

Dharmasetuḥ, a Bridge between Nepal, Bengal, Odisha, Cambodia, South India and Java : Exploring the Use of a Sanskrit Stanza in Epigraphical Records

Workshop “At the ‘Margins’ of the Indic World: Connections, Innovations, and Archaism from Nepal to Bali”



cnrs



2024-01-08 Amandine Wattelier-Bricout

*sarvān evāgāmiṇaḥ pāṛthivendrān
bhūyo bhūyo yācate rāja-siṅhaḥ
sāmānyo yaṅ dharmma-setur narāṇām
kāle kāle pālaniyo bhavadbhiḥ*

“The Lion among Kings again begs all future kings among kings, without exception, that this universal Dharma-causeway for humans, is to be maintained by you in every age!” (A. Griffiths)

INSIDENKKalasan “Kalasan”

*sāmānyo 'yaṅ dharmma-setur nṛpāṇām
kāle kāle pālaniyo bhavadbhiḥ
sarvān etān bhāvinaḥ pāṛthivendrān
bhūyo bhūyo yācate rāmacandraḥ*

“Rāmacandra begs repeatedly to all these future kings: "this bridge of Dharma which is common to all the kings, you always must protect it!".

Stanza numbered 117 in : Sircar, Dines Chandra. 1965. « Stanzas on Bhūmi-Dāna Quoted in Raja-Śāsanas, Appendix II ». In *Indian Epigraphy*, 170-201. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

“The similarities between the examples presented above, as well as a number of other comparable verses found in additional inscription from **ancient India, Campā and Nepal**, strongly suggest the existence of an even earlier source of this statement from which the composers of all these charters had drawn.”

Long, Mark. 2014. *Voices from the Mountain: The Śailendra Inscriptions Discovered in Central Java and the Malay Peninsula*. Śata-Piṭaka Series 648. New Delhi / Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, p.76

Issues raised by this stanza in Java

Long, Mark. 2014. *Voices from the Mountain: The Śailendra Inscriptions Discovered in Central Java and the Malay Peninsula*. Śata-Piṭaka Series 648. New Delhi / Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan

- origin of this stanza: connection with ancient India, Campā and Nepal (Long, 2014, p.76) ?
- originality of this stanza : archaism or innovation (id.)?
- origin of the script : connection with Bengal and Nepal?
(similarities with the Nālanda plate (Bengal) + Nepalese manuscripts (through Buddhism teachings), Bhandarkar 1887-89, p.10 and Bosch 1929 p13-15 : Khālimpur and Munger Plates of Devapāla)
- origin of the Śailendra dynasty : connection with Kalinga area ? (Majumdar, BEFEO XXXIII p140-141 and Sarkar, 1971-72, note 45 p 40)

Epigraphical testimonies

- Long, Mark. 2014. *Voices from the Mountain: The Śailendra Inscriptions Discovered in Central Java and the Malay Peninsula*. Śata-Piṭaka Series 648. New Delhi / Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan: 7 inscriptions + One instance in the *Skandapurāṇa* (extensive one, v. 40)
=> From Sarkar, H. 1971-72. *Corpus of the inscriptions of Java*, 2 vols. Calcutta: Firma KLM.
- Sircar, Dines Chandra. 1965. « Stanzas on Bhūmi-Dāna Quoted in Raja-Śāsanas, Appendix II ». In *Indian Epigraphy*, 170-201. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass: 11 inscriptions + One instance in the *Skandapurāṇa* (extensive one, v. 40)

Connection to Nepal?

The problem of the *Skandapurāṇa*

- Stanza found in the extensive *Skandapurāṇa*
- M. Long (2014) hypothesises the presence of this stanza in Nepal from the old Nepalese manuscripts of the *Skandapurāṇa* => “original” *Skandapurāṇa*
- No occurrence in the Bhāṭṭāraī ’s edition
- Connexion through script and Buddhist teachings?

Gathering more epigraphical testimonies

BESTOW : Benedictive and Exhortative Stanzas, a Thread of Officially uttered Words

- 78 inscriptions (12 stone / 66 CP) containing best_117
- Dynasties :
Śailendra (2), Rāṣṭrakūṭa (3), Pāla (8), Eastern Cālukya (14), Somavaṃśin (33), Candra (1), Bhañja (1), Cālukya of Vemulavāḍa (1), Kalyana Cālukya (3), Kalacuri (1), Chandella (1) + Khmer inscriptions (7) + unknown (3)
- Date : from 778 to 1218 CE



Temporal window

From 778
to 1218

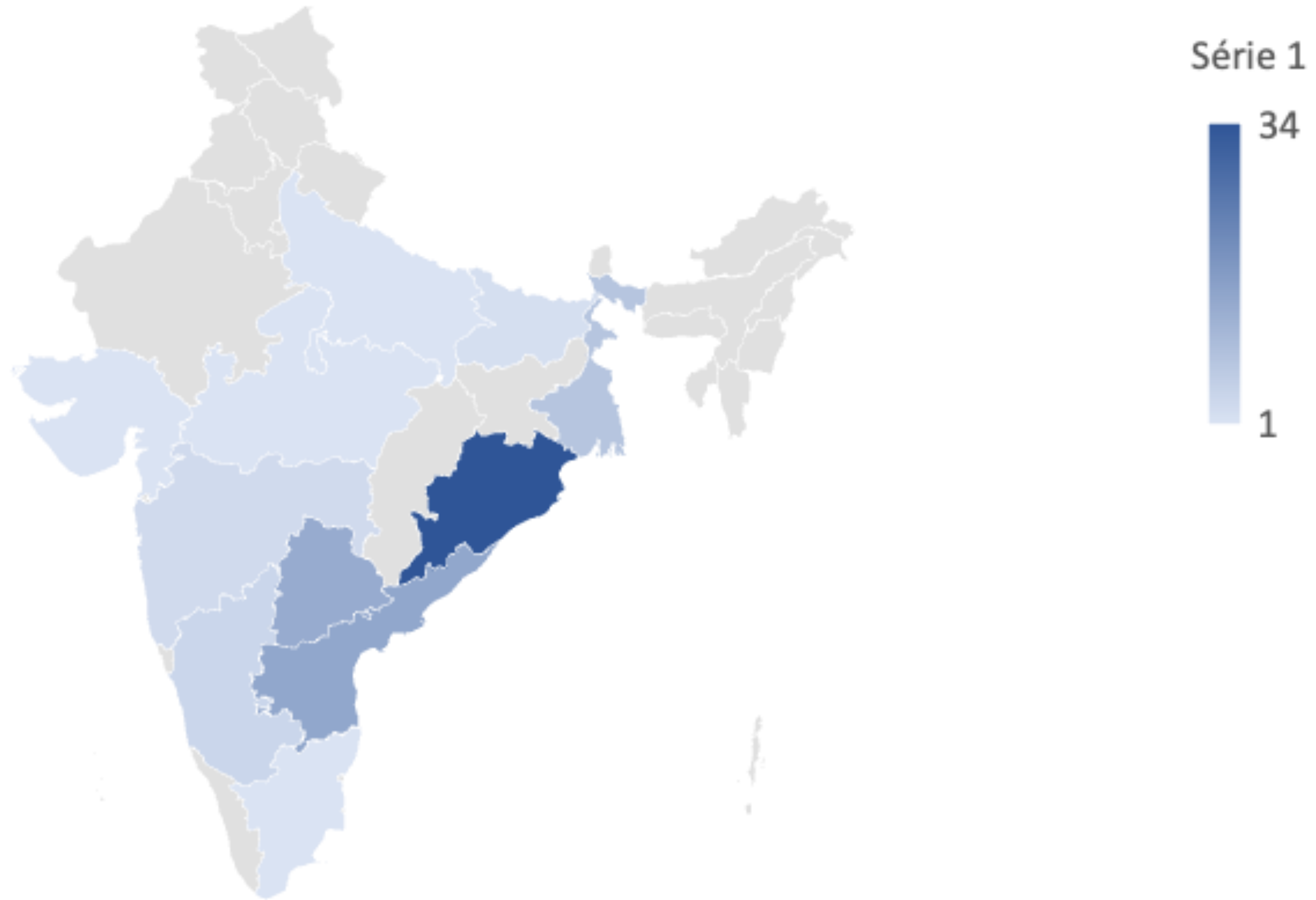
Approximate date	Approximate place	Dynasty
778	Java	Śailendra
782	central Java	Śailendra
807	Maharashtra	Rāṣṭrakūṭa
810	West Bengal; Bangladesh	Pāla
812	Gujarat	Rāṣṭrakūṭa
843	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
843	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
843	Telangana	Eastern Cālukya
843	West Bengal	Pala
848	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
848	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
866	Maharashtra	Rāṣṭrakuṭa
872	Bihar; West Bengal	Pala
881	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
883	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
886	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
886	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
886	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
888	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
890	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
892	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
892	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya

892	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
893	Cambodia	
893	Cambodia	
893	Cambodia	
897	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
900	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
900	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
903	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
908	Bihar; West Bengal	Pala
911	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
911	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
911	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
911	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
914	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
924	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
928	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
929	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
930	Bangladesh	Candra
935	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
935	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
944	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
947	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
947	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
948	Odisha	Somavaṃśin

949	Odisha	Bhañja
958	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
966	Andhra Pradesh	Cālukya of Vemulavāda
970	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
981	Karnataka	Kalyana Calukya
981	Karnataka	Kalyana Calukya
981	Karnataka	Kalyana Calukya
986	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
987	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1000	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
1000	Telangana	Eastern Calukya
1000	Bangladesh	Pala
1000	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1000	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1016	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1022	Telangana; Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Calukya
1026	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1043	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1044	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1044	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1053	Maharashtra	
1072	West Bengal	Kalacuri
1106	Odisha	Somavaṃśin
1132	West Bengal	Pala
1141	West Bengal	Pala
1152	West Bengal	Pala
1192	Madhya Pradesh; Uttar Pradesh	Chandella dynasty
1218	Tamil Nadu	

Spatial distribution

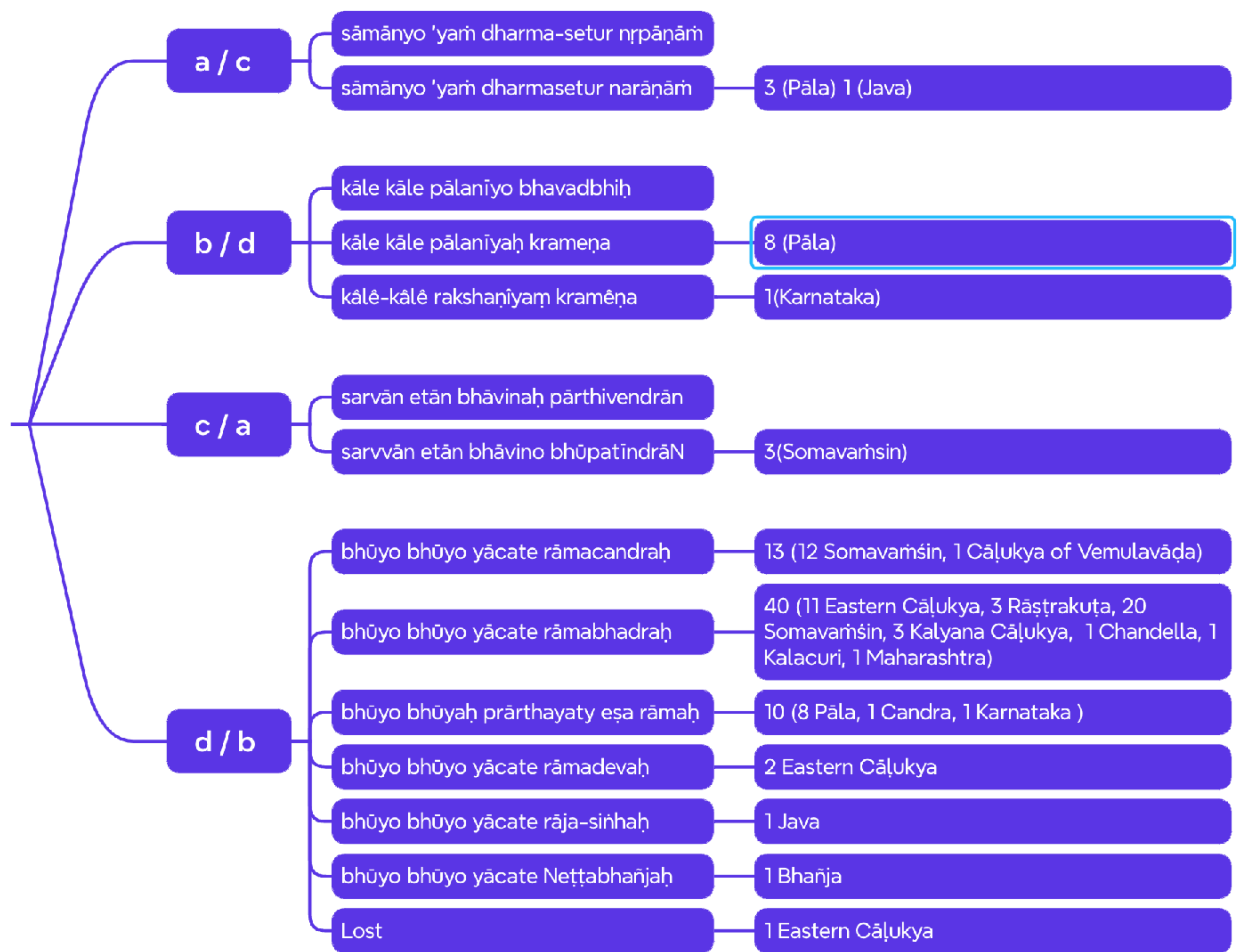
Spatial distribution best_117



Andhra Pradesh	15
Bangladesh	3
Bihar	2
West Bengal	8
Cambodgia	6
Gujarat	1
Java	2
Karnataka	4
Madhya Pradesh	1
Uttar Pradesh	1
Maharashtra	3
Odisha	34
Telangana	14
Java	2
Cambodia	7

v a r i a t i o n s

Best_117



Authorship assigned to the stanza

- Global: 2 Śailendra + Chandella
- Verses instructing dharma : 9 (Pāla (8), Candra (1))
- Rāmabhadra 3 (Eastern Cālukya (1), Rāṣṭrakūṭa (2)) / Rāma (Eastern Cālukya (1))
- Vyāsa : 8 (Eastern Cālukya (7), Rāṣṭrakūṭa (1))
- Vyāsagītā : 1 (Eastern Cālukya (1))
- Dharmaśāstra : 34 (Somavaṃśin + Bhañja)
- No authorship : 15 (Eastern Cālukya (4), Cālukya of Vemulavāḍa (1), Kalyana Cālukya (3), Śailendra (1), Khmer (6))
- Giver's praise : 1 (Kalacuri)
- Vālmīki : 1 (Karnataka)

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Java (2) 778-782

- Kalasan (778-779 CE) : stanza **alone** + **rāja-siṅhaḥ**

*sarvān evāgāmiṇaḥ pāṛthivendrān
bhūyo bhūyo yācate **rāja-siṅhaḥ**
sāmānyo yan dharmma-setur **narāṇām**
kāle kāle pālaniyo bhavadbhiḥ*

- Kelurak (782-784 CE) a stanza **close to** best_117

*yace tri - caritocitacāruvṛttān āgāmiṇaḥ kṣitipatīn ava- sarvān
yuṣmābhir aprati(ma)ḥ (pratip)ālāniyaḥ śrīdharmasetur ayam - bhṛtkumāraḥ*

Long's translation : I implore (yāce) all of those (sarvān) future (āgāmiṇaḥ) kings (kṣitipatīn) ..., whose virtuous activities (vṛttān) of conduct (caritaḥ) are heaped (cita) with splendor (cāru), that by you (yuṣmābhis) be guarded (pratipālāniyaḥ) this (ayam) Śrī Dharmasetu, which is highly esteemed [apratimaḥ], for the Prince (kumāraḥ) who is bearer (bhṛt) of the....

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Rāṣṭrakūṭa (3) 807-812-866

- Best_117 preceded by two or more very well-known and common stanzas (best_23 and best_123) = Group of stanzas
- Authorship :
Vyāsa: Nilgund inscription of the time of Amoghavarsha I.; A.D. 866

Vyāsa and then Rāmabhadra specified in an introductory sentence for best_117 : Sīsavai Grant of Govinda III 807 AD and Baroda copper plate Inscription of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Karkkarāja II

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Pāla (8) 810-843-872-908-1000?-1132-1141-1152

- Buddhist records (connection with Kalasan inscription?)
- One specific feature shared with Kalasan inscription :
sāmānyo 'yaṃ dharmasetur narāṇām
- At the end of a group of well-known stanzas (Best_23 Best_123) and associated with best _71

=> create the impression of a final direct discourse

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Eastern Cālukya (14) from 843 to 1061

- At the end of a group of well-known stanzas (Best_23 Best_123)
- Almost always followed by a verse indicating the executor with the following wording “*Ajñaptir asya dharmasya*”
- Authorship Vyāsa
except for INSVengiCalukya00021 and INSVengiCalukya00047 specific sentence Rāma’s words
- INSVengiCalukya00023 Ṭraṇḍapaṛu grant of Vijayāditya III (843-887?) shares a benediction verse with a **Javanese inscription** of the 10th century (Sangguran Charter : Griffiths, Arlo, Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan, et Eko Bastiawan. Forthcoming. « Restoring a Javanese Inscription to Its Proper Place: The Minto Stone (Sangguran Charter) Seen in New Light ». *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*)

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Somavamśin (33) Odisha

- 800-1100 CE : Association best_71 and best_117 at the end of a dozen stanzas creating a final direct discourse / authorship always *Dharmaśāstra*

*sāmānyo 'yam dharma-setur nṛpāṇām kāle kāle pālaniyo bhavadbhiḥ
sarvān etān bhāvinaḥ pāthivendrān bhūyo bhūyo yācate **rāmacandraḥ/rāmabhadraḥ**
Iti kamala-dalāmbu-bindu-lolām śriyam anucintya manuṣya-jīvitam ca
sakalam idam udāhṛtam ca buddhvā na hi puruṣaiḥ para-kīrtayo vilopyāḥ*

Rāmacandra/Rāmacandra begs repeatedly to all these future kings: "this bridge of Dharma which is common to all the kings, you always must protect it!"

Having considered that fortune and human life were as transient as a drop of water on a lotus petal, and having thought that the entire world is an illustration, let the glorious acts made by others not be destroyed by men.

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Bhañja (1) Odisha 949 CE

- 949 CE : Plates of Neṭṭabhañja Tribhuvanakalaśa (EI28_44_B) :
Minatory stanzas assigned to *Dharmaśāstra*
Date followed by 3 minatory stanzas : best_117 best_90 best_71
Name of the issuer king Neṭṭabhañja in the stanza
*sarvvān etān bhavinaḥ pāṛthivendraḥ bhūyo bhūyo yācate **Neṭṭabhañjaḥ***
sāmānyo 'yaṁ dharmma-setur nṛpāṇāṁ kāle kāle pālaniyo bhavadbhiḥ
- Create the impression of a direct discourse of the issuer king and a kind of giver's praise

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Kalyana Cālukya (3) Karnataka 981-982

- No authorship given
- Bilingual inscription
- Always 2 verses best_23 or best_123 with best_117

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Kalacuri (1) 1072

- Khairha Plates of Yashakarnadeva (Kalachuri) Samvat 823, EI12_24
- 16 minatory stanzas introduced by “*atra cābhyarthanādātur bhavati*” Giver’s praise
- The first one best_117
- impression of a direct discourse of the issuer king which talks like Rāma

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Chandella (1) 1192

- One of the “Three Chandella Charters : plates of Madanavarman V.S. 1192”
EI32_14_1
- 8 minatory stanzas introduced by “*uktaṁ ca*”
- Last one best_117 followed by “*svahasto'yam*”
- impression of a direct discourse of the issuer king

Variations or specific features by dynasty

Khmer inscriptions (7) Cambodia 893

- 893CE ; A kind of rewriting of the content of best_117 : K. 324, K.327, K.331, K.280, K.281, K.282, K.283
*sa cāgra-yāyī dadatām samastām tān bhāvinaḥ kambuja-bhūpatīndrān punaḥ punar **yyācata** lty **ayaṁ** vas svadharmma-setuḥ paripālaniyaḥ*
And he, the foremost among givers, implorers all those future kings of kings of the Kambujas again and again: 'You should protect this bridge of merit for yourself!'
- Best_117 :
*sāmānyo '**yaṁ dharma-setur** nṛpāṇām kāle kāle **pālaniyo** bhavadbhiḥ sarvān etān **bhāvinaḥ** pāthivendrān bhūyo bhūyo **yācate** rāmacandraḥ*
- Best_118 : (*Indian Antiquary vol. 12 1883 p.186: Rāṣṭrakūṭa Dhruva III*)
*sāmānyo '**yaṁ dharma-setuḥ** sarveṣām iha bhūbhujā yato 'taḥ **pālaniyo** 'yaṁ kāle kāle mahātmabhiḥ*
- Common features with Java's inscription : kind of rewriting + only this minatory stanza

New light on the issues raised by this stanza in Java

- origin of this stanza: connection with ancient India, Campā and Nepal (Long, 2014, p.76) ?
- originality of this stanza : archaism or innovation (id.)?
- origin of the script : connection with Bengal and Nepal?
(similarities with the Nālanda plate (Bengal) + Nepalese manuscripts (through Buddhism teachings), Bhandarkar 1887-89, p.10 and Bosch 1929 p13-15 : Khālimpur and Munger Plates of Devapāla)
- origin of the Śailendra dynasty : connection with Kalinga aera (Majumdar, BEFEO XXXIII p140-141 and Sarkar, 1971-72, note 45 p 40)?

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- origin of this stanza: connection with ancient India, Campā and Nepal (Long, 2014, p.76) ?

No evidence of a connection with Nepal

Evidences of connection with Pāla dynasty through a shared reading of best_117

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No testimony before the two Javanese inscriptions

First best_117 attributed to a global authorship

Evidences of variations in the oldest testimonies (Java + Cambodia)

Standardisation of pādas a and c from the beginning

Turn with the introduction of a specific authorship Rāma (Eastern Cālukya)

Three testimonies with the name of the issuer king

Specific use in Tamil Nadu in the framework of a boundary dispute (Lubin. (2018). The

Theory and Practice of Property in Premodern South Asia: Disparities and

Convergences. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 61(5-6), pp. 803–850.)

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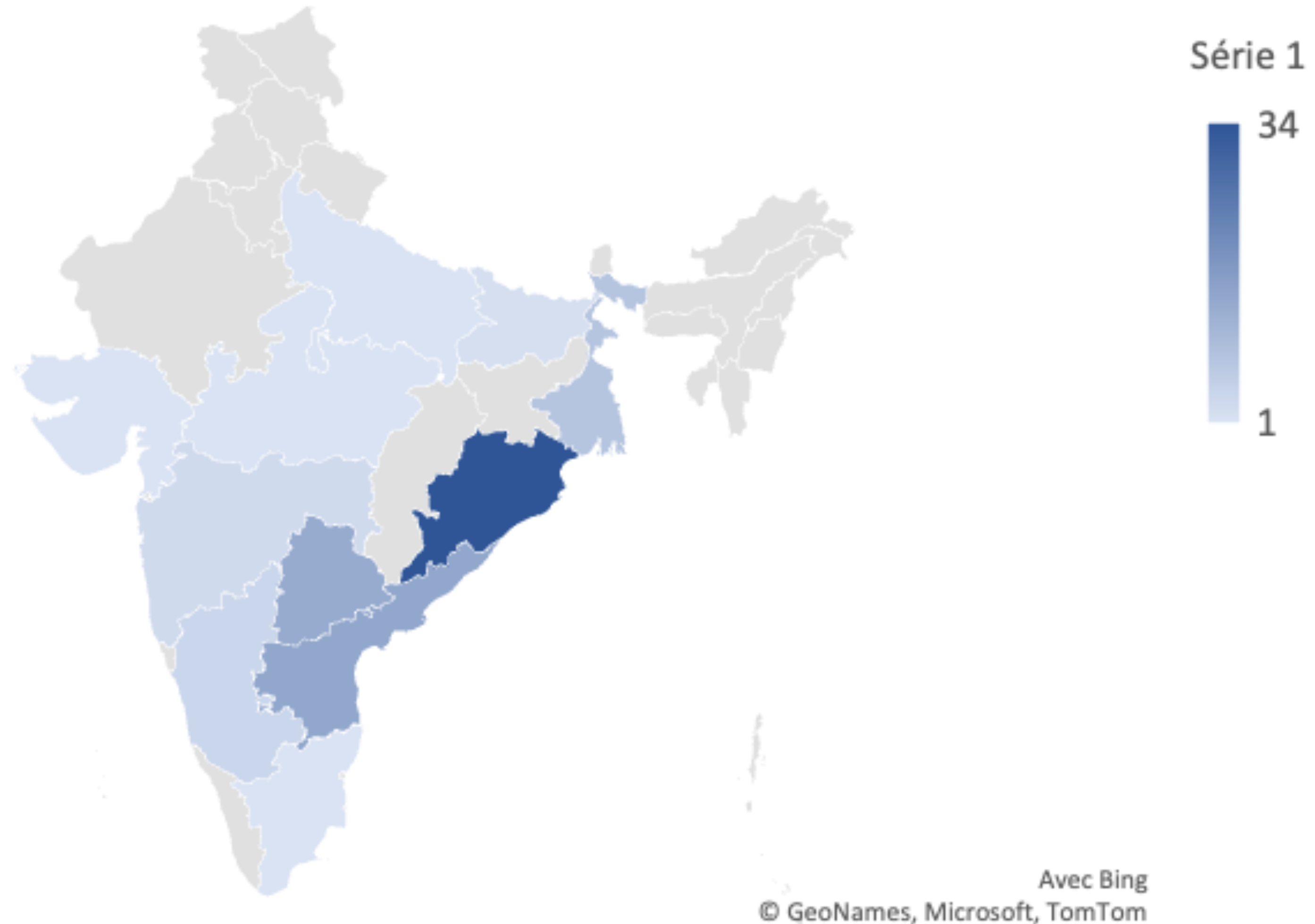
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Need of a reassessment by comparing the scripts (BC99 edition by Furui 2011)

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- origin of the Śailendra dynasty : connection with Kaliṅga aera (Majumdar, BEFEO XXXIII p140-141 and Sarkar, 1971-72, note 45 p 40)?
First occurrence in Java ; connection with Pāla records ; some similarities with Cambodia
Strong presence of best_117 in Odisha
Wide spread in India

Spatial distribution

Spatial distribution best_117



Andhra Pradesh	15
Bangladesh	3
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Thank you !