

Kāṣṭī rock (east face). The Major Rock Edicts of Aśoka

Aśoka

AND THE DECLINE OF THE MAURYAS

REVISED EDITION
WITH NEW AFTERWORD, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND INDEX

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APPENDIX V

A TRANSLATION OF THE EDICTS OF AŚOKA

IN preparing this translation, we have had in mind the reader who is not familiar with the standard translations of Hultzsch and Bloch, or for whom these texts are not readily available. The translation is therefore not a literal one. Footnotes giving lengthy explanations of variations of meaning have been excluded. The emphasis has been on providing a readable version of the original inscriptions.

The inscriptions have been divided as follows:

Major Rock Edicts. Fourteen edicts and the two separate edicts found at sites in Kalinga.

Minor Rock Inscriptions. The Minor Rock Edict, the Queen's Edict, the Barābar Cave Inscriptions, and the Kandahar bilingual Inscriptions.

A second section of this division consists of minor rock inscriptions concerned entirely with the Buddhist community or Buddhists generally. These include the Bhabra Inscription, the Rummindei Pillar Inscription, the Nigalisāgar Pillar Inscription, and the Schism Edict.

The Pillar Edicts. Seven Pillar Edicts.

I am indebted to Prof. A. L. Basham for assistance with these translations.

THE MAJOR ROCK EDICTS

1st Major Rock Edict

The Beloved of the Gods, Piyadassi the king, has had this inscription on *Dhamma* engraved. Here, no living thing having been killed, is to be sacrificed; nor is the holding of a festival permitted. For the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, sees much evil in festivals, though there are some of which the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, approves.

Formerly in the kitchens of the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, many hundreds of thousands of living animals were killed daily for meat. But now, at the time of writing this inscription on *Dhamma*, only three animals are killed, two peacocks and a deer, and the deer not invariably. Even these three animals will not be killed in future.

2nd Major Rock Edict

Everywhere in the empire of the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, and even in the lands on its frontiers, those of the Coḷas, Pāṇḍyas, Satyāputras, Keralaputras, and as far as Ceylon, and of the Greek king named Antiochus and of those kings who are neighbours of that Antiochus, everywhere the two medical services of the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, have been provided. These consist of the medical care of man and the care of animals. Medicinal herbs whether useful to man or to beast, have been brought and planted wherever they did not grow; similarly, roots and fruit have been brought and planted wherever they did not grow. Along the roads wells have been dug and trees planted for the use of men and beasts.

3rd Major Rock Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: When I had been consecrated twelve years I commanded as follows: Everywhere in my empire, the *yuktas* [subordinate officers] with the *rājūkas* [rural administrators] and the *prādesīkas* [heads of the districts], shall go on tour every five years, in order to instruct people in the *Dhamma* as well as for other purposes. It is good to be obedient to one's mother and father, friends and relatives, to be generous to brahmins and *śramaṇas*, it is good not to kill living beings, it is good not only to spend little, but to own the minimum of property. The council will instruct the officials to record the above, making it both manifest to the public and explaining why.

4th Major Rock Edict

In the past, the killing and injuring of living beings, lack of respect towards relatives, brahmins and *śramaṇas* had increased. But today, thanks to the practice of *Dhamma* on the part of the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, the sound of the drum has become the sound of *Dhamma*, showing the people displays of heavenly chariots, elephants, balls of fire, and other divine forms. Through his instruction in *Dhamma* abstention from killing and non-injury to living beings, deference to relatives, brahmins and *śramaṇas*, obedience to mother and father, and obedience to elders have all increased as never before for many centuries. These and many other forms of the practice of *Dhamma* have increased and will increase.

The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, his sons, his grandsons and his great grandsons will advance the practice of *Dhamma*, until the end of the world and will instruct in the law, standing firm in *Dhamma*. For this,

the instruction in the law, is the most valuable activity. But there is no practice of *Dhamma* without goodness, and in these matters it is good to progress and not to fall back. For this purpose, the inscription has been engraved — that men should make progress in this matter, and not be satisfied with their shortcomings. This was engraved here when the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, had been consecrated twelve years.

5th Major Rock Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: It is hard to do good and he who does good, does a difficult thing. And I have done much good. And my sons, my grandsons and my descendants after them until the end of the world if they will follow my example, they too will do good. But he who neglects my reforms even in part will do wrong, for sin is easy to commit.

In the past there were no officers of *Dhamma*. It was I who first appointed them, when I had been consecrated for thirteen years. They are busy in all sects, establishing *Dhamma*, increasing the interest in *Dhamma*, and attending to the welfare and happiness of those who are devoted to *Dhamma*, among the Greeks, the Kambojas, the Gandhāras, the Rīṣṭhikas, the Pitinikas, and the other peoples of the west. Among servants and nobles, brahmans and wealthy householders, among the poor and the aged, they [the officers of *Dhamma*], are working for the welfare and happiness of those devoted to *Dhamma* and for the removal of their troubles. They are busy in promoting the welfare of prisoners should they have behaved irresponsibly, or releasing those that have children, are afflicted, or are aged. They are busy everywhere, here [at Pāṭaliputra] and in all the women's residences, whether my own, those of my brothers and sisters, or those of other relatives. Everywhere throughout my empire the officers of *Dhamma* are busy in everything relating to *Dhamma*, in the establishment of *Dhamma* and in the administration of charities among those devoted to *Dhamma*. For this purpose has this inscription of *Dhamma* been engraved. May it endure long and may my descendants conform to it.

6th Major Rock Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: In the past the quick dispatch of business and the receipt of reports did not take place at all times. But I have now arranged it thus. At all times, whether I am eating, or am in the women's apartments, or in my inner apartments, or at the cattle-shed, or in my carriage, or in my gardens — wherever I may

be, my informants should keep me in touch with public business. Thus everywhere I transact public business. And whatever I may order by word of mouth, whether it concerns a donation or a proclamation, or whatever urgent matter is entrusted to my officers, if there is any dispute or deliberation about it in the Council, it is to be reported to me immediately, at all places and at all times.

This I have commanded. In hard work and the dispatch of business alone, I find no satisfaction. For I consider that I must promote the welfare of the whole world, and hard work and the dispatch of business are the means of doing so. Indeed there is no better work than promoting the welfare of the whole world. And whatever may be my great deeds, I have done them in order to discharge my debt to all beings. I work for their happiness in this life, that in the next they may gain heaven. For this purpose has this inscription of *Dhamma* been engraved. May it endure long. May my sons, grandsons, and great grandsons strive for the welfare of the whole world. But this is difficult without great effort.

7th Major Rock Edict

The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, wishes that all sects may dwell in all places, for all seek self-control and purity of mind. But men have varying desires and varying passions. They will either practise all that is required or else only a part. But even he who is generous, yet has no self control, purity of mind, gratitude, and firm faith, is regarded as mean.

8th Major Rock Edict

In the past, kings went on pleasure tours, which consisted of hunts and other similar amusements. The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, when he had been consecrated ten years, went to the tree of Enlightenment. From that time arose the practice of tours connected with *Dhamma*, during which meetings are held with ascetics and brahmans, gifts are bestowed, meetings are arranged with aged folk, gold is distributed, meetings with the people of the countryside are held, instruction in *Dhamma* is given, and questions on *Dhamma* are answered. The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, derives more pleasure from this, than from any other enjoyments.

9th Major Rock Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: People practise various ceremonies. In illness, at the marriage of sons and daughters, at the birth of children, when going on a journey — on these and on other similar occasions people perform many ceremonies. Women especially perform a

variety of ceremonies, which are trivial and useless. If such ceremonies must be performed they have but small results. But the one ceremony which has great value is that of *Dhamma*. This ceremony includes, regard for slaves and servants, respect for teachers, restrained behaviour towards living beings, and donations to *śramanas* and brahmins — these and similar practices are called the ceremony of *Dhamma*. So father, son, brother, master, friend, acquaintance, and neighbour should think, 'This is virtuous, this is the ceremony I should practice, until my object is achieved.'

[Kāsi version]. Or else they should say to themselves: Other ceremonies are doubtful in their effectiveness. They may achieve their objects or they may not, and they are only effective in temporal matters. But the ceremony of *Dhamma* is effective for all time, for even if its object is not attained in this life, endless merit is produced for the life to come. But if the object is attained in this life, there is a gain in both respects. For in this life the object is attained, and in the next life, endless merit is produced through that ceremony of *Dhamma*.

[Girnar version]. Moreover, they say: 'Giving is good.' But there is no gift or favour comparable to the gift of *Dhamma* or the favour of *Dhamma*. So it is essential that a friend, companion, relative, or colleague should advise on all occasions, saying, 'This should be done. Through this one can gain heaven' — and what can be more important than to gain heaven?

10th Major Rock Edict

The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, sets no great store by fame or glory, except in, that he desires fame and glory both now and in the future, in order that his people may obey *Dhamma* with obedience and follow the way of *Dhamma*. To this extent the Beloved of the Gods desires fame and glory. Whatever efforts the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, makes, it is all done with a view to the after-life, that all men may escape from evil inclinations, for there can be no merit in evil inclinations. But this is difficult for men, whether humble or highly placed, without extreme effort and without renouncing everything else, and it is particularly difficult for the highly placed.

11th Major Rock Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: There is no gift comparable to the gift of *Dhamma*, the praise of *Dhamma*, the sharing of *Dhamma*, fellowship in *Dhamma*. And this is — good behaviour towards slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, generosity towards

friends, acquaintances, and relatives and towards *śramanas* and brahmins, and abstention from killing living beings. Father, son, brother, master, friend, acquaintance, relative, and neighbour should say, 'this is good, this we should do'. By doing so, there is gain in this world, and in the next there is infinite merit, through the gift of *Dhamma*.

12th Major Rock Edict

The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, honours all sects and both ascetics and laymen, with gifts and various forms of recognition. But the Beloved of the Gods does not consider gifts or honour to be as important as the advancement of the essential doctrine of all sects. 'This progress of the essential doctrine takes many forms, but its basis is the control of one's speech, so as not to extoll one's own sect or disparage another's on unsuitable occasions, or at least to do so only mildly on certain occasions. On each occasion one should honour another man's sect, for by doing so one increases the influence of one's own sect and benefits that of the other man; while by doing otherwise one diminishes the influence of one's own sect and harms the other man's. Again, whosoever honours his own sect or disparages that of another man, wholly out of devotion to his own, with a view to showing it in a favourable light, harms his own sect even more seriously. Therefore, concord is to be commended, so that men may hear one another's principles and obey them. This is the desire of the Beloved of the Gods, that all sects should be well-informed, and should teach that which is good, and that everywhere their adherents should be told, 'The Beloved of the Gods does not consider gifts or honour to be as important as the progress of the essential doctrine of all sects.' Many are concerned with this matter — the officers of *Dhamma*, the women's officers, the managers of the state farms, and other classes of officers. The result of this is the increased influence of one's own sect and glory to *Dhamma*.

13th Major Rock Edict

When he had been consecrated eight years the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, conquered Kalinga. A hundred and fifty thousand people were deported, a hundred thousand were killed and many times that number perished. Afterwards, now that Kalinga was annexed, the Beloved of the Gods very earnestly practised *Dhamma*, desired *Dhamma*, and taught *Dhamma*. On conquering Kalinga the Beloved of the Gods felt remorse, for, when an independent country is conquered the slaughter, death, and deportation of the people is extremely grievous to the Beloved of the Gods, and weighs heavily on his mind. What is even more deplorable to the

Beloved of the Gods, is that those who dwell there, whether brahmanas, *śramaṇas*, or those of other sects, or householders who show obedience to their superiors, obedience to mother and father, obedience to their teachers and behave well and devotedly towards their friends, acquaintances, colleagues, relatives, slaves, and servants -- all suffer violence, murder, and separation from their loved ones. Even those who are fortunate to have escaped, and whose love is undiminished [by the brutalizing effect of war], suffer from the misfortunes of their friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and relatives. This participation of all men in suffering, weighs heavily on the mind of the Beloved of the Gods. Except among the Greeks, there is no land where the religious orders of brahmanas and *śramaṇas* are not to be found, and there is no land anywhere where men do not support one sect or another. Today if a hundredth or a thousandth part of those people who were killed or died or were deported when Kalinga was annexed were to suffer similarly, it would weigh heavily on the mind of the Beloved of the Gods.

The Beloved of the Gods believes that one who does wrong should be forgiven as far as it is possible to forgive him. And the Beloved of the Gods conciliates the forest tribes of his empire, but he warns them that he has power even in his remorse, and he asks them to repent, lest they be killed. For the Beloved of the Gods wishes that all beings should be unharmed, self-controlled, calm in mind, and gentle.

The Beloved of the Gods considers victory by *Dhamma* to be the foremost victory. And moreover the Beloved of the Gods has gained this victory on all his frontiers to a distance of six hundred *yojanas* [i.e. about 1500 miles], where reigns the Greek king named Antiochus, and beyond the realm of that Antiochus in the lands of the four kings named Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas, and Alexander; and in the south over the *Coḷas* and *Pāṇḍyas* as far as Ceylon. Likewise here in the imperial territories among the Greeks and the *Kambojas*, *Nābhakas* and *Nābhapanktis*, *Bhojas* and *Pitinikas*, *Andhras* and *Pārindas*, everywhere the people follow the Beloved of the Gods' instructions in *Dhamma*. Even where the envoys of the Beloved of the Gods have not gone, people hear of his conduct according to *Dhamma*, his precepts and his instruction in *Dhamma*, and they follow *Dhamma* and will continue to follow it.

What is obtained by this is victory everywhere, and everywhere victory is pleasant. This pleasure has been obtained through victory by *Dhamma* — yet it is but a slight pleasure, for the Beloved of the Gods only looks upon that as important in its results which pertains to the next world.

This inscription of *Dhamma* has been engraved so that any sons or great

grandsons that I may have should not think of gaining new conquests, and in whatever victories they may gain should be satisfied with patience and light punishment. They should only consider conquest by *Dhamma* to be a true conquest, and delight in *Dhamma* should be their whole delight, for this is of value in both this world and the next.

14th Major Rock Edict

This inscription of *Dhamma* was engraved at the command of the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadasi. It exists in abridged, medium-length, and extended versions, for each clause has not been engraved everywhere. Since the empire is large, much has been engraved and much has yet to be engraved. There is considerable repetition because of the beauty of certain topics, and in order that the people may conform to them. In some places it may be inaccurately engraved, whether by the omission of a passage or by lack of attention, or by the error of the engraver.

1st Separate Edict (Uhaulī and Jaugaḍa).

By order of the Beloved of the Gods: the officers and city magistrates at Tosali/Samāpa are to be instructed thus:

Whatever I approve of, that I desire either to achieve by taking action or to obtain by effective means. This is what I consider the chief method in this matter, and these are my instructions to you. You are in charge of many thousands of living beings. You should gain the affection of men. All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they should obtain welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, the same do I desire for all men. But you do not realize how far this principle goes — possibly one man among you may realize it, but even he only in part and not entirely. Reflect on it well even those of you who are well-placed. Often a man suffers imprisonment or torture and then is released from prison, without reason, and many other people suffer further. You should strive to practise impartiality. But it cannot be practised by one possessing any of these faults — jealousy, shortness of temper, harshness, rashness, obstinacy, idleness, or slackness. You should wish to avoid such faults. The root of all this is to be even-tempered and not rash in your work. He who is slack will not act, and in your official functions you must strive, act, and work. So he who approves this should say to you, 'Think of clearing the debt — thus and thus, does the Beloved of the Gods instruct.' There is great advantage in conforming to this instruction and great loss in not conforming to it. For by disregarding it you will gain neither heaven nor the favour of the king. Why do I devote my mind to this matter so

extensively? Because by conforming you will reach heaven and will discharge your debt to me.

This edict is to be proclaimed on the eighth day of the star *Tiṣya*, and at intervals between the *Tiṣya*-days it is to be read aloud, even to a single person. By doing this you may be able to conform to my instructions. This inscription has been engraved here in order that the city magistrates should at all times see to it that men are never imprisoned or tortured without good reason. And for this purpose, I shall send out on tour every five years, an officer who is not severe or harsh; who, having investigated this matter . . . , shall see that they carry out my instructions. The prince at Ujjain shall send out a similar group of officers, but at intervals not exceeding three years. Similarly at Taxila when the officers go out on tour they shall investigate this, without neglecting their normal duties and shall carry out the king's instructions.

2nd Separate Edict

By order of the Beloved of the Gods. At Tosali the prince and the officers/ at *Samāpa* the officers charged with announcing the royal decrees, are to be ordered thus: Whatever I approve of, that I desire either to achieve by taking action or to obtain by some effective means. This is what I consider the chief method in this matter, and these are my instructions to you. All men are my children and just as I desire for my children that they should obtain welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, the same do I desire for all men. If the unconquered peoples on my borders ask what is my will, they should be made to understand that this is my will with regard to them — 'the king desires that they should have no trouble on his account, should trust in him, and should have in their dealings with him only happiness and no sorrow. They should understand that the king will forgive them as far as they can be forgiven, and that through him they should follow *Dhamma* and gain this world and the next.'

For this purpose I instruct you, that having done so I may discharge my debt to them, by making known to you my will, my resolve and my firm promise. By these actions, my work will advance, and they will be reassured and will realize that the king is like a father, and that he feels for them as for himself, for they are like his own children to him. My couriers and special officers will be in contact with you, instructing you and making known to you my will, my resolve, and my firm promise. For you are able to give the frontier people confidence, welfare, and happiness in this world and the next. Doing this you will reach heaven and help me discharge my debt to my people.

This inscription has been engraved here for this purpose — that the officers shall at all times attend to the conciliation of the people of the frontiers and to promoting *Dhamma* among them. This edict is to be proclaimed every four months on the day of the star *Tiṣya*; it may optionally be proclaimed from time to time in the interval between *Tiṣya*-days, and on occasions may be proclaimed even to a single person. By doing this you will be able to conform to my instructions.

THE MINOR ROCK INSCRIPTIONS

Minor Rock Edict (a conflation of the various versions)

From *Suvarṇagiri*, on the order of His Highness the Prince, and the officers: good health to the officers of *Isila* who are to be instructed thus: Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, *Asoka*: I have been a Buddhist layman for more than two and a half years, but for a year I did not make much progress. Now for more than a year I have drawn closer to the Order and have become more ardent. The gods, who in India up to this time did not associate with men, now mingle with them, and this is the result of my efforts. Moreover this is not something to be obtained only by the great, but it is also open to the humble, if they are earnest and they can even reach heaven easily. This is the reason for this announcement — that both humble and great should make progress and that the neighbouring peoples also should know that the progress is lasting. And this investment will increase and increase abundantly, and increase to half as much again. This matter must be inscribed here and elsewhere on the hills, and wherever there is a stone pillar it is to be engraved on that pillar. You must go out with this document throughout the length and breadth of your district. This announcement has been proclaimed while on tour; 256 nights have been spent on tour.

Thus says the Beloved of the Gods. Whatever the Beloved of the Gods orders must be carried out in every respect. The *rājūka* [rural officer] is to be instructed and he will instruct the people of the countryside, assembling them with the sound of the drum; likewise the local chiefs. 'Obey mother and father, obey the teachers; have mercy on living beings; speak the truth. These virtues of *Dhamma* should be followed.'

Thus you will instruct them on the orders of the Beloved of the Gods, and also you will ensure that elephant trainers, clerks, fortune-tellers, and brahmins instruct their apprentices according to ancient tradition, that they should honour their masters . . . righteous masters. In a family relatives must treat each other with respect.

This is the ancient custom, conducive to long life, and thus it must be carried out. Carved by the engraver Capaḍa.

The Queen's Edict

On the order of the Beloved of the Gods, the officers everywhere are to be instructed that whatever may be the gift of the second queen, whether a mango-grove, a monastery, an institution for dispensing charity or any other donation, it is to be counted to the credit of that queen . . . the second queen, the mother of Tivala, Kāruvāki.

Barābar Cave Inscriptions

I.

The king Piyadassi, when he had been consecrated twelve years, gave the Banyan Cave to the *Ājivikas*.

II.

The king Piyadassi, when he had been consecrated twelve years, gave this cave on the Khalatika mountain to the *Ājivikas*.

III.

The king Piyadassi, consecrated since nineteen years . . .

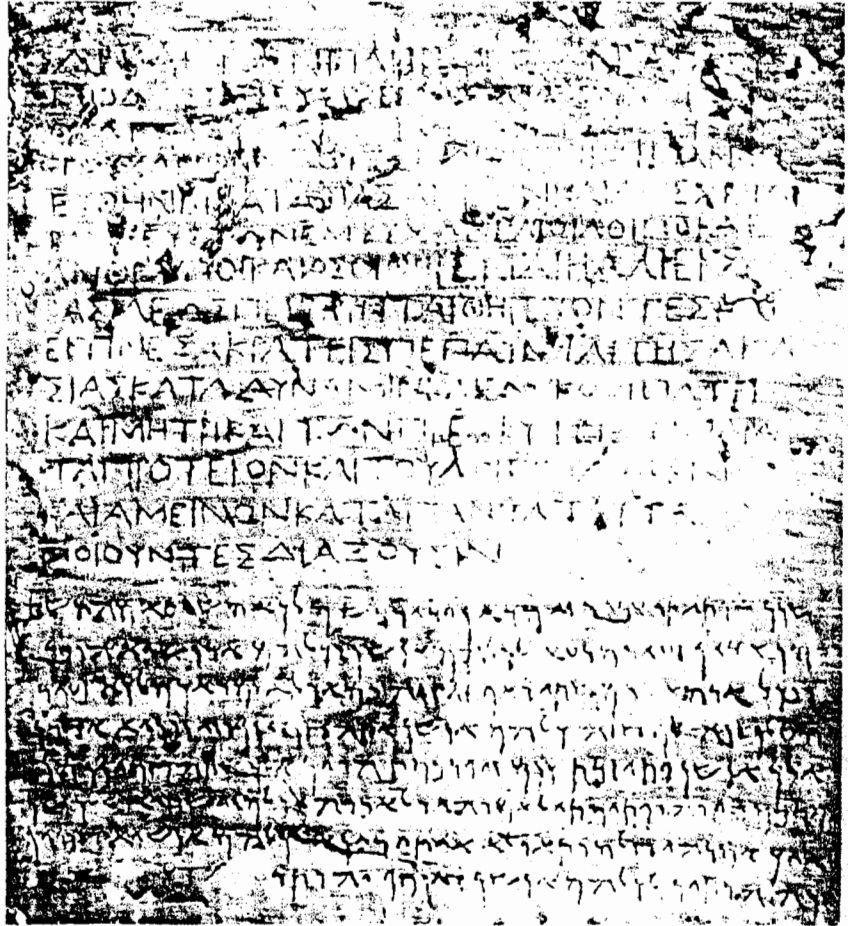
Kandahar Bilingual Rock Inscription

[Greek Version]¹ Ten years being complete¹ king Piyadassi showed piety [i.e. Dhamma] to men. And from that time [onwards] he made men more pious. And all things prosper throughout the whole world. And the king refrains from [eating] living beings, and indeed other men and whosoever [were] the king's huntsmen and fishermen have ceased from hunting, and those who were without control [over themselves] have ceased as far as possible from their lack of [self-] control, and [have become] obedient to father and mother and to elders, such-as was not the case before. And in future, doing all these things, they will live more agreeably and better than before.

[Aramaic Version]² Ten years having passed, our Lord the king Piyadassi, decided to instruct men in *Dhamma*. Since then, evil among men has diminished in the world. Among those who have suffered it has disappeared, and there is joy and peace in the whole world. And even in another matter, that which concerns eating, our Lord the king kills very few animals.

¹ Translated by Prof. Basham, based on the text recorded in *JA*, ccxli, 1958, pp. 2-3.

² We have based this translation on that of André Dupont-Sommer, in *JA*, ccxli, 1958, p. 22.



Kandahar bilingual inscription in Greek and Aramaic

Seeing this the rest of the people have also ceased from killing animals. Even those who catch fish, their activity has been prohibited. Similarly those that were without restraint have now learnt restraint. Obedience to mother and father, and elders, and conformity with the obligations implied in this, is now in practice. There are no more trials for men of piety. Thus the practise of *Dhamma* is of value to all men, and it will continue to be so.

MINOR ROCK INSCRIPTIONS

(Concerned specifically with Aśoka's interest in Buddhism.)

Bhabra Inscription

The king of Magadha, Piyadassi, greets the Order and wishes it prosperity and freedom from care. You know Sirs, how deep is my respect for and faith in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Samgha* [i.e. the Buddhist creed]. Sirs, whatever was spoken by the Lord Buddha was well spoken. And Sirs, allow me to tell you what I believe contributes to the long survival of the Buddhist *Dhamma*. These sermons on *Dhamma*, Sirs — the Excellence of the Discipline, the Lineage of the Noble One, the Future Fears, the Verses of the Sage, the *Sūtra* of Silence, the Questions of Upatissa, and the Admonition spoken by the Lord Buddha to Rāhula on the subject of false speech — these sermons on the *Dhamma*, Sirs, I desire that many monks and nuns should hear frequently and meditate upon, and likewise laymen and laywomen. I am having this engraved Sirs, so that you may know what I desire.

Rummindei Pillar Inscription

The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, when he had been consecrated twenty years, came in person and revered the place where Buddha Śakyamuni was born. He caused a stone enclosure to be made and a stone pillar to be erected. As the Lord was born here in the village of Lumbini, he has exempted it from tax, and fixed its contribution [i.e. of grain] at one-eighth.

Nigalisāgar Pillar Inscription

The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi, when he had been consecrated fourteen years, increased the *stūpa* of Buddha Konākamana to double [its former size] . . . And when he had been consecrated . . . years he came in person, worshipped . . . brought . . .

Schism Edict (a conflation of the various versions)

The Beloved of the Gods orders the officers of Kausāmbī/Pāṭa[liputra] thus:

No one is to cause dissention in the Order. The Order of monks and nuns has been united, and this unity should last for as long as my sons and great grandsons, and the moon and the sun. Whoever creates a schism in the Order, whether monk or nun, is to be dressed in white garments, and to be put in a place not inhabited by monks or nuns. For it is my wish that the Order should remain united and endure for long. This is to be made known to the Order of monks and the Order of nuns. Thus says the Beloved of the Gods: You must keep one copy of this document and place it in your meeting hall, and give one copy to the laity. The laymen must come on every *uposatha* day [day of confession and penance] to endorse this order. The same applies to special officers who must also regularly attend the *uposatha*, and endorse this order, and make it known. Throughout your district you must circulate it exactly according to this text. You must also have this precise text circulated in all the fortress districts [under military control].

THE PILLAR EDICTS

1st Pillar Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: When I had been consecrated for twenty-six years, I had this inscription of *Dhamma* engraved. It is hard to obtain happiness in this world and the next without extreme love of *Dhamma*, much vigilance, much obedience, much fear of sin, and extreme energy. But, through my instructions, care for *Dhamma* and love of *Dhamma* have grown from day to day, and will continue to grow. My subordinates too, whether high or low or of middle station, endorse it and practise it sufficiently to win over the wavering, and likewise do the frontier officials. For this is my principle: to protect through *Dhamma*, to administer affairs according to *Dhamma*, to please the people with *Dhamma*, to guard the empire with *Dhamma*.

2nd Pillar Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: *Dhamma* is good. And what is *Dhamma*? It is having few faults and many good deeds, mercy, charity, truthfulness, and purity.

I have given the gift of insight in various forms. I have conferred many benefits on man, animals, birds, and fish, even to saving their lives, and I

have done many other commendable deeds. I have had this inscription of *Dhamma* engraved that men may conform to it and that it may endure. He who conforms will do well.

3rd Pillar Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: One only notices one's good deeds, thinking, 'I have done good', but on the other hand one does not notice one's wicked deeds, thinking, 'I have done evil', or 'this is indeed a sin'. Now, to be aware of this is something really difficult. But nevertheless one should notice this and think, 'Cruelty, harshness, anger, pride, and envy, these are indeed productive of sin.' Let them not be the cause of my fall. And this one should especially notice, thinking, 'This is important to my happiness in this world; that, on the other hand, for the next.'

4th Pillar Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: When I had been consecrated twenty-six years I had this inscription on *Dhamma* engraved. My *rājūkas* [rural officers] are appointed over many hundred thousands of people. In judgment and punishment I have given them independent authority, so that the *rājūkas* may fulfil their functions calmly and fearlessly and may promote the welfare and happiness of the country people and benefit them. They will learn what makes for happiness and unhappiness and together with those devoted to *Dhamma*, they will admonish the country people that they may obtain happiness in this world and the next. The *rājūkas* are eager to obey me and they will likewise obey my envoys who know my wishes. These likewise will admonish [the erring *rājūkas*] so that they will be able to give me satisfaction.

Just as one entrusts his child to an experienced nurse, and is confident that the experienced nurse is able to care for the child satisfactorily, so my *rājūkas* have been appointed for the welfare and happiness of the country people. In order that they may fulfil their functions fearlessly, confidently, and cheerfully, I have given them independent authority in judgment and punishment. But it is desirable that there should be uniformity in judicial procedure and punishment.

This is my instruction from now on: Men who are imprisoned or sentenced to death are to be given three days respite. Thus their relations may plead for their lives, or, if there is no one to plead for them, they may make donations or undertake a fast for a better rebirth in the next life. For it is my wish that they should gain the next world. And among the people

various practices of *Dhamma* are increasing, such as self-control and the distribution of charity.

5th Pillar Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: When I had been consecrated for twenty-six years I forbade the killing of the following species of animals, namely: parrots, *mainās*, red-headed ducks [?], *cakra-vāka*-geese, swans, *nandi-mukhas* [birds encountered in rice fields?], pigeons, bats, ants, tortoises, boneless fish, *vedaveyakas*, *pupūṭas* of the Ganges [fish?], skate, porcupines, squirrels, deer, lizards, domesticated animals, rhinoceroses, white pigeons, domestic pigeons, and all quadrupeds which are of no utility and are not eaten. She goats, ewes, and sows which are with young or are giving suck are not to be killed, neither are their young up to the age of six months. Capons must not be made. Chaff which contains living things must not be set on fire. Forests must not be burned in order to kill living things or without any good reason. An animal must not be fed with another animal.

On the first full moon days of the three four-monthly seasons, and for three days when the full moon falls on the star *Tiṣya*, and the fourteenth and fifteenth of the bright fortnight, and the first of the dark, and regularly on fast days, fish are not to be caught or sold. And on these same days in the elephant-park and fisheries, other classes of animals likewise must not be killed. On the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days of the fortnight, on the days of the star *Tiṣya* and *Punarvasu*, on the three first full moons of the four-monthly seasons, and on festival days, bulls, goats, rams, boars, and other animals which it is customary to castrate are not to be castrated. On the days of the stars *Tiṣya* and *Punarvasu*, on the first full moon days of the four-monthly seasons, and on the fortnights following them, cattle and horses are not to be branded.

In the period [from my consecration] to [the anniversary on which] I had been consecrated twenty-six years, twenty-five releases of prisoners have been made.

6th Pillar Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: When I had been consecrated for twelve years I had an inscription of *Dhamma* engraved for the welfare and happiness of the world. Whoever follows it should obtain progress in *Dhamma* in various ways. Thus do I provide for the welfare and happiness of the world — in the same way as I bring happiness to my relatives, both close and distant and work for it, so do I provide for

all classes. I honour all sects with various kinds of reverence, and I consider visiting them in person to be most important. When I had been consecrated for twenty-six years I had this inscription of *Dhamma* engraved.

7th Pillar Edict

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: In the past, kings searched for means whereby people's interest in *Dhamma* would increase, but the people did not respond accordingly with a greater devotion to *Dhamma*. Hence the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi says: This idea occurred to me. In the past kings sought to make the people progress . . . but they did not . . . How then could people be made to conform to *Dhamma* and increase their interest in it? . . . How could I elevate them through devotion to *Dhamma*? . . . I shall make them hear proclamations of *Dhamma*, and instruct them with the knowledge of *Dhamma*. When they have heard this, the people will endorse it and will be elevated, and will progress greatly in *Dhamma* . . . For this reason there have been proclamations of *Dhamma* and many instructions of *Dhamma* were ordered, and my administrators were appointed over many people; they will admonish them and explain *Dhamma* to them.

The *rājūkas* [rural officers] are appointed over many hundreds of thousands of people; I have instructed them duly to encourage those people devoted to *Dhamma*.

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: With this same idea in mind I have made pillars of *Dhamma*, appointed officers of *Dhamma*, and made proclamations of *Dhamma*:

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: On the roads I have had banyan trees planted, which will give shade to beasts and men, I have had mango-groves planted and I have had wells dug and rest houses built at every eight *kos*. And I have had many watering places made everywhere for the use of beasts and men. But this benefit is important, and indeed the world has enjoyed attention in many ways from former kings as well as from me. But I have done these things in order that my people might conform to *Dhamma*.

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: My officers of *Dhamma* are busy in many matters of public benefit, they are busy among members of all sects, both ascetics and householders. I have appointed some to concern themselves with the Buddhist Order, with brahmins and *Ājivikas* . . . , with the Jainas . . . , and with various sects. There are many categories of officers with a variety of duties, but my officers of *Dhamma* are busy with the affairs of these and other sects.

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: These and many other chief officers are busy with the distribution of charity both on my behalf and on that of my queens; and in all my harem, in various forms, they . . . assist in the recognition of virtuous deeds, here and in all regions. And I have ordered them to be concerned with the distribution of charity on behalf of my sons, and of the other princes, that they may glory in *Dhamma* and conform to it. Thus the glory of *Dhamma* will increase throughout the world, and it will be endorsed in the form of mercy, charity, truthfulness, purity, gentleness, and virtue.

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: Whatever good deeds I have done, the world has consented to them and followed them. Thus obedience to mother and father, obedience to teachers, deference to those advanced in age, and regard for brahmins and *śramaṇas*, the poor and wretched, slaves and servants, have increased and will increase.

Thus speaks the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi: The advancement of *Dhamma* amongst men has been achieved through two means, legislation and persuasion. But of these two, legislation has been less effective, and persuasion more so. I have proclaimed through legislation for instance that certain species of animals are not to be killed, and other such ideas. But men have increased their adherence to *Dhamma* by being persuaded not to injure living beings and not to take life.

I have done all this so that among my sons and great grandsons and as long as the sun and moon endure, men may follow *Dhamma*. For by following it one gains this world and the next. When I had been consecrated twenty-seven years I had this inscription of *Dhamma* engraved. The Beloved of the Gods speaks thus: This inscription of *Dhamma* is to be engraved wherever there are stone pillars or stone slabs, that it may last long.