

ANDRZEJ GAWROŃSKI.

Bindusāra Māurya.

1. — Between the great Candragupta Māurya and his still greater grandson Aśoka falls the shadowy reign of Bindusāra, son to the former and father of the latter. Nothing is known about this ruler except his name, the length of his reign, and his surname. He is called Bindusāra (with variants) in Buddhist and Jain sources as well as in the Puranic lists, which let him reign 25 or 28 years; he was called Amitrokhades by the Greeks, who tried, as best they could, to imitate the unfamiliar sounds of a Sanskrit title Amitraghāta or Amitrakhāda. That is all that can be said with certainty of Aśoka's father. He was apparently a very able ruler. For a quarter of a century he ruled in peace the immense kingdom inherited from his father. But maybe he did more than that. Maybe the kingdom of Candragupta did not extend beyond the Vindhya hills, and Bindusāra ought to be credited with the conquest of the peninsula down to the Far South. In his standard work on the Early History of India the late Dr V. A. Smith leaves the question open. Now I think we have reason to be more positive on this point than he is. There are two facts which, if taken into due consideration and *combined with each other*, enable us to decide the question. These facts are, first, Ptolemy's embassy to India, and, secondly, the other name of Bindusāra, handed down to us by the Greek writers.

2. — If we ask, when was Megasthenes sent to represent Seleucus the Conqueror at the court of Pāṭaliputra, then the true answer is not: in or about (say) 303 B. C., but: at a time when Candragupta had grown strong enough to rank paramount in Northern India and to converse on equal terms with his powerful neighbour in the West. In fact, after his Indian defeat Seleucus awoke to the consciousness of being the neighbour not of half a dozen

petty rājas struggling for supremacy but of a great monarch ruling over a vast kingdom, perfectly organized and full of unlimited possibilities. There was constant and vivid intercourse between the great western and the great eastern monarchies. Syria was greatly concerned in over land traffic to India. No doubt it was worth while for the Syrian king to entertain a special envoy at the court of his Indian friend. There was reason enough for sending first Megasthenes and after him Deimachos to distant Magadha. On the other hand, Candragupta created a special class of officials charged with providing for the wants of numerous foreigners, no doubt most of them merchants, visiting the imperial capital on business. This shows that India was then what it is now: an exporting rather than an importing country. Personal relations between the two courts were also maintained. They were, no doubt, much spoken of. The curious anecdote preserved by Phylarchus and Apollonius Dyscolus must have taken very firm roots in the East, since it has been repeated as late as the XV-th century by a Persian writer (Jāmī, Bahārīstān) with scarcely any other change than the substitution of the *halifa-i Bagdād* and the *malik-i Hind* for Seleucos and Candragupta respectively. The relations between Northern India and Syria continued for three generations on one side and at least as many on the other side. They came to an end with the downfall of the Mauryan Empire *i. e.* after Aśōka's death. Antiochus the Great no more thought of sending ambassadors to India. On the contrary, he seized the first opportunity to invade the Indian borderland. Instead of a powerful rival he met and defeated a local rāja scarcely worthy to be the object of his ambitions.

Now Ptolemy I, the founder of the dynasty, did not deem it worth while to send an envoy to Candragupta, as the Syrian ruler did. Of course he was quite right. The foreign trade of Egypt was chiefly concerned with Southern India which supplied all kinds of spices and precious stones. The ruler of Egypt cared little for the political situation of the great plain on the other side of the Vindhyan range. But Ptolemy Philadelphos, who came to the throne in 285 B. C., thought it wise to dispatch an envoy to Pāṭaliputra and selected for that office Dionysios. Evidently a change had meanwhile taken place in India. What was that change? In my opinion the only possible one was the conquest of the south by the ruler of Magadha, *i. e.* by Bindusāra, as it is more than improbable

that Aśoka should have made any other acquisitions besides that of Kalinga. After the conquest of the Deccan by Bindusāra, Ptolemy too, like Seleucus a quarter of a century before, found himself to be confronted no more by a swarm of petty rājas but by one powerful monarch. And so he imitated Seleucus and Antiochus and sent an ambassador to Pātaliputra.

3. -- Bindusāra was known to the Greeks under his secondary name Ἀμιτροχάτης or Ἀμιτροχάδης which corresponds to Sanskrit Amitraghāta or Amitrakhāda, both of these epithets meaning „Destroyer (lit. Slayer or Eater) of Enemies“. Apparently there was some reason for giving him such an epithet¹). Amitraghāta is nearly synonymous with Ajātaśatru, whose real name was probably Kūnika, as preserved by the Jains. Now, Ajātaśatru, the sixth king of the Śāiśunāga line, was a fierce warrior who greatly extended the limits of the young kingdom of Magadha. The powerful kingdom of the Prasii, whose fame in vain provoked the ambition of Alexander, was chiefly the result of Ajātaśatru's conquests. No one of his successors, unless it was Mahāpadma Nanda, is likely to have made any substantial additions to his heritage. It was on account of his successful wars that Ajātaśatru got his epithet²). Thus we have every reason to suppose that Bindusāra also came to be called Amitraghāta or khāda after his conquest of Peninsular India.

Candragupta was a greater conqueror than his son. But he was an upstart and — Jaina or no Jaina — a stern despot. The drama *Mudrārākṣasa* gives us some idea of the sultry atmosphere at the court of Candragupta. Feared though the king may have been, his own minister did not shrink from addressing him by the contemptuous *vr̥ṣala*! No flattering epithets are easily originated

¹) „Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusāra, whose title Amitraghāta, 'slayer of enemies', suggests a martial career“ (V. A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, Oxford 1920, p. 76).

²) The Upanishads mention an Ajātaśatru Kāśya, a king and a sage (*Bṛhad-Ar.* II. 1; *Kāuṣ.-Br.-Up.* IV). Was this his real name? Or was it rather a surname due to some conquests made at a time when Benares was still a conquering power? Whatever it may have been, it was probably repeated in the case of Bimbisāra's son, just as the Vedic epithet of Indra (*amitrakhāda*) or a similar one was repeated in the case of Bindusāra. „It may well be that the Ajātasattu of Magadha gladly borrowed an epithet which a king of Kāśi had made famous“. (Prof. Berriedale Keith in the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 123; Cambridge 1922).

in such an atmosphere. But Bindusāra was born a son of the lord paramount of Northern India. He was brought up in an oriental palace. And so it is only natural that the flattering courtiers sur-named him the „Destroyer of Enemies“ as soon as an opportunity presented itself. Again, with the accession of his son and successor the conditions at the court of Pāṭaliputra soon became different: the official title of the new emperor, Priyadarśin, bears eloquent testimony to that change. No doubt, in course of time, under the Guptas and later on, the use of giving epithets to kings turned into abuse, and grandiloquent surnames of all kind were freely assigned in a way which reminds us of Imperial Rome. But in earlier times it was not so, and we have no right to regard the fact of Bindusāra's having assumed the official title of Amitraghāta as a mere caprice or a chance accident¹⁾.

4. — Dr V. A. Smith was not sure to which of the two first Māurya kings we ought to assign the conquest of the Deccan. „The twenty-four years of the reign of Candragupta (he says) seem to be fully occupied with the great events known to have been crowded into them..... and it is more probable that the conquest of the south was the work of Bindusāra than that it was effected by his busy father. But the ascertained outline of the career of Candragupta is so wonderful, and implies his possession of such exceptional ability, that it is possible that the conquest of the south must be added to the list of his achievements“. (Early History of India², Oxford 1914, p. 148 f.). „At present there is no good evidence that his (= Candragupta's) conquests extended into the Deccan, but it is possible that he may have carried his victorious arms across the Narbadā“. (The Oxford History of India, Oxford 1920, p. 74) „...it seems likely that the conquest of the Deccan was effected mostly by Bindusāra. But, as already remarked, it is possible that the southern extension of the empire may have been in part the work of Candragupta, who certainly held the remote province of Kāthiāwār or Surāshtra in the west“ (ibidem, p. 76). Prof. Hopkins is scarcely less vague when he says: „his (= Candragupta's) successors, Bindusāra and Aśoka, enlarged the empire, annexing Kalinga on the eastern coast and ruling as far south as Madras“. (The Cam-

¹⁾ „whether he earned, or merely assumed, his soubriquet, we do not learn“ (Dr F. W. Thomas in the Cambridge History of India, Vol. 1, p. 495).

bridge History of India, Cambridge 1922, Vol. I, p. 223). Of course, these are mere guesses.

In my opinion, the correct interpretation, on the one hand, of the official title of Bindusāra, and, on the other hand, of Ptolemy's having sent an envoy to the court of Pāṭaliputra, both of which facts complete, in a way, each other, compels us to assign the conquest of the south not to Candragupta, but to his son. Bindusāra was no unworthy successor to his father; we may safely vindicate for him the honour of having been a truly great monarch and one of the ablest rulers of India. The series Candragupta—Bindusāra—Aśoka ranks with the Imperial Guptas and the earlier Moghuls.