is Onians (2005).

³ For the various versions of the beginning and end of the *Daśakumāracarita*, see Gupta (1970:43).

⁴ See, e.g., Gawronski (1907:45-48), Keith (1920:297-299) and Gupta (1970:43-45).

⁵ See Raghavan: “The Pūrva and Uttara Pīṭhikās are by other different hands [than the central part] and it must also be noted that there is more than one Pūrvapīṭhikā and also more than one Uttarapīṭhikā. *Therefore* [my italics] it seems likely that the original work of Daṇḍin was partly lost both at the beginning and at the end, a portion escaped and is represented by the central eight chapters, now called the *Daśakumāracarita*” (Raghavan 1963:836).

beginning to end. It is hard to see, however, how an author working back from the central part could have composed a *pūrvapīṭhikā* as found in, for instance, Onians (2005). Thirdly, it is not certain with how many fragments and, consequently, with how many authors we have to reckon. All these points affect the assumption that Daṇḍin was responsible for the central part, and for the central part only. I will advance some arguments suggesting that Daṇḍin wrote only what is now known as the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and that its abrupt ending was a literary ploy, not unknown in classical Sanskrit literature. The fourth point is that Daṇḍin used the same story twice, in the *Daśakumāracarita* and also in his *Avantisundarīkathā*. In the study of the relationship between these two versions insufficient attention has been paid to the fact that each in its own way combines the same two literary genres. Before taking up the above issues I will present an outline of the story of the *Daśakumāracarita*.

The Story of the Daśakumāracarita in outline

The bulk of the *Daśakumāracarita* consists of the stories in which the ten young men of its title recount what happened to them after they got separated in the course of a *digvijaya*, or “conquest of the quarters” (for the distribution of the stories, see the overview below). The text begins, however, with the Magadhan king Rājahaṃsa, who was driven out of Pāṭaliputra (called Puṣpapurī or Puṣpapura, “Flower City”) by King Mānasāra of Ujjayinī in Mālava. Together with his wife and ministers Rājahaṃsa fled to the Vindhya, where his son, Rājavāhana, was born. According to a prophesy of an ascetic, the prince would destroy his father’s enemy and regain the kingdom. Rājavāhana grew up together with nine other young men, the sons of his father’s ministers and allies.⁶ When these boys had reached the age of sixteen they were sent out on a *digvijaya*, in the course of which, as said, they got separated. Upon meeting again after another period of sixteen years each related what had happened to him in the meantime. The stories show an identical pattern: the young man fell in love with a princess and she with him, and he became heir to the throne of the girl’s father’s kingdom or succeeded her father immediately.⁷ At the

⁶ Below, I will return to the different backgrounds of these nine young men.

⁷ See Porcher (1985). The sole exception to this pattern is Puṣpodbhava, who did not marry a girl of royal blood but a girl he had met in a merchant's house, called Bālacandrikā (Onians 2005:121). Later on, in *ucchvāsa* 5, however, we meet her again, this time as a member of the entourage of the king of Mālava's daughter, Avantisundarī. Apahāravarman, in *ucchvāsa* 6 first married a prostitute's daughter. After that he fell in love with King Siṃhavarman's daughter, Ambālikā. Upahāravarman did not marry a king's daughter but a king's wife (*ucchvāsa* 8). I use the word “marry” here in a loose

moment the young men told each other their stories, Rājavāhana was still stuck halfway in his aim: he had managed to win the heart of Avantisundarī, the daughter of his father's rival Mānasāra, but his rights to her father's kingdom (which included his own father's former kingdom) were still far from secured. This matter is settled in the final part of the text, in which we are told how Rājavāhana, accompanied by his nine friends, defeated and killed Mānasāra and how he became king of the combined realms of his father and his father's rival.

This conflict between the kings of Magadha and Mālava is dealt with in the beginning and the ending of the text. The middle part of the text revolves around another conflict, namely that between Siṃhavarman, the king of Aṅga, and Caṇḍavarman. This conflict, which ended in the latter's death, was directly related to the one between Rājahaṃsa and Mānasāra, as Caṇḍavarman was Mānasāra's nephew and successor. In the absence of direct heirs Mānasāra had appointed him king of Mālava. With Caṇḍavarman's death the Mālava dynasty had come to an end and Rājavāhana's mission was almost fulfilled. The only obstacle left was the old king Mānasāra himself, who, as said, was dealt with by Rājavāhana next. The text ends with Rājavāhana and his companions governing the "entire circumference of the earth".⁸

The order of the stories

Pūrvapīthikā

1 *Introduction*

2 *Introduction*

3 Somadatta

4 Puṣpodbhava

5 Rājavāhana

Middle part

6 Rājavāhana

7 Apahārarvarman

8 Upahārarvarman

9 Arthapāla

10 Pramati

11 Mitragupta

sense, for, as shown by Porcher (1985), the text does not mention official marriages. In fact, the only official marriage ceremony occurring in the text is the one between Rājavāhana and Avantisundarī, but this is actually an imitation of such a ceremony taking place on stage as part of a play.

⁸ Onians (2005:573-5). For information on how the various kingdoms together cover the entire South-Asian continent, see Brisson (1984).

- 12 Mantragupta
- 13 Viśruta
- Uttarapīṭhikā
- 14 Viśruta
- 15 *Finale*

The turning points in the story

As can be seen in the above overview, in most cases the young men's stories take up one *ucchvāsa* each. However, the story of Rājavāhana is spread out over two *ucchvāsas*, the first one (5) forming the end of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and the second (6) the beginning of the central part. The same is the case with Viśruta's story, the first *ucchvāsa* (13) forming the end of the central part and the second (14) the beginning of the *uttarapīṭhikā*. A closer look at the two junctures will show that we are not dealing with arbitrary breaks caused by the loss of manuscript pages, as has been hitherto assumed.

At a certain moment during the *digvijaya* Rājavāhana went his own way, leaving his companions behind, and descended into the subterranean world of the *asuras*. While he was there the brahmin who had served as his guide into the underworld married an *asura*'s daughter and became the ruler there. Sixteen years later Rājavāhana came up again to discover that his nine friends were no longer there; they had all gone in search of him. Next, in the course of his wanderings, Rājavāhana arrived at the outskirts of Ujjayinī, his sworn enemy's capital. There he met two of his former companions, namely Somadatta and Puṣpodbhava. After each had in his turn told what had happened to him during these last sixteen years, Rājavāhana entered Ujjayinī in the disguise of a brahmin. There things had in the meantime changed considerably. King Mānasāra had retired from office and had been succeeded by his nephew Caṇḍavarman, as his son and heir had opted for a life of asceticism in the Himalayas.

In the fifth and last *ucchvāsa* of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* we are told how Rājavāhana and King Mānasāra's daughter, Avantisundarī, had met each other in the garden of Ujjayinī and had fallen in love. Once Avantisundarī was informed about the brahmin Rājavāhana's real identity, she realized that a marriage between them was impossible. However, a trick was resorted to, with a jugler offering to stage a play in the palace in which someone, played by Rājavāhana, married a girl looking like the king's daughter, played by Avantisundarī herself. The *pūrvapīṭhikā* ends with Rājavāhana and Avantisundarī enjoying their wedding night in the harem.

Ucchvāsa 6, the first one of the central part of the text, presents the same harem the next morning, when Rājavāhana woke up to discover that

his feet were chained by silver shackles. Avantisundarī, horrified at the sight of the shackles, started screaming, which alarmed the guards, who came rushing in and took Rājavāhana prisoner. Caṇḍavarman's first impulse was to execute him, but he was prevented from doing so by Avantisundarī's aged parents. The execution was postponed pending instructions from Mānasāra's son, Darpasāra, which, however, took a long time to arrive as they had to come all the way from the Himalayas. When Caṇḍavarman started on a campaign against Siṃhavarman, the king of Aṅga, he took Rājavāhana along with him with the idea to execute him later. What we see here is a change of scene from the conflict between the kings of Magadha and Mālava to that between the kings of Aṅga and Ujjayinī. The transition is neatly marked by the night. As we will see presently, in Viśruta's story, likewise spread out over two *ucchvāsas*, we move back again to the former conflict.

When the king of Aṅga, Siṃhavarman, saw Caṇḍavarman approaching, he did not wait for reinforcement but threw himself headlong upon the enemy, and was defeated. His life, however, was spared, as Caṇḍavarman wanted to marry his daughter Ambālikā: one does not kill one's father-in-law. At this point the permission for Rājavāhana's execution arrived. However, at that very moment the shackles around the prince's feet turned into an *apsaras* (I will return to this miracle later) and news of Caṇḍavarman's death arrived. Rājavāhana rushed to the palace to find out who had killed Caṇḍavarman, to discover that it was his own former companion Apahārarvarman who had joined Siṃhavarman's force. Leaving the battleground, Rājavāhana and Apahārarvarman retired to a grove on the banks of the Ganges, where they waited for the other allies to join them. The latter appeared to include Rājavāhana's remaining companions. After Rājavāhana had told all that had happened to him as well as to the absent Somadatta and Puṣpodbhava, he invited his friends to tell their stories. The first to do so was Apahārarvarman (*ucchvāsa* 7), who was followed by Upahārarvarman (8), Arthapāla (9), Pramati (10), Mitragupta (11), Mantragupta (12) and Viśruta (13 and 14), each story except Viśruta's taking up one *ucchvāsa*.

In *ucchvāsa* 13, the final one of the central part, Viśruta narrates how he had met the prince of Vidarbha, who as a result of his father's lack of interest in politics, had had to flee the country with his mother and sister. In the first instance they had sought refuge with their uncle Mitrarvarman, the king of Mahiṣmatī. It was soon discovered, however, that Mitrarvarman had plans to kill the prince, after which his mother made the prince to go into hiding in the Vindhyas. This is where Viśruta met him, upon which he solemnly pledged to place the prince again on the throne of Vidarbha. How

he did that, however, is the topic of the next *ucchvāsa* in the *uttarapīṭhikā*. First, however, Viśruta had to deal with the treacherous King Mitravarman of Mahiṣmatī and with Praçaṇḍavarman, another younger brother of Caṇḍavarman, who had announced his intention to marry the Vidarbha prince's sister, Mañjuvādinī, who was still in Mahiṣmatī. After Viśruta had eliminated both opponents he received the princess Mañjuvādinī as his wife. The *ucchvāsa*, and with it, the central part, ends with Viśruta narrating how he had managed to turn all citizens of Mahiṣmatī into law-abiding subjects. After that he could direct his attention to his main task, to place the prince on the throne in Vidarbha. This he accomplished in the fourteenth *ucchvāsa*, the first of the *uttarapīṭhikā*. As a reward for his help Viśruta now received the kingdom of Utkala, which had formerly belonged to Praçaṇḍavarman. At the very moment he intended to go in search of Rājavāhana, summons reached him to come to King Siṃhavarman's aid, and, as we have seen, that is how he met Rājavāhana and his other friends again.

Viśruta's task has been divided into two. The central part ends with the accomplishment of the first one and, next, in the *uttarapīṭhikā* Viśruta embarks upon the second part of his task. The central part ends, highly significantly, with a description of an ideal state in the kingdom to mark Viśruta's success so far. As said, it is generally assumed that the present versions of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and *uttarapīṭhikā* were added secondarily to the central part after the original beginning and ending had been lost. However, the neat cuts suggest that the originals, if ever there were "originals", rather than *lost*, were replaced, or substituted, by alternative versions. The present scenario, which assumes such losses, may almost certainly have to be abandoned.

With how many fragments and how many authors do we have to reckon?

Whatever is the case, the *Daśakumāracarita* is a patchwork all the same, pieced together from independent fragments from different authors. However, rather than three independent fragments, the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, central part and *uttarapīṭhikā*, we seem to be dealing with two, namely the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and the central part together with the *uttarapīṭhikā*. On closer consideration the evidence for different authors for the central part and *uttarapīṭhikā* is slender. Gupta mentions the occurrence of the name Vasumdhārā, the queen of Vidarbha, in the *uttarapīṭhikā* for Vasumatī, Rājavāhana's mother, which may, however, well be a mere scribal error.⁹ Besides, in the *uttarapīṭhikā* Rājavāhana is said finally to defeat his father's

⁹ Gupta (1970:46-47). I leave aside the so-called grammatical mistakes found in the *uttarapīṭhikā* as we do not know to which stage in the text's life these mistakes belong. The same could apply to the occurrence of Vasumdhārā for Vasumatī.

enemy Mānasāra. Gupta sees an inconsistency here, as Mānasāra would at that stage in the story no longer have been active as a king. It should be noted, however, that after this king's nephews had been killed, he was the only obstacle left, if we discount his son Darpasāra, who, however, had retired from kingship to devote himself to a life of asceticism on Mount Kailāṣa.¹⁰ Besides the existence of alternative *uttarapīṭhikās*, this seems to be more or less all the evidence put forward so far for a different authorship of the *uttarapīṭhikā*. It is not much and does not make a strong case.¹¹

The evidence for setting the *pūrvapīṭhikā* apart from the central part is much more convincing. Two examples should suffice to demonstrate this. The first concerns the origins of Arthapāla and Pramati and has been cited by others as well.¹² In the *pūrvapīṭhikā* Arthapāla is said to be the son of Kāmapāla and Pramati the son of Sumati, while in the central section both are said to be the sons of Kāmapāla with different wives, Kāntimatī and Tārāvalī respectively.¹³

¹⁰ Admittedly, Darpasāra's role is ambiguous. Earlier, in *ucchvāsa* 6, Caṇḍavarman was persuaded to put the question whether or not Rājavāhana should be executed to Darpasāra in his retreat on Mount Kailāṣa. This, however, was just an excuse introduced by Avantisundarī's parents to gain time.

¹¹ Here I would like to add a note on a peculiarity in the story, the nature of which I find difficult to assess. As said, the story opens in the city Puṣpapurī in Magadha, ruled by Rājahaṃsa, Rājavāhana's father. Given its position in Magadha it is most likely that Puṣpapurī is another name for Pāṭaliputra. This latter name is, however, also found in connection with one of the other young men, namely Somadatta. Somadatta fell in love with Vāmalocanā, the daughter of King Vīraketu of Pāṭalī (see Onians 2005:100-101). Note that the text reads only *nagarīm*, a town which is identified in the translation as Pāṭalī. The text in Agashe's edition, however, reads *pāṭalīm nāmnā nagarīm* (p. 16, line 16). After Somadatta had killed his rival in love, Mattakāla, king of Lāṭa, Vīraketu gave him his daughter's hand in marriage and appointed him heir to the throne. These events, however, took place somewhere in the Vindhya, far away from Somadatta's wife's and his father-in-law's country. So when Somadatta had met up with Rājavāhana and Puṣpodbhava again and the latter two decided to enter Ujjayinī, the town of their enemy Mānasāra, he was ordered to bring back his wife to her own army camp (*nijakaṭakaṃ*, *DKC*, p. 132). Later on, however, in the beginning of the *uttarapīṭhikā*, in *ucchvāsa* 15, we learn that Somadatta had brought her back to her father's capital, Pāṭaliputra, where he himself was subsequently enjoying the position of crown-prince (pp. 564-565). In the most recent translation of the *Daśakumāracarita* by Isabelle Onians Vīraketu's Pāṭalī is situated somewhere in Rajasthan. In doing so Onians seems to follow Gupta, ignoring, however, the latter's hesitations (Gupta 1972:91-92). This mixing up of the same town, if that is what it is and if there is indeed no second Pāṭalī elsewhere in India, is hard to understand.

¹² E.g. Gupta (1970:44) and Keith (1973:298).

¹³ It should be noted that this inconsistency directly affects the division of the young men into boys whose origin is known, on the one hand, and three foundlings (not including the

The second example concerns a difference in idiom in the passages in which Rājavāhana thanks his companions for having told their stories and invites the next ones to start theirs. The text follows a more or less fixed pattern: “having heard” the story, Rājavāhana “said” something “with a smile”. After this the prince comments on the resourcefulness shown by the main character of the story, who is the same person as the one who told the story, and invites the next one to start his story. This is also the reason why this passage is not found in the *uttarapīthikā*, since Viśruta is the last to narrate his adventures. Wherever in the middle part this passage occurs, it has *śrutvā*: e.g. *śrutvaitad devo rājavāhanaḥ sasmitam avādīt ... iti arthapālamukhe nidhāya snigdhadīrghāṃ drṣṭim ... iti ādideśa* (end eighth *ucchvāsa*, pp. 320 and 322); *śrutvā ca smitvā ca devo’pi rājavāhanaḥ ... iti abhāṣata* (end seventh *ucchvāsa*, p. 276); *śrutvaitat pramaticaritaṃ smitamukulitamukhanalinaḥ ... iti mitraguptam aikṣata kṣitīśaputraḥ* (end tenth *ucchvāsa*, pp. 390 and 392); and *śrutvā ... iti abhidhāya bhūyaḥ smitābhiṣiktadantacchado mantragupte harṣotphullaṃ cakṣuḥ pātayām āsa devo rājavāhanaḥ* (end eleventh *ucchvāsa*, p. 454).¹⁴ The corresponding two passages in the *pūrvapīthikā* follow a slightly different pattern and have *niśamya* instead of *śrutvā*: *tan niśamya ... ātmacaritaṃ kathayām āsa* (end third *ucchvāsa*, p. 108) and *evaṃ mitravṛttāntaṃ niśamya ...* (end fourth *ucchvāsa*, p. 132).

This finding is matched by an unevenness in the the symmetry between the transition from the *pūrvapīthikā* to the central part, on the one hand, and that from the central part to the *uttarapīthikā*, on the other. In the former case it involves a change of scene in the main story, in the latter a change of scene within the story of one particular young men.

The order of appearance of the young men

When all is said and done we seem to have to do, not with three but two fragments, and therefore with only two authors, one of whom was Daṇḍin. As said, Daṇḍin is generally held responsible for the central part only. Do we now have to assume that he was responsible for the *uttarapīthikā* as well

two royal foundlings), on the other, in that in the central part Pramati is moved from the first category into the second. Consequently, the four ministers' sons are reduced to a threesome, as a result of which the direct link with the stories about Naravāhanadatta, for which, see below, is broken.

¹⁴ In the following two passages a word for hearing is absent: *devo’pi rājavāhanaḥ ... iti abhidhāya bhūyaḥ pramatim eva paśyan prītismeraḥ ... iti ajñāpayat* (end ninth *ucchvāsa*, p. 360) and *tasya tatkauśalaṃ smitajyotsnābhiṣiktadantachadaḥ saha suhrdbhir abhinandya ... ityabhidhāya ... viśrute ... drṣaṃ cikṣepa devo rājavāhanaḥ* (end twelfth *ucchvāsa*, p. 484).

or rather that he was responsible for what is now known as the *pūrvapīṭhikā*? I think there is scope for a scenario, according to which Daṇḍin wrote the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, which he had left intentionally unfinished. Daṇḍin's intentions, however, were no longer understood by later generations of poets, who could not resist completing the story. First, however, I will draw attention to the various backgrounds of the young men as depicted in the *pūrvapīṭhikā*. Among the boys it is possible to distinguish several, partly overlapping, categories, which, in turn, appear to have determined the order of their appearance and their function in the story. In the second place I will try to show what Daṇḍin's intentions may have been with composing the *Daśakumāracarita* and suggest that he had made the point he desired to make already in the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and that what follows in the second part is just more of the same.

Rājavāhana's nine companions include seven born in families which served his father as ministers and two born in a family of allies. Five of these nine were strictly speaking foundlings. As to the ministers's sons, we have to start with their grandfathers, Dharmapāla, Padmodbhava and Sitavarman, who acted as advisers to King Rājahaṃsa. These three had seven sons between them, four of whom succeeded their fathers as Rājahaṃsa's advisers, while the remaining three left to roam around the world. These seven ministers and travellers had, again, seven sons, who grew up at the court together with Rājavāhana. Four of them, Mantragupta, Mitragupta, Viśruta and Pramati, were born at the court itself. The other three, Arthapāla, Puṣpodbhava and Somadatta, were born in the course of their fathers' peregrinations, got separated from their parents and arrived at the court as foundlings, where they were raised by their uncles. (With respect to Pramati the central part of the text deviates from the *pūrvapīṭhikā*. In the middle part Pramati is said to be a half-brother of Arthapāla and like the latter born away from the court. I will come back to this later.) Beside these three there are two more foundlings, called Upahāravarmaṇ and Apahāravarmaṇ. In this case, however, we are not dealing with ministers' sons but with princes. They were the sons of Prahāravarmaṇ, the king of Mithilā and an ally of Rājahaṃsa in his conflict with Mānasāra. The two boys got separated from their parents, but were found and adopted by Rājahaṃsa's wife Vasumatī. The following overview shows the origins of the ten young men; the foundlings have been italicized:

Kings	Sons
Rājahaṃsa	Rājavāhana
Prahāravarmaṇ	<i>Upahāravarmaṇ</i>
	<i>Apahāravarmaṇ</i>

Ministers	Ministers	Travellers
Dharmapāla	Sumantra	Mantragupta
	Sumitra	Mitragupta
		Kāmapāla <i>Arthapāla</i>
Padmodbhava	Suśruta	Viśruta
		Ratnodbhava <i>Puṣpodbhava</i>
Sitavarman	Sumati	Pramati
		Satyavarman <i>Somadatta</i>

On the basis of their origins we can thus distinguish two categories of boys (discounting Prince Rājavāhana, who forms a category on his own), who are divided into three groups: (1) four ministers' sons born at the court and (2) five boys who had arrived at the court as foundlings, (2a) three of whom were ministers' sons and (2b) two princes. Both divisions, the one into two groups and the other into three, appear to have played a role in the organization of the story. Thus, the division of the boys into foundlings and ministers' sons born in the palace seems have determined the order in which the men appear and tell their stories as adults. If we leave aside Rājavāhana (in *ucchvāsas* 5 and 6), who does not relate his adventures himself anyhow, a point to which I will return below, the first to tell their stories are the foundlings. Only after all the five foundlings have had their turn – and then the story has already moved from the *pūrvapīṭhikā* to the central part – the other four tell theirs. In the overview below, which presents the distribution of the story-tellers over the successive *ucchvāsas*, Rājavāhana, or rather the author of the text, Daṇḍin, has been left out and the foundlings have been italicized:

Pūrvapīṭhikā

1 -

2 -

3 *Somadatta*

4 *Puṣpodbhava*

5 -

Middle part

6 -

7 *Apahārarvarman*

8 *Upahārarvarman*

9 *Arthapāla*

10 Pramati

- 11 Mitragupta
 12 Mantragupta
 13 Viśruta
 Uttarapīṭhikā
 14 Viśruta
 15 –

Unfortunately, it is unclear why the foundlings came before the ministers' sons born at the court. All I can say in this matter is that while the latter set of four was a given, the five foundlings were a creation of the author of the *Daśakumāracarita* himself. The four ministers' sons have their counterparts in the four companions of Prince Naravāhanadatta known from the recasts of the *Bṛhatkathā*. In the *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṅgraha*, for instance, we are told that on the same day that Vāsavadattā gave birth to Naravāhanadatta, four sons were born to his father's ministers as well. These five young men grew up together and were trained in the arts and sciences. After Naravāhanadatta was consecrated crown-prince, his four friends were appointed his ministers. Hariśikha was to be his counsellor and chief of the army, Marubhūtika his bodyguard, Gomukha was to provide entertainment, and Tapantaka would be his constant companion.¹⁵ In the case of the *Daśakumāracarita* to these four ministers' sons five more young men were added, the five so-called foundlings, as four was not enough. For while Naravāhanadatta achieves *cakravartin*-hood by contracting a sheer endless number of alliances through a sheer endless number of marriages, in the *Daśakumāracarita* it is not the *cakravartin*-to-be who acquires wife after wife – Rājavāhana married only once – but the marriages are so to say spread out over his companions. Without exception their adventures ended in *de facto* marriages, in most cases with kings' daughters. Subsequently, as kings in their own right or else as crown-princes they assisted Rājavāhana in his attempt to regain the throne. The text ends with Rājavāhana and his allies, who form a neat circle around him, governing “the entire circumference of the earth”,¹⁶ sharing as it were *cakravartin*-hood among each other.

This is not the only element borrowed from the stories about Naravāhanadatta. In fact, the very action in the *Daśakumāracarita* is said to take place simultaneously with the conflict between Naravāhanadatta and

¹⁵ See Maten 1973:21. The *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṅgraha* is later than the *Daśakumāracarita*, or later than Daṇḍin, and therefore cannot have been a direct source of the latter. However, the *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṅgraha* itself goes back, directly or indirectly, to the *Bṛhatkathā*, which is mentioned by Daṇḍin in his own *Kāvyaḍarśa* (I 38).

¹⁶ Onians (2005:573-5).

Mānasavega.¹⁷ As seen above, the *pūrvapīṭhikā* ends with Rājavāhana and Avantisundarī enjoying their wedding night in the harem. When the prince woke up the next morning, he found his feet tied by a silver chain, which later turned into a beautiful *apsaras*. At that occasion the *apsaras* told Rājavāhana that her transformation into a silver chain had been due to a curse, which after a two-month period had lost its power. She furthermore told Rājavāhana how she had got around his feet. The *vidyādhara* Vīraśekhara, the son of Mānasavega and grandson of Vegavat, had entered into an alliance with King Mānasāra's son, Darpasāra, in the hope that the latter would help his father, Mānasavega, in the ongoing conflict (*vair pravartamāne*, p. 182) with Naravāhanadatta, king of the Vatsas. Part of the agreement was that Vīraśekhara would receive Darpasāra's sister Avantisundarī, as his wife. Longing to see Avantisundarī, Vīraśekhara one night entered her harem. It should be remembered that *vidyādharas* possess supernatural powers, including the ability to walk through walls.¹⁸ There he found Avantisundarī with her head resting on Rājavāhana's lap after the exhaustion of love-play. As soon as the two were asleep, the jealous Vīraśekhara tied Rājavāhana's feet using the *apsaras*-turned-silver-chain.

It thus seems that the story of the *Daśakumāracarita* is set in "vidyādhara time". This may also apply to its geography. A case in point is the Vindhya forest as a place of exile and dangerous encounters in which a hero can prove his intrepidity.¹⁹ In any case, the setting of the *Daśakumāracarita* in a familiar world with familiar place names should not deceive us: the world of the *vidyādharas* is deceptively normal.²⁰

Returning to the division of the boys into groups, the division into three is in a striking way involved in the elimination of Mānasāra's dynasty. At some point during the 32 years since he had driven Rājahaṃsa from his realm, King Mānasāra had retired. He was not succeeded by his son, Darpasāra, who had opted for a life of asceticism on Mount Kailāṣa. Instead, the throne went to his nephews Caṇḍavarman and Dāruvarman. In *ucchvāsa* 13 we meet yet another brother, Pracāṇḍavarman. All three were one after the other killed, before it was Mānasāra's turn. The first one was

¹⁷ For a summary of the conflict as described in the *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha*, see Maten (1973:29ff.).

¹⁸ See Grafe (2001).

¹⁹ See Baldissera (1996).

²⁰ All this suggests that we have to be careful in using the *Daśakumāracarita* as a historical source. A by now classical example of this use is the way Vākāṭaka history has been fleshed out with the help of Viśruta's adventures, started by Collins (1907) and further elaborated upon by Spink (for a summary, see Bronner 2012: 78) and DeCaroli (1995). I am of course not the first to comment on this use; see, for instance, Brisson (1984) and Bakker (1997:37).

Dāruvarman, he was killed in *ucchvāsa* 4 by Puṣpodbhava, a minister's son and foundling in a fight over a woman. For the same reason Pracaṇḍavarman was killed by Viśruta, a minister's son born at the court (*ucchvāsa* 13). Apahāravarmaṇ, a prince and foundling, killed Caṇḍavarman (*ucchvāsa* 6), which meant the end of all the King Siṃhavarman's troubles. King Mānasāra was left to the last; he was killed in the final *ucchvāsa* by Rājavāhana, who as prince was a category on his own.

Daṇḍin and the Daśakumāracarita

While the second part is a predictable outcome of the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, the *pūrvapīṭhikā* is clearly not a predictable outcome of the second part. To put it more bluntly: while the second part depended almost completely on the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, the *pūrvapīṭhikā* did not depend to the same extent on the second part. This raises the question if the *pūrvapīṭhikā* could indeed have existed independently from the central part as a “complete” text in its own right and, if so, how it was connected with Daṇḍin. Presently I will try to show that the *Daśakumāracarita* interfered directly in a controversy between Daṇḍin-the-poetician and the latter's predecessor Bhāmaha, but also that, if that was indeed what the *Daśakumāracarita* was composed for, the point was already fully made in the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, the central part and *uttarapīṭhikā* adding nothing new. It is therefore tempting to conclude that Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita* originally consisted of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* only and that we are dealing with yet another example of a classical literary text which breaks off seemingly in the middle of the story and as such invited attempts to complete it.

In this connection I like to draw attention to the alternation between first and second person narratives in the *Daśakumāracarita*. Each of Rājavāhana's companions narrated his own story – producing first-person narratives – with Rājavāhana functioning as a kind of Master of Ceremonies. Thus, at the end of *ucchvāsa* 7, after Apahāravarmaṇ had told his story, Rājavāhana smiled and commented: “Extraordinary! Your ruthlessness surpasses even that of wily Karṇisuta, patron of thieves”. Then he looked into the direction of Upahāravarmaṇ, inviting him to tell his story. Upahāravarmaṇ bowed down with a smile, starting his story in the next *ucchvāsa* with the words: “There I was, wandering about until one day I reached Videha”.²¹ Rājavāhana is the one and only exception to this pattern, as his exploits are told in the third person; they are told by the omniscient narrator of the text. This situation is reminiscent of a

²¹ Onians (2005:277-281).

controversy in the poetical tradition between Daṇḍin and his predecessor Bhāmaha about the distinction between two types of stories, the *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*.²² The first formulation of a distinction between these two types of prose tales is found in Bhāmaha's *Kāvyaḷaṃkāra* 1.25-28. According to the definition given there, an *ākhyāyikā* is a prose tale about lofty topics and divided into *ucchvāsas*. Furthermore, the hero (*nāyaka*) in such a tale narrates what has happened to him himself. In the other type, the *kathā*, the hero's exploits are narrated by the author of the text, for, as Bhāmaha argues, "how can one expect a well-bred person (*abhijāta*) to speak about his own excellent qualities?" According to Daṇḍin, however, the *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā* are just two different names for all types of prose tales (see *Kāvyaḷadarśa* I, 23-30). This claim by Daṇḍin is supported by his *Daśakumāracarita*, in which first and second-person narratives have been combined. At the same time, the distinction made by Bhāmaha between well-bred (*abhijāta*) and, by implication, less well-bred persons is maintained, though admittedly in a slightly garbled form. That is to say, in the *Daśakumāracarita* the distinction has shifted from "well-bred" or "gentleman-like" to "well-born": Rājavāhana, who does not narrate his heroic exploits himself, is also the only prince or the only one whose princely status is properly established. The other young men, who narrate, or "boast of", their exploits themselves, are either sons of ministers or foundlings, men about whose (royal) origins nothing definite is known.²³

If the aim of the author of the *Daśakumāracarita* was indeed to prove that Bhāmaha's distinction between *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā* was irrelevant, he had proved his point with the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, the end of which was as it were his parting shot. Apart from marking an important turning point in the story, the transition from the *pūrvapīṭhikā* to the middle part of the text also coincides with a pause in the action. At the end of *ucchvāsa* 5 Rājavāhana and Avantisundarī had retired to the harem, where the prince, "desiring to drink the nectar of conversation with her, ... narrated (*śrāvayām āsa*) the marvelous, captivating stories of the fourteen worlds". The next *ucchvāsa* then opens with the words "[h]aving heard (*śrutvā*)²⁴ the stories of the

²² On the relative chronology of the two earliest poeticians, with Daṇḍin coming after Bhāmaha, see Bronner (2012).

²³ In this connection one should remember the reception accorded to the Pāṇḍavas when they returned to Hastināpura after a prolonged stay in the jungle: nobody believed that they were Pāṇḍu's sons. See also the fate of princesses who got lost on the way to the king they were to be married to in the *nāṭikā* type of drama; they ended up as servants in the queen's harem (Tieken 2001).

²⁴ *śrutvā* echoes *śrāvayām āsa* in the preceding sentence and anticipates *śrutvā* (instead of *niśamya*) in the sentence with which Rājavāhana thanks and congratulates his friends for telling their stories in the central part (see above).

worlds, the excellent lady, her eyes wide open with wonder, smiled and said”.²⁵ We are made to believe that between these two passages Rājavāhana entertained Avantisundarī with numerous stories. The pause in the action, though nominally taking only a part of the night, must have been a very long one, as the *caturdaśabhuvanavṛttānta*, or “the happenings in the fourteen worlds”, that is the seven worlds and seven hells, make up the history of the entire universe.²⁶ Here, the author of the text does not present him actually telling the story but merely informs us, the readers, in one or two sentences that he told these stories. At this point, however, Rājavāhana is presented as not just an ordinary story-teller but as a most excellent one, one who knows how to fascinate his audience: his stories “were ambrosial streams feeding another flood of passion in Avantisundarī”²⁷ In this way his silence as far as his own exploits are concerned is held under a magnifying glass. It may thus be argued that the author, who may now well be identified as Daṇḍin, had made his point with the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and stopped there.

The *pūrvapīṭhikā* would not be the only text in Sanskrit literature which breaks off somewhere in the middle of a story. Another example is Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita*, which ends abruptly with Harṣa’s pledge to a Buddhist monk that he will become a Buddhist monk too, but only after having avenged his brother’s death by killing the King of Gauḍa. At this point the *Harṣacarita* ends with the description of nightfall. We know, however, how Harṣa’s campaign ended: according to tradition Harṣa did become a Buddhist, so he must have succeeded in killing the King of Gauḍa. The point Bāṇa wanted to make was that this needed not to be told: of course Harṣa would succeed! Another example is Kālidāsa’s *Kumārasaṃbhava*, which ends with the wedding night of Śiva and Pārvatī, which of course had the desired result: the conception of the kumāra of the title of the work.²⁸ Breaking off a text like that in the middle of the story works only if the object has been achieved or a decisive step into that direction has been made. As we have seen, at the end of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* Rājavāhana spends the night with Avantisundarī, which makes him virtually the heir of her

²⁵ *tadanulāpapiyūṣapānalolaś citracitraṃ cittahāriṇaṃ caturdaśabhuvanavṛttāntaṃ śrāvayām āsa and śrutvā tu bhuvanavṛttāntam uttamāṅganā vismayavikasitākṣī sasmitam idam abhāṣata* (end fifth *ucchvāsa*, p. 164 and beginning sixth *ucchvāsa*, p. 170 respectively). Onians’s translation may be found on the opposite pages.

²⁶ On pp. 182-183 we find more concrete information about the contents of the stories: *tribhuvana-sargayātrāsamhārasaṃbaddhābhiḥ kathābhir*, “stories ... about the creation, maintenance and reabsorption of the three world realms”.

²⁷ Onians (2005:183).

²⁸ See Tieken (1989) and (2001).

father's kingdom, which includes his own father's kingdom. His mission is in principle accomplished. What follows is just a temporary setback.

It is not hard to see why a sequel was added to the *pūrvapīṭhikā* or, *mutatis mutandis*, why a text like the *pūrvapīṭhikā* was added to the second part. It is more difficult to see where the sequel or else the beginning came from. In either case, however, it seems to have been a ready-made text, not one composed for the occasion, as in the latter case in, for instance, the origin of Pramati its author would have followed the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and the second part respectively. Thus, besides Daṇḍin's "*Daśakumāracarita*" another version was circulating. Furthermore, irrespective of whether Daṇḍin wrote the *pūrvapīṭhikā* or the second part, he himself may merely have reworked an existing text. For, while it is possible that all the details about the young men in the *pūrvapīṭhikā* were made up by Daṇḍin merely to give an idea of the extent of the material which was not told and to make the blow dealt by the abrupt ending only stronger, it is more likely that in composing the *pūrvapīṭhikā* Daṇḍin based himself on a well-known story, or rather, as for all the references to on-the-spot performances, it is hard to imagine the *Daśakumāracarita* as the reproduction of an oral performance, a well-known text. However, the only other known version of the *Daśakumāracarita* that we know is the *Avantisundarīkathā*, likewise by Daṇḍin. However, if the textual history of the *Daśakumāracarita* is in a confused state, by including the *Avantisundarīkathā* the situation becomes even more complicated.

The Avantisundarīkathā

The *Daśakumāracarita*, though a patchwork, is the only complete version of the story we have. Of the *Avantisundarīkathā* only a fragment has come down to us, covering the first half of the *pūrvapīṭhikā* and breaking off at the point where Rājavāhana enters the underworld. However, from its summary, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, we know that it must have been a much longer text. However, the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra* is a fragment as well, breaking off in the middle of Upahāravarman's story. As said, the *Avantisundarīkathā* is attributed to Daṇḍin. While in the case of the *Daśakumāracarita* Daṇḍin's authorship is based on "external" evidence, that is, the colophons to the *ucchvāsas* and the *maṅgala* verse at the beginning of the text, in which verse the word *daṇḍa* occurs seven times in all, in the *Avantisundarīkathā* the author is written into the story itself. The text opens (pp. 1-17) with an account of Daṇḍin's ancestors, the circumstances under which he had arrived in Kāñcī, the seat of the Pallava dynasty and how he came to tell Avantisundarī's story to his friends there. It should be noted that strictly speaking Daṇḍin is not presented as the author here, but as a figure

in the text telling the story about Avantisundarī to his friends. In writing this introduction to the *Avantisundarīkathā* Daṇḍin seems to have taken his cue from Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, which likewise opens with the biography of the poet, who next, though only on page 92 of the Bombay edition of 1925, starts narrating Harṣa's *carita*. However, if Bāṇa, a figure *in* the text, is indeed also the author *of* the text, we have no good reason to cast doubt on the identification of Daṇḍin as the author of the *Avantisundarīkathā*.²⁹

While by opening with a biography of the author the *Avantisundarīkathā* sides with the so-called historical texts, like, besides Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, Vākpati's *Gauḍavaho* and Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*,³⁰ it is not a historical text. Far from it: in the story Daṇḍin promises to narrate how a *vidyādhara* who by a curse had been changed into a lotus flower, regained his original form after he had touched the feet of the image of a certain god.³¹ If anything at all, the *Avantisundarīkathā* turns out to belong to the genre of fictitious tales. By contrast, the *Daśakumāracarita*, though not an historical text in the strict sense of the word either, is definitely more consistently political than the *Avantisundarīkathā*. Furthermore, by its description as "*carita*" it joins the category of the historical tales but at the same time lacks the introduction which otherwise seems typical of such texts. It is tempting to conclude that either the titles of the two texts or stretches of texts were swapped, or that the *Daśakumāracarita*, or more specifically, what is now known as the *pūrvapīṭhikā*, was originally entitled *Avantisundarīkathā*. In this connection it should be noted that the *pūrvapīṭhikā* of the *Daśakumāracarita* ends with Rājavāhana having been united with Avantisundarī, and that the author's biography heading the *Avantisundarīkathā* was initially meant as an introduction to a *carita* text like the *Daśakumāracarita*; or, as already suggested by others, that the *Avantisundarīkathā* and the *Daśakumāracarita* originally formed one work which was subsequently broken up, with

²⁹ I leave aside the other discrepancies between the *Daśakumāracarita* and *Avantisundarīkathā*. For instance, in the *Avantisundarīkathā* Somadatta is the son of Rājavāhana's father's purohita and in Somadatta's stead we find a certain Devarakṣita there. Furthermore, in the *Avantisundarīkathā* Puṣpodbhava's story comes before Somadatta's. Another aspect which I will not pursue here is that the *Avantisundarīkathā* abounds in sub-stories which have no direct bearing on the main story. Thus, it includes, for instance, a version of Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*. The *Avantisundarīkathā* breaks off somewhere in the middle of the *Kādambarī*; see Harihara Sastri's introduction to the *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, p. 36.

³⁰ See Tieken (1999).

³¹ See *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, p. 3.

elements of it being distributed over two texts.³² If the creation of two texts out of one was indeed a deliberate process, it may be asked if it was done by one and the same author. In any case, it is hard to see what this author's intentions were when he gave one and the same person different backgrounds or changed the order of their appearance: Somadatta and Puṣpodbhava in the *Daśakumāracarita* and Puṣpodbhava and Somadatta in the *Avantisundarīkathā*.

Concluding remarks

One of the aims of this article was to show that the *Daśakumāracarita*, though a patchwork, forms a close-knit frame story. In the course of the argument it appeared that the action of the *Daśakumāracarita* took place simultaneously with the conflict between Naravāhanadatta, king of the Vatsas, and Mānasavega as narrated in, for instance, the *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṅgraha*. As pointed out, the relationships between the ten young men in the *Daśakumāracarita* and the roles they play echo those of the protagonists in the texts belonging to the orbit of the *Bṛhatkathā*. Secondly, I questioned the generally accepted idea that only the so-called central section of this text was all that was left of Daṇḍin's text. The *pūrvā-* and *uttarapīṭhikās* would be paraphrases of the missing beginning and ending. In the first place I have argued that the cuts between the beginning, central part and ending are too neat to assume that the beginning and end were lost accidentally. Instead, the authors of the alternative beginnings and endings would have had access to the originals, which they replaced by their own, "improved", versions. In the second place, I have tried to show that, instead of the central part, Daṇḍin may have been responsible for what is now known as the *pūrvapīṭhikā*. With this fragment he wanted to put himself in the right, or to put his competitor Bhāmaha in the wrong, in the matter of the distinction between the *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*. The *pūrvapīṭhikā* could indeed have been a text in its own right, its incompleteness being part of a literary ploy such as is also seen in, for instance, Kālidāsa's *Kumārasaṃbhava* and Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*. However, if the aim of this study was to throw some light on the convoluted picture offered by the transmission of *Daśakumāracarita* and this text's relationship to the *Avantisundarīkathā*, we end up in a muddle once again. For instance, while the *Daśakumāracarita* is a patchwork, pieced together from independent fragments, it is unclear where these fragments came from and how independent they actually were. But for a few discrepancies, the secondary

³² See Bronner (2012:77), Raghavan (1963:836-839), Warder (1983:166-169) and Khoroché (2014).

part, whether it is the *pūrvapīṭhikā* or the second part, fits the other like a glove. Furthermore, as shown by a comparison between the *Daśakumāracarita* and *Avantisundarīkathā*, if these are indeed both by Daṇḍin, the discrepancies between the supposed fragments of the *Daśakumāracarita* may well fall within the (rather wide) margins which an author allowed himself in two versions of the same story. Finally, it is virtually impossible to say anything definite about the relationship between these two versions of the same story. The fact that we are dealing with a patchwork and a fragment does not really help. It is unclear how it could happen that both the *Daśakumāracarita* and *Avantisundarīkathā* suffered such serious losses in the course of their transmission: was it accidental or were they fragments from the very beginning?

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RÉSUMÉ

On considère généralement que Daṇḍin est l'auteur de la seule partie centrale du *Daśakumāracarita*, le début et la fin d'origine ayant été perdus. Les versions dont nous disposons aujourd'hui sont considérées comme des additions tardives dues à différents auteurs. Le but principal de cet article est de montrer que Daṇḍin était l'auteur, non pas de la partie centrale, mais du début, la portion connue aujourd'hui sous le nom de *pūrvapīṭhikā*. C'était un texte indépendant, avec, cependant une fin laissée ouverte où, Daṇḍin, l'auteur du *Kāvyādarśa*, s'efforça de prouver que la distinction établie par son prédécesseur Bhāmaha entre *kathā* et *ākhyāyikā* était dénuée de pertinence. Les générations ultérieures ne purent s'empêcher d'ajouter au texte une fin plus satisfaisante. Il n'est pas invraisemblable de penser que Daṇḍin et les auteurs ultérieurs disposaient d'une version complète. Malheureusement, la seule autre version existante, l'*Avantisundarīkathā*, du même Daṇḍin, n'a survécu que de façon fragmentaire. Il n'est pas invraisemblable de supposer que l'*Avantisundarīkathā*, tout comme le *Daśakumāracarita*, est un extrait du texte complet servant un but particulier. Tandis que, dans le *Daśakumāracarita*, Daṇḍin combinait *kathā* et *ākhyāyikā*, dans l'*Avantisundarī*, il combinait fiction et histoire. Il n'est pas invraisemblable de penser, cependant, qu'à un certain stade, les titres des deux textes aient pu être échangés.

