

Ratnins, Cakravartin and Gecimjāka: Discerning Archaic Elements in the Seventh Century Licchavi inscription of Nepal.

Gautama Vajracharya

In the ancient town of Hadigaun, Kathmandu, there is a Licchavi period (c. 200-879 A.D.) edict carved on a stone slab. De facto ruler Amśuvarman (r. 604-621 A.D.) issued this edict to preserve the traditional custom of an ancient royal palace of his time. The long list of the recipients of customary annual payment (*maryādāpaṇa*) mentioned in the edict includes the coronation elephant, stallion, bearers of royal paraphernalia, a royal messenger, a prime minister, an army general, and the members of the royal family. If we compare this epigraphic statement with the contemporaneous works on architecture and Bana's *Harṣacaritam* and *Kādambarī*, it becomes evident that the palace compound or *rājakula* encompassed not only stables for the animals but also shrines and individual residences for the royalty.

Despite the fact that the royalty is not designated here as *ratna*, the reference to the members of royal family, prime minister, army general, elephant and horse etc. reminds us the seven *ratnas* of Cakravartin's iconography. At first glance, therefore, we may think that the planning of the palace and the palatial custom might have been based on the cult of Cakravartin, the universal monarch whose legend dominates both literature and art of ancient India. A closer observation of the epigraphic evidence, however, reveals that the architectural planning and the custom is actually related to the much earlier Vedic rite Ratna-haviṣ, performed in the course of the royal consecration known as Rājasūya. In this paper, we intend to present textual evidence supporting this view.