Recent exploration in the countryside of Badoh-Pathari (District Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh) has revealed many interesting and some exciting remains dating from the Gupta era through the early medieval period, notably in the area of Rāmgarh. Rāmgarh is a small village built on the slope of a low sandstone hill four km to the north of Badoh-Pathari, and a place worth the attention of those interested in the religious history and archaeology of the period in Central India. On the hill of Rāmgarh, away from the main habitational and political centre of Badoh-Pathari, a religious enclave was conceived and shaped into the rock for the worship of deities of the Brāhmaṇical faith, ie Viṣṇu and his incarnations as Narasiṃha, Varāha, and Trivikrama, Śiva in his aniconic form, the Devī who slays the buffalo, Gaṇapati, and mother goddesses (Figures 1 and 3). The setting included hydrological structures, perhaps made for both irrigation and ritual purpose.

The antiquities found at Rāmgarh suggest, on the one hand, that the hill was a place of sacred significance in the religious landscape of Badoh-Pathari and, on the other hand, that its conception followed, in a provincial fashion, the sacred hill of Udayagiri, near Vidiśā, whose sculpted panels and caves are directly connected with the patronage of the Gupta kings and court, and display a special alignment with Viṣṇavism. At Rāmgarh the imagery hints at the great value attached to the worship of Viṣṇu, whose images appear many times side by side, along with other divine figures that are also seen and combined at Udayagiri.

The reliefs and caves carved on the hill side at Rāmgarh were first documented in Indian Archaeology 1958-59 – A review (1959). Then Carmel Berkson (1978) published an article on the site, assigning ‘an early Gupta date’ to the imagery. ‘In the interest of conciseness’ the author discusses selected sculptures, omitting the rest considered of ‘less artistic value’, and focuses on iconographic and stylistic issues only. In later scholarly literature, Rāmgarh is occasionally referred to in publications concerned with various questions in art history, architecture and iconography, religious and cultural history (eg Viennot 1976, Meister, Dhaky and Deva 1988, Dass 2001, Schmid 2003-2004). Despite this attention, little has been written about the site as a whole and nothing about its geographical setting and archaeological context. The antiquities of Rāmgarh hill are in fact not confined to the rock-cut images and caves. Related remains – including the hydrological structures further down the hill, and built structural temples and sculpted niches up to the top – have been discovered during fieldworks recently carried out in the area in 2004 and 2005.
This article re-examines Rāmgarh, reporting my recent discoveries in relation to the rest of the site through a descriptive analysis focusing on various aspects of the imagery, architecture, and landscape. The following attempt at interpreting this site and the visual art it displays, carries with it a number of important questions, notably, the reason for its specific location, the iconographic particularities of its imagery and the iconographic programme as a whole in comparison with other sites, its significance in the history of the religious dynamics of the Gupta period, the cultural and political context of its conception, its meaning and function in the religious and socio-economic environment. While these are complex issues that cannot be explored on the basis of this one site and within the limitations of this article, the purpose of the present study is to provide primary data about Rāmgarh hill and its remains and to raise relevant questions that can be taken as a groundwork for further investigation into local religious and cultural history, and into archaeology, during this period.

The photographs attached to this article illustrate overall views of the site, as well as the new discoveries, while pictures of the temples and single reliefs carved down the hill are available in Berkson (1978) and in the collection of the American Institute of Indian Studies, available in the Digital South Asia Library (DSAL) on Internet (http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aiis/).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING

The contextual position of the site should be briefly introduced at the outset. As mentioned above, Rāmgarh is geographically and historically related to Badoh-Pathari, an area rich in cult sites, temples and hydrological structures dating from the Gupta era and throughout the early medieval period. This area belongs to the region between the Betwā river and its tributary, the Bīna, forming part of the eastern limit of the Mālwa plateau (in the northwest corner of Madhya Pradesh) (Figure 2). Its topography consists of flat and fertile plains of black cotton soils broken by rocky hills. Located at the northeast extremity of a spur of the Vindhya formation (called the Garhi-Teonda range), the hills of Badoh-Pathari area are particularly rich in high quality sandstone. The activity of stone cutting thus plays a central role in the local economy, probably from an early period. From the point of view of the landscape, Badoh-Pathari is an impressive site, encircled by hills dominating the plain from a wide distance.

Known as Vad. otaka in the 5th century according to the Gupta inscription from Tumain dated 435 AD (Garde 1941-42, 117), and in later times as Vadovypattana, i.e. the city of Vaḍovya (Trivedi 1978-91, 208-9), Badoh-Pathari thrived as a religious, economic and political centre of regional importance throughout the early medieval period, within the sphere of influence embracing ancient Vidiśā (80 km to the south-west) and ancient Airikina (now Eran, one day’s walk farther to the north of Badoh-Pathari). Situated at the crossroads of several routes, which link Madhyađeśa to the Avanti region, the Vidiśā region was significant in the history of political formations and cultural exchanges between northern India and the Deccan from the early historic period (Willis 1997, Bakker 2002). Badoh-Pathari offered the advantageous conditions for human settlement – water sources and a defensible position – and appears well-situated in the regional communication network, on the bank of the Bīna River at the intersection of routes connecting Vidiśā, via Gṛāraspur, with Eran (very possibly via the hill range including Rāmgarh hill) (Figure 2).

From the 4th century the Guptas became influential in this region, as shown by an inscription of Samudragupta at Eran. Slightly later the sacred hill of Udayagiri was transformed under the patronage of Candragupta II (c 376-413) and members of his court into a ‘state sanctuary’ of great significance in the religious and socio-economic environment of that period (Willis 2004). The coming of the Guptas and their support of Brāhmaṇism, particularly Vaishnavism, was a major influence on the configuration of the religious landscape in the region from the 5th century (Shaw 2004). The remains found at Rāmgarh,
among other places, bear testimony of this influence and of the spread of a devotional cult of Viṣṇu into the rural hinterland of Badoh-Pathari. No sculpted imagery predating the Gupta period has been discovered so far in this area.

Rāmgarh developed as a religious site away from the main habitational and political centre of Badoh (Figure 2). A fertile plain spreads out between the two places. On this plain, the remains of four dams were discovered during the survey. They were built during the early medieval period, seemingly for irrigation, which indicates the plain was valued for agricultural purposes. Midway toward the west is Chhapāra, a village built on a hillock and the place of a cult centre, as revealed by temples and hydrological structures dating from the 5th century and later. To the south of Chhapāra, a thick slab was recently unearthed in a field. It is carved in relief with a standing four-armed Viṣṇu, wearing a cylindrical crown and a sash-like dhotī, and resembling the previous representations of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa from the region of Mathurā. A five-line inscription in late Brāhmī characters of the Gupta period is engraved on the slab, but too worn to yield a meaningful reading. Rāmgarh and Chhapāra face each other, separated by the plain and the bed of the Rehti river, a tributary of the Bīna.

Several questions arise regarding the location of Rāmgarh: why, on this particular hill, do we find a religious complex set into the rock face, away from the main habitational and political seat? Why was the complex not developed on one of the four prominent hills of Badoh-Pathari? And previous to its transformation, had this place any sacred significance in connection with local beliefs and natural features? For the moment, no remains pre-dating the Gupta period have been found, but the site does...
include a hydrological structure, and possibly a spring too. As will be discussed later, it appears that the place was associated with water and perhaps offered appropriate features to control it.

ARCHITECTURAL AND SCULPTURAL REMAINS DOWN THE HILL

The hill of Rāmgarh is not more than 20 m high and its archaeological remains are distributed over three areas: a low site at the foot of the hill with the caves and images carved into the hillside facing south-west; an intermediate site to the south on the way up to the hilltop; and an upper site with temples built on the top of the hill towards the north (Figure 2).

These areas have been subject to much destruction due notably to modern stone cutting activities and looting excavations. Except for the rock-cut images, the caves, and two small temples still standing on the side of the hill, the structures are reduced to mounds and scattered fragments of architecture and sculpture among piles of stones thrown about from the quarry. These fragments give only hints about the former shape of the place and content of its imagery. No epigraphs have been found apart from shell inscriptions. The structures are not the result of a single campaign, but were conceived at various times over a long period running from the 5th to the 7th century.

The ‘core area’ of Rāmgarh, known from publications to date, faces south-west and the view from there is dominated by the hills of Badoh-Pathari in the distance. The place is called Satmarhiā by the villagers because of the seven small caves carved into the rock. It is nowadays associated with the worship of a sacred tree, performed by women to ensure the general welfare and protection of their children. The caves and images are of small size due to the shape and dimensions of the natural rock face (Figures 1 and 3). As Berkson suggested in the introduction of her article, ‘the execution of the works seems to have sought integration with the existing rock formation. Except for occasional framing, there is no attempt to shape the rock to prepare appropriate placement of the particular images. […] The worshipper was in close connection with the surrounding natural environment’ (1978, 215). At first sight, no scheme seems to have guided the placement of the images. Still, the general spatial distribution of the cultic images and caves does not seem to be random.

The natural features were used to carve a series of reliefs on two superposed and irregular strips of rock. The surface is very worn due to erosion, so it is difficult to study the carvings in detail. The reliefs are mostly devoted to figures of standing Viṣṇu, and his incarnations as Varāha, Trivikrama and Narasimha, while the caves – all excavated into the upper tier – are devoted to Śiva in his phallic emblem (five of a total of seven caves still enshrine a Śiva-liṅga).

The upper tier shows the most prominent rock face with four images of Viṣṇu and two caves. The reliefs start with the reclining figure of Nārāyaṇa in slumber, set in a shallow niche just beside cave 7 enshrining a liṅga (Figure 3). Nārāyaṇa is seen lying on his back in a straight position similar to the relief carved into the passage at Udayagiri, but with the head placed on the opposite side. Next to Nārāyaṇa’s niche are juxtaposed three images of the god, ie (reading from the left) his form standing straight with four arms and his incarnations as Narasimha and Trivikrama. Then are cave 6 (enshrining a liṅga) and a standing Viṣṇu again (DSAL Accession No 48028, 48051).

The rock mass supports a flat terrace, on which was cut a square plinth (about 1,50 x 1,50 m), now carrying a little altar with two fragmented liṅga-s. Both the altar and liṅga-s appear to be smaller replicas of the liṅga inside the cave. We doubt that the terrace was their original placement. The plinth points to the former existence of some kind of material, now lost. First, it suggests that a structure was built on the terrace, perhaps to provide height and emphasis to the caves and reliefs just below. On the other hand, the carving of a small channel into the plinth, for the evacuation of fluid, is rather indicative of a ritual and devotional practice of lustration on this specific spot. One can only speculate on the nature
and dedication of this cult. We could notably suppose that this natural terrace came to be related with the three steps of Viṣṇu – whose effigy is represented just below and twice on the lower strip – and dedicated to the god’s footprints (pada-s). The antiquity of Viṣṇupada worship is well established in the region as testified by various data (see further on the origin and development of this worship Bakker 1991). The terrace above the caves and reliefs had no doubt a function. From a visual perspective, it curiously reminds us of cave 7 at Udayagiri, excavated into a dome-like rock shape crowned with a flat terrace that carries postholes, suggesting that some kind of structure once topped the cave (Dass 2001).

Farther up on the rock face at Rāmgarh, next to cave 5, which is empty, Viṣṇu standing in samabhaṅga posture, static in a frontal pose, was carved twice into a framed panel (DSAL Accession No 48022, 48023). According to iconographic features that are well known from Udayagiri, notably in cave 6, the god is shown with his two extra hands resting on the discus (cakra) – placed on a box-like pedestal – and the mace (gadā) (for an interpretation of this particular iconography of Viṣṇu standing at Udayagiri, see Balasubramaniam, Dass and Raven 2004). On the Rāmgarh panel the weapons are presented in reverse order, with the right hand placed on the discus.

These two icons differ from the second and mostly depicted type at Rāmgarh, with regard to the placement of hands and weapons (DSAL Accession No 48033-48036). In this variant, the god holds the mace (gadā), descending from head level down to the ground, and the discus (cakra) in the extra raised right and left hands, respectively. The natural right is in protection-bestowing gesture (abhaya-mudrā), while the left has the conch (śan. kha) held near the narrow hip. The god is crowned with a kiriṭa-mukūṭa and wears a long garland (mālā). This iconography is derived from the images of an earlier age from the Mathurā region figuring Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. It is known from other sites of the Gupta period in central India, notably from Pawāyā in the area south of Gwalior (an example is now in the Gurjari Mahal Museum

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Figure 3: Map of the lower site of Rāmgarh
at Gwalior; Williams 1982, plate 54). Going down to the lower strip at Rāmgarh, this iconographic type is repeated fifteen times along with five Varāhas, three Trivikramas, and one Narasimha. These forms are carved side by side on the continuous line of rock and in various sizes depending on the height of the rock face (Figures 1 and 3). The dimensions vary from about 30 cm to nearly 1 m in height. We anticipate that more images were sculpted and are now buried in the earth and stone debris covering, here and there, the outcrops – an almost fully buried relief of a standing Viṣṇu has been noticed in field observation. The five Varāha figures are quite similar in iconography and style to the famous relief seen at Udayagiri in cave 5 (DSAL Accession No 48032). The similar resemblance is found with the Narasimha carved into the upper rock face at Rāmgarh: the shape and the iconography closely follow the Narasimha carved in the passage next to the reclining Nārāyaṇa panel at Udayagiri (Berkson 1976, fig. 6). The second Narasimha carved on the lower strip, on the other hand, is depicted differently: like the standing Viṣṇus, the natural arms show abhya-mudrā (right hand) and the conch near the hip, whereas the extra arms hold, as does Trivikrama, the mace (lower right hand) and the discus (upper left hand) (DSAL Accession No 48038). The Trivikrama is also not related to any preserved reliefs from Udayagiri. However, following Willis and Dass, we suggest that the several images could be derived from a prototype missing at Udayagiri, just as the Varāha and upper Narasimha are likely to be (Dass 2001, Willis 2004, 55, n. 57).

The iconography of Trivikrama at Rāmgarh again finds links with the imagery of the Kuṣāṇa age from the Mathurā region (Srinivasan 1988-89). Viṣṇu is seen facing forward, with the left foot taking the stride, eight arms and a long garland. The front arms hold a conch in the left hand near the waist, while the other hand rests on the hip. The next four arms carry the bow and the discus in the lower and upper left hands respectively, the mace and an arrow in the two opposite right hands, while the upper two hands show two discs lifted at head level as if they were symmetrically related. In our view, these two discs symbolise the sun (left hand) and the moon (right hand), whose crescent is still visible on one example (Berkson 1978, fig. 6).

The Trivikrama images from Rāmgarh immediately bring to mind the sculpted lintel from Pawāyā now in the Gurjari Mahal Museum of Gwalior (Williams 1982, 53, plate 50). The lintel is broken and gives us only the left portion only of the iconography of the eight-armed Trivikrama (in what would have been the centre of the lintel), but the upper corner has a crescent with the personified Moon riding two horses. In the Trivikrama from Rāmgarh, the discs are smaller and flat, directly lifted in hand near the head. This feature appears to be a direct reflection of actual iconographic practice in Kuṣāṇa time. The symbols of the sun and the moon as planetary discs held in the upper hands are found in the imagery of multiple-armed divinities from the Mathurā area, notably on reliefs showing the Warrior Goddess slaying the buffalo and on certain icons of Maheśa (Srinivasan 1997, 223-224, 296-297, plates 17.11, 20.16, 20.18). The discs are also found on a Varāha version of the 4th century from the Mathurā region again, which depicts the god holding in each hand a disc embossed with representations of Sūrya riding in his chariot (Joshi 1965).

How are the planetary symbols held by the divinity to be interpreted? The sun and the moon endorsed different, but all related, meanings depending on the context. In the epics and purāṇic sources, the sun and the moon refer to lineage structures. It seems that this notion was particularly favoured in the concept of divine kingship in Kuṣāṇa time (Srinivasan 1997, 296). In addition, ‘sun and moon’ as an expression found in literature and inscriptions, often implies the idea of time and duration (Srinivasan 1997, 296-297). Both notions, according to Srinivasan, ‘can be applied to the Warrior Goddess who holds the sun and moon symbols’, and ‘as such, emphasis on the divine origin and endurance of the Goddess are being stressed’ (Srinivasan 1997, 297).
The observation of the sun and moon are involved in the empirical science of reckoning the time, conceived as a yearly cycle (see further on this point Dass and Willis 2002). The sun causes the change of day and night and of the six seasons, and sustains the creation. Thus Time is the sun. For the months, the calendar in India from an ancient period follows the moon's cycles. In Vaishnava theology the notion of time is an important aspect in the portrayal of Viṣṇu, particularly in his association with the twelve aspects of the sun, ie the āditya-s, originally connected with the monthly cycle of the year (Gonda 1954, Gupta 1992). In the earliest mythology, the three steps of Trivikrama have been interpreted as being the three positions of the sun in the sky. In the context of Udayagiri, a place of astronomical observations and time keeping as recently discovered by Dass and Willis, the association of Viṣṇu with the sun and with Time at cosmic level is quite meaningful (Dass and Willis 2002, Willis 2004). Indeed, it is in the light of the recent breakthroughs in religious and cultural history of Udayagiri hill by these two authors, that the heavenly bodies of the sun and the moon held in the god’s hands find their best interpretation. The question is too broad to be tackled in detail here, in that it concerns, beside iconographic matter, the political and socio-religious background of Udayagiri. Briefly, however, astronomical observation and time keeping according to Dass and Willis were major themes of ancient dating, which along with natural features governed the conception of the religious imagery and architectural programme under the patronage of Candragupta Vikramāditya II and his circle, who ‘through a massive reworking of the site […] sought to transform Udayagiri from an aniconic observatory into an astro-political node where the royal path of the Gupta king intersected the ecliptics of the sun and moon’ (Willis 2004, 41). Willis again has demonstrated that ‘references to the sun and moon are built into the landscape of the site and that links between these celestial bodies and the king’s person are repeatedly made by the images and inscription’ (Willis 2004, 51-52). In the religious conception of the hill, the importance of Trivikrama, notably in connection with the worship of Viṣṇupada, has been demonstrated by Dass (2001). This importance is further sustained by the epithet Vikramāditya used for Candragupta who ‘was drawing an analogy between his own acts as king and Viṣṇu Trivikrama, the heroic three strides by which Viṣṇu redeemed the world from evil’ (Willis 2001, 42-43).

These considerations together help us understand the sun and moon in the Trivikrama images at Rāmgarh. In addition, they reinforce the supposition that the iconography of the Trivikrama reliefs at Rāmgarh was derived from a prototype now lost at Udayagiri. Again, considering this proposal that Udayagiri may have served as a model in the conception of Rāmgarh, we can further suppose that the four-armed form of Viṣṇu standing in samabhāṅga posture, which is represented seventeen times at Rāmgarh, is also derived from another and perhaps most important ‘prototype’, now lost, from Udayagiri hill, probably from the temple built on the summit, which according to Dass may well be associated with the worship of Viṣṇu’s footprints (pada-s) (Dass 2001, Willis 2001). The antiquity of this worship is well established in the region as testified by several pieces of evidence (Bakker 1991, Dass 2001, Willis 2001, Balasubramaniam and Dass 2004). The religious development of the Viṣṇupada as objects of veneration appear to result from various threads — including social customs, devotional practices and symbols (in both Brāhmanism and Buddhism), mythological stories, and the idea in literature that places on earth could be considered ‘as able to preserve the footstep of Viṣṇu Trivikrama’ (Bakker 1991, 21). However, the evidence of this development during the Gupta period, in both literary and material sources, do not clearly and imperatively imply the installation in temples of actual footprints, as the primary meaning of the word would suggest. And if they ‘clearly point to the foundation of footprint sanctuaries in the Gupta period […], no actual proof for the existence of such cult objects has come to light’ (Bakker 1991, 28). The popular device of a pair of footprints as an auspicious symbol, as it is notably seen on many Gupta seals, may be taken as the iconographic stamp on a religious development, but does not apparently
mean that temples of Viṣṇupada enshrined a cult object showing footprints. Thus, the temple on the summit of Udayagiri hill may well have contained an image of standing Viṣṇu, with four arms, as he is carved many times at Rāmgarh. The identity of the image in this temple remains, however, an open question (Dass 2001).

Leaving this supposition aside, we shall now turn to the other reliefs that are seen at Rāmgarh. A particular feature of the iconographic scheme is the integration on the lower strip, amidst the Viṣṇu series, of Gaṇapati and of the Devī slaying the buffalo, identified in later sources with Durgā-Mahiśāsuramardini. Here again a parallel with Udayagiri finds its way in regard to the association of these two divinities with Viṣṇu.

Gaṇapati occupies alone a projected side of the lower rock strip. The surface is very damaged and it is difficult to read the iconography, but the attributes can be deduced from two close examples found at Udayagiri (cave 18) and Deogarh (Gupta Temple, left pillar flanking the southern niche showing Viṣṇu reclining on Ananta). The god is sitting in sukhāsana pose and his trunk rests on a pot of sweet-cakes held in his left hand, while the extra hand holds an aksamālā. An axe and possibly a tusk (or a radish, mūlika) are carried in the opposite upper and lower right hand, respectively. The Warrior Goddess pulling up the head of the buffalo is carved in a small frame and interestingly is included amidst the images of Viṣṇu, next to Trivikrama. The figure is only 20 cm high and appears as an addendum to the series. The iconography derives from earlier representations of the Kuśāṇa period in the region of Mathurā, which show the buffalo lifted in the goddess’ front arms (Berkson 1976, 228-229, Srinivasan 1997). With her extra left arm, she thrusts the trident into the animal’s back, while the opposite hand lifts a shield. This iconographic type is also seen at Udayagiri (next to cave 5 and 17), although the goddess is depicted with more arms and weapons. Her presence on the lower strip in an iconographic programme exclusively devoted to Viṣṇu (apart from the relief of Gaṇapati) is an interesting and somewhat problematic aspect that takes us to the complex question of the identity and meaning of the very popular Warrior Goddess during the previous Kuśāṇa age, before she becomes assimilated into the Śaiva trend in literary sources (Schmid 2003-2004, Srinivasan 1997, 282-304, Yokochi 2004). This larger question is beyond the scope of this article. Her discreet appearance beside a representation of Trivikrama, ie in a context where god is seen as a hero in his combat against demons, might hint at a parallel function between the two divinities.

Gaṇapati and the Devī, which at Udayagiri are twice associated with caves 6 and 17, appear again at Rāmgarh in an enigmatic series of eight other figures standing in rigid samapāda posture with two arms (Figure 4). This series, which at a glance seems to represent Sapta-Mātrikās along with the Warrior Goddess, Gaṇapati, and a form of Śiva, is carved on a rectangular panel in the upper strip, somewhat isolated from the rest of the complex. The height of the figures ranges from 50 to 80 cm. The erosion over the centuries has wrought havoc on the surface, preventing us from a precise iconographic reading of details and attributes. That the surface became so worn could be due to a ritual of lustrating the images with some fluid or water flowing from a spring. The likely association of the site with a spring will be considered further in this article.

The identification of the relief with Mātrikā, as it has been suggested (Schmid 2003-2004, 24), is not quite guaranteed. A close examination of the panel is well deserved. Reading the iconography from the right, the series consists of: (1) a standing female figure perhaps showing abhaya-mudrā (or a lotus?) and holding an object near the hip; (2) a standing female with a spear and the left hand resting on her waist. A small figure, possibly a child, stands at her foot. The next Figure (3) is seated and appears to be playing a type of musical instrument – the harp or lute. At her feet is a small personage, possibly a child again. This image recalls of the sculpted lintel from Pawāyā depicting next to the representation
of Trivikrama, a scene with women playing instruments accompanying a female dancer (Williams 1982, plate 50). That music and musical instruments were part of the kingly and courtly culture of the Gupta period is indicated by Sanskrit literature and imagery, for example the coins stamped with the depiction of Samudragupta playing the lyre. The fourth figure (4) on the panel resembles the first of the series, with the left hand raised in abhaya-mudrā. But here the opposite hand rests on the waist. Then appears the four-armed ‘Warrior Goddess’ (5), depicted with her trident thrust into the buffalo according to the same features described above. She is integrated amidst the series and carved the same size, as if she were to be considered of equal importance to the other figures. Although the iconography suggests to us the myth of a divine action (Durgā fighting against Mahiṣa, as first stated in the Skanda-purāṇa and later in the Devī-māhātmya), the representation seems hieratic. The goddess stands in a static and frontal pose, with no swaying of the hips like the other figures. Beside her is an object that resembles a linga-pittha. On her right are seen two further figures (6 and 7). They appear to be carrying an object in both hands (a bowl or a cup?) as if offering or performing rituals. We cannot be certain that these two figures were feminine. It seems that small figures kneeling in devotion were carved at the feet of both – perhaps they are local patrons. The next figure (8) has a long spear, broad hips, and big ankle-bracelets. A small personage is standing to her right, we again surmise a child. A two-armed Gaṇapati (9) sitting in lalitāsana – strikingly resembling the ithyphallic image carved at Udayagiri to the left of cave 6 entrance – and the series is ended (or introduced) by a two-armed divinity (10) holding what appears to be a large battle-axe. The last is likely an emanation of Śiva or Vīrabhadra, the terrible form associated with the Mātrikās (according to Schmid 2003-2004, 24). A small figure kneeling in devotion is seen beside him.
The composite iconography of this panel differs from the well-known Mātrkās sculptures of the Gupta period in the region. Indeed, the series from Udayagiri, Badoh-Pathari (Harle 1974, fig. 27), Besnagar (now in the Gurjari Mahal Museum at Gwalior. Harle 1974, fig. 31-32), and Raighati at Deogarh (Williams 1982, plate 210), all show the goddesses sitting in bhadrāsana posture on stools. That mothers were represented at Rāmgarh is suggested by a broken sculpture in the round still preserved at the site (Figure 4). This sculpture depicts a seated goddess, holding a ball-like fruit in her right hand placed on her knee. The feature and iconography remind us of the Mātrkās series from the sites mentioned just above.

The Rāmgarh relief of the so-called ‘Mothers’ remains enigmatic. The various figures seen at Udayagiri (notably in cave 5, where Gaṇapati and the Warrior Goddess are depicted together twice, along with two series of mothers) could perhaps explain the nature of its composition. More precisely we might suggest that the Rāmgarh artists have taken Udayagiri as a model and drawn images together in a fashion that appears to us somewhat random. Notwithstanding the inclusion of the Warrior Goddess in the ensemble, the identification of the seven other figures as mothers, accompanied by Gaṇapati and Śiva, is not excluded. At least three divinities appear with a child (if the small characters are indeed children). On the other hand, the kneeling figures at the feet of three other divinities are clearly worshippers rather than children. In the religious and spatial scheme of the site, the panel is placed somewhat away from the Vaiṣṇava group and next to three caves (cave 2, 3, and 4) containing linga-s in the alignment of the same rock face. This location cannot be coincidental, and points to a particular ritual space devoted to Śiva.

Underneath the relief, a wide and horizontal ledge and a small cave (cave 1) were cut into the rock, the latter with a mortise carved into the floor. A Śiva-linga is now placed inside, but it is likely that this cave sheltered a different cult image, now lost. In addition, a flat-roof shrine, square in plan, was built in front of the panel, facing east and made of stone slabs with projecting pilasters (Meister, Dhaky, and Deva 1988, 131). The doorway has disappeared as well as the effigy inside. This shrine is likely to have been built at a later time (perhaps in the early 6th century). Inside is a fragment of an image wearing a garland. A part of the chest only is preserved, which shows around the neck an asymmetric necklace composed of two different halves, a typical feature of Hari-Hara. The original position of this sculpture is of course unknown.

We shall now talk briefly about the caves. They are all very simple, roughly excavated with little attempt to shape the walls and to carve doorframes for the entrances, with the exception of cave 1 beside Nārāyaṇa’s niche. This has a doorframe, though devoid of decoration. Some are quite low, so one can barely enter and stand inside. Apart from cave 1, the ground level is lower than the threshold, and so the floor inside is flooded with water during the rainy season and for several months after. Indeed, it has been noticed that some caves can be flooded throughout the year with water. The visual effect of the linga-pitha emerging from the water was certainly the result of deliberate manipulation of natural features to emphasise the idea of prosperity associated with Śiva. On the issue of linga worship in the early historic period, based on textual and sculptural sources, Mitterwallner (1994, 27) has written: ‘Śiva is employed in the service of the sovereign, as a deity who guarantees the necessary water from which fertility and, along with it, prosperity arise’.

Five caves still enshrine, encapsulate rather, a linga embedded into the altar, which in one case has been directly carved into the rock inside. This means that the caves, at least five of them, were excavated for the express purpose of installing the linga-s of Śiva. These have three shaft sections – square at the base, octagonal at the centre, and circular and polished, topmost that shows a pārśvasūtra and brahmāsūtra in a style resembling type d in Mitterwallner (1984, 21) (DSAL Accession No 48050). According to this
This type developed in the course of the 5th century AD. Two other linga-s of the same size are found outside. In addition, a low opened porch with four roughly-decorated pillars still stands before one of the cave (Meister, Dhaky, Deva 1988, 131). Similar pillars lie nearby, suggesting that two or more caves had a front porch too. These were seemingly built to shelter Nandi images sculpted in the round: three fragmentary sculptures of the bull can be counted among the ruins lying on the ground.

In addition to the caves, a square temple facing east was built on a platform farther down the slope (Berkson 1978, Meister, Dhaky and Deva 1988, 129-31, plates 270, 272-73). This is of the so-called maṇḍapikā-shrine type, consisting of a square sanctum and a porch supported by two pillars, now lying on the floor. The T-shaped doorframe shows a linga on its lintel – indicating the shrine was dedicated to Śiva – as well as the river goddesses and dvārapāla-s on its jamb-bases. The image in the niche facing north is preserved and shows the Devī grasping the hind leg of the buffalo while pressing the demon’s head to the ground with her foot and piercing him with her trident. A sword and a bell are held in her two extra right and left hands respectively. The shape and iconography, although simplified here, are reminiscent of the image beside cave 6 at Udayagiri. This temple along with the other structure at Rāmgarh bears precious testimony of a particular architectural type which continued to develop in the area during the early medieval period. It appears that the temples were built after the reliefs and the caves. A dating around the mid-6th century AD can be proposed on the basis of the decorative designs of the temple and the style of the figures carved with ballooning forms. As for the carvings and the caves, they were probably conceived in the course of the 5th century (contrary to Williams’ proposition of ‘considerably later’; Williams 1982, 53, note 106). Berkson assigns an ‘early Gupta date’ to the reliefs, ‘which in all likelihood are contemporary with, or prior to, to those at Udayagiri’ (Berkson 1978). The idea that the carving of the site could precede Udayagiri is unlikely.

THE LANDSCAPE SETTING

Beside iconographic and architectural issues, a study of the landscape setting adds new and important data to the understanding of Rāmgarh. As we shall see in this section, the religious conception of the site involved not only caves and temples but hydrological structures, possibly made for both irrigation and ritual purposes.

That water was an important component of the site has been briefly suggested in the foregoing description of the caves. Not long ago, the site was still associated with a spring, which is indicated on the 1:50,000 topographical map and geological map of the Survey of India, as well as attested by local people. The spring has been apparently destroyed, due to the extent of the modern stone quarry, and its exact location is now lost. The existence of a spring seems to explain that some caves are flooded with water throughout the year, and furthermore that the surface of the carved imagery, especially the series of standing goddesses on the upper strip, is so worn.

The spring, which no doubt existed in early times, was certainly considered an important and sacred feature of the landscape. It was perhaps used in association with the rock-cut imagery to facilitate ritualistic ablutions and lustrations and enrich the mythological and cosmological content of the displayed imagery. Water flowing from the spring and from the annual rains, and flooding the caves, was diverted downhill into a large reservoir (Figures 3 and 5). Indeed, a very prominent archaeological feature, which was observed in the landscape during field surveys, was the remains of a large dam. Our understanding of this structure was advanced by the discoveries and studies by Shaw and Sutcliffe of dams in the area of Sanchi, near Vidiśā (Shaw and Sutcliffe 2001 and 2003). Their publications detail the structure, function and associated land use practices of these dams, whose earliest construction according to these authors occurred between the c. 3rd and 2nd centuries BC to provide irrigation, possibly for rice.
The dam at Rāmgarh abuts the hillside, running westward on about 300 meters, and formed a large reservoir to collect water runoff from the rain and the spring. It appears to be made of both natural and built structures, and presents similar features to the dams discovered in the Sanchi area, consisting of an earthen core that was possibly reinforced on the upstream side by slabs of sandstone masonry (slabs are seen, here and there, buried in earth on the upstream face). The stone-facing was perhaps confined to only a portion of the structure on its highest part, where the reservoir water level would fluctuate. The height of the dam ranges from about 1 m to 5 m up to the ridge, where the reservoir reaches its deepest level at the foot of the hillside. A mound on the uppermost part of the dam seems to indicate the location of a structure now lost, perhaps a temple (Figure 3). A survey of the dams in the area of Badoh-Pathari has revealed that temples were associated with reservoirs and often built at the most prominent, and most fragile or vulnerable part of the dam, where excess of water would flow. This is a feature which is in keeping with patterns from other part of South Asia (Shaw and Sutcliffe 2003, 80). The relationship of this dam to the sculpted strip and excavated caves is evident on the ground. The images of Viṣṇu carved into the lower strip face the reservoir upstream at a close distance. Another large reservoir was formed downstream to receive further water runoff from the hill and water surplus from the upstream reservoir. Nowadays, the water flows through a channel having a modern spillway built at the deepest point in the dam. However, our examination of the features suggested us that this channel could have come from a large breaking of the dam at some time in the past. The flow during the course of time has dug a wide breach through the dam. Previous to the possible breaking of the dam, the water was possibly evacuated through a canal built up artificially with a bank of earthen and stone material abutting the hillside. The remains are visible on the ground and this kind of features was observed at Devrajpur and Morel Kala dams (Shaw and Sutcliffe 2003, 76-78). They were found also during our survey at Babai Kāla to the north of Rāmgarh (Figure 2). The modern road has altered the landscape, but it is still possible to visualise the arrangement and reconstruct the former shape of the dam and the course of the water before the images and the temple, its flow through the channel abutting to the hill to the north-east, and finally to the downstream reservoir. However, measurements and further investigations are required to test the viability of this observation and understand the functioning and purpose of this dam.

For the time being, these remains on the ground clearly suggest that water (from the runoff and possibly from the spring) was controlled and associated with the religious conception of the site, possibly as a mean both to enhance the legendary narrative of the imagery, by symbolising the sāgara, and fulfil at the same time irrigation function. In the sacred perception, the hill, into which the mythological imagery was carved, could have been perceived as a cosmic mound emerging out of the primordial waters. Water control and manipulation (notably for the keeping of time) were most significant aspects of the religious and conceptual map of Udayagiri hill (Willis 2004).

The water system at Rāmgarh was apparently not confined to the dam described above. Three additional dams were discovered in the vicinity, one on the way up to the hilltop from the south near the modern road, and two in the short valley toward the north, near Parsora, a small village at the foot of
the hill. To the south, remains of further temples were found on the bank of the reservoir formed by one of these dams (Figure 2). Again, the dams were made of an earthen core and stone-facing (now partially buried). This water supply was placed at a strategic location and served to collect runoffs from the rocky slopes just above and possibly to irrigate the fertile soil downstream. The place now has a modern shrine, partly built with material of early structures dating from the 5th to the 8th century. This material is badly preserved and too partial to allow a proper reconstruction of the site. Among the fragments is the upper part of a small T-shaped doorframe similar to the doorframe of the mandapika-shrine described in the previous part of this article (Figure 6).

In Badoh-Pathari and its surrounding area, the control of water was a major condition for the population settling in this area where perennial rivers flow too far away from the habitation zones in the dry season to be of any use. In the rainy season numerous streams flowing into the Bina river drain the plain. Twenty-five dams dating from the 5th century (and possibly earlier) throughout the early medieval period, have been discovered during our recent fieldwork. Built in the fertile plains, across short valleys and between hills, these embankments are fed with water runoffs from hills and streams. Their spatial distribution and relationship to the topography reveals a well-organised hydraulic system which makes the maximum use of the slope. A study of these structures and their association with cult sites and temples provide precious and vital information about the socio-economic context and patronage of the religious monuments.

FURTHER DISCOVERIES ON THE HILLTOP
Access from the lower site to the upper site was probably made round the hill from the south following the modern road (Figure 2). The hill slope is gentle enough to allow vehicle access. Pedestrian access to the top could also be made by mounting the hill directly on the natural steps above the terrace of the main rock face. It is easy to find the way up, but one encounters quickly the modern quarry. The activity of stone cutting could have caused some destruction just above the caves.

Figure 6: Door lintel of a temple, circa early 6th century, intermediate site, Rāmgarh
Coming to the top of the hill after passing through the village of Rāmgarh, we find a large plateau strewn with piles of stone thrown from the quarries in the surroundings. The view to the south is dominated by the hills of Badoh-Pathari in the distance. Toward the east, the slope declines gently and the plateau turns into a fertile plain spreading out to the bank of the Bīna river. Toward the north, the modern road continues on the low hill range: several cult sites associated with dams dating from the early medieval period have been discovered here and there along this route. Going down to the north-east toward Parsora, the small village at the foot of the hill, the slope declines until a short valley. The two dams built for the supply of water runoff found across this valley have been mentioned.

On the top of the plateau is a large sacred tree, the only tree in the middle of a scrub area, incorporated into a modern platform (cabutron) built for the reinstallation of damaged sculptures. To the north of this platform, about 60 m away, is a pond, which is full in the rainy season only – possibly the vestige of an old reservoir. At least eight temples and further unidentified structures were built on the plateau. These are now all reduced to mounds. The architectural fragments scattered around do not provide enough material to reconstruct the former shape of the temples. It is also impossible to trace their plan, except for one small maṇḍapikaša shrine, of which the moulded base survives, now partly fitted into the modern platform, and similar to the bases of the two temples built at the foot of the hill. The plan has three receding faces on each side. Among the few fragmentary images and architectural pieces found on this platform is a four-armed Kumāra, attended by a woman on his right and peacock on his left.

Two large mounds indicate the sites of temples. One toward the east of the modern platform counts among its vestiges the lower part of an image of Warrior Goddess pressing the buffalo’s head to the ground, while thrusting her trident into the animal’s back, a large demon-faced drain (pranāla), fragments of a sculpted ceiling (showing animals in interlaced vegetal designs), and a pilaster of the type that was notably carved at Deogarh in the late 5th- early 6th century (Figure 7). A standing female figure, perhaps one of the river goddess, flanked by flying bodies, was carved on the square part of the pillar shaft, of which the lower part is missing. This architectural piece is comparable with a pillar from Mathurā belonging, according to Williams, to a late Gupta phase (Williams 1982, plate 228).

About 100 m toward the west is another large mound, the site of a temple that was seemingly devoted to Śiva. A few architectural fragments are found lying around, including two interesting niches sculpted with an image of a two-armed Gaṇapati in a flexed-standing posture showing abhaya-mudrā (or holding an aksamālā?) and a sweat pot in the left hand (Figure 8), and a four-armed Warrior Goddess, whose iconography is identical to the relief in the northern niche of the temple down the hill (Berkson 1978, fig. 2a). The rather crude modelling of these two niches suggests a hasty execution. This temple was dedicated to Śiva, as indicated by the remains of a large altar. Some distance away, half buried in the earth, is a large linga measuring about 1.50 m high and similar
Midway between these two mounds, next to the new platform, are more remains of particular interest (Figures 9, 10 and 11). Three impressive niches show lokapāla-s or dikpāla-s, ie Yama, Varuṇa and a third guardian divinity. They lie on the ground, positioned as if they have fallen inward from the three walls of a collapsed temple. Stone slabs and squared blocks, as well as a few sculpted architectural pieces (parts of a square pillar and of a doorjamb), are piled up here on the ground too. These indicate that the temple was smaller than the two previous structures mentioned above. Are these three niches related to this ruined temple? Were they part of a series including four or more guardian deities? Did they serve as principal images, possibly with one or more other guardian gods on the temple wall, or were they relegated to lateral subordinate positions beside the figuration of main gods of the Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva pantheon? Due to the lack of evidence, it is difficult to answer these questions. No conclusions can be drawn as to whether the directional guardian deities were conceived as a series of three, four or more, and whether they occupied the central-offset or subordinate positions in the iconographic programme of the temple. The second option seems likely as no example of early medieval temples exhibiting guardian deities as principal images on the exterior wall are known. For Wessels-Mevissen ‘the hierarchical order of deities must have been the reason for the fact that dikpāla-s were generally not permitted in the bhadra position on the wall’ (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, 92). Nevertheless, the remains surrounding the area on the site are not indicative of a sufficiently important structure that could integrate further directional deities guarding the temple in side niches.

It is remarkable that these three niches (rathikā) with their pediment (udgama) were fully carved into a single large and thick square slab of sandstone (about 175 x 135 x 55 cm), like the two sculpted niches mentioned above (Figure 8). This feature suggests that the temple wall section was possibly made of alternating panels and square decorated pilasters. A fragment of a square pilaster, consisting of a short
octagonal section and carved with decorated discs, tongues and drops-finials, was found with the three niches. This pillar type was often used in the 5th and 6th century temple architecture. Above the niches, the deeply carved pediment shows an elaborate design, based on the traditional motif of an ogee dormer (candraśālā) on a depressed barrel vault resting on miniature pillars. This motif is placed on two tiers of additional barrel vaults resting again on pillars, the whole configuration forming a pyramid. The same structure, but twice as small is repeated again in the foreground. The design arrangement of the pediment is additive in its conception and still dependant on the mimetic replication of wooden prototypes that characterise some aspects of the architectural language in the Gupta period and later. A fragment of the lower part of a doorway, carved with a rugged and ballooning figure in flexed standing posture, possibly one of the river goddesses, also counts among the remains found in association with the three niches. The band decorating one of the doorway-jambs (śākhā) shows an interlaced vegetal design similar to a decorative pattern used on the Gupta temple at Deogarh (see the lintel above the main niches on the temple wall; Williams 1982, plate 206). The stylistic and structural analysis of these remains, in comparison with architectural and sculptural data dating from the Gupta and later Gupta periods, leads us to situate the temple in the 6th century.

The imagery that is carved in the three niches bears great testimony to early representations and to a rare iconography devoted to directional guardian deities. The surface of the sculpture is eroded, preventing us from a clear reading of some details. Yet, two of them, ie Varuṇa and Yama, are easily recognizable. The Vedic deity Varuṇa, the god of the ocean, but also the guardian of cosmic order and chief of celestial deities known as the āditya-s (and as such belonging to heaven by definition), is depicted as if he was floating in sitting posture, perhaps on a lotus throne or mattress, with a conical crown and curled hairs arranged in rows (Figure 9). His right hand is raised as if showing abhaya-mudrā or holding
the noose (pāśa) (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, 101). A large makara-head occupies the upper right corner of the image, while a female figure attends the god on the other side. She holds an attribute in her raised left hand, perhaps a flywhisk. The Vedic deity Yama, the god of death, associated to the south, sits with ease on his galloping vehicle, the water-buffalo, carrying his staff (danḍā), and accompanied by a female attendant, similar to the figure on the relief of Varuṇa, and by a flying body bearing a garland (Figure 10).

The third niche is different from these two (Figure 11). The deity is shown riding a horse carved in walking attitude, and is attended by a parasol bearer, an attribute of royal significance. The iconography resembles that of a deified king. The horse being the vehicle of Vāyu (the wind god) in some instances of later figuration of dikpāla-s series from Central India, one could think that the third niche represents Vāyu (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, 103). However, neither the billowing garment – though an early convention in the portrayal of the god – nor the flag are held in his hands. The identity of this figure is ambiguous, and its iconography finds no equivalent to other early medieval representations described by Wessels-Mevissen. Beside the iconographic identification, the meaning and function of these three divinities are even more problematic. Do they refer to subordinate gods guarding the particular direction, or are they represented as the protectors of particular spheres or as symbolising the three worlds (the three lokapāla-s protecting the earth, the heaven and the nether world, mentioned in the epics (Sircar 1971, 241-242))? Various concepts may be attached to the dikpāla-s or lokapāla-s from literary sources and inscriptions from the Gupta period (see Wessels-Mevissen 2001, whose approach is essentially drawn on a comparative study of literary and visual traditions). It is considered that during the early medieval period the figuration of dikpāla-s symbolizes the fundamental division of space and the extent of the
power of the divinity inside the temple, to which they are subordinate. But more precisely, in historical terms, what could be the theological, and eventually political, significance of representing these divinities in the religious and ritual conception of the temple, and more generally the site? The interpretation may prove difficult to develop, given the lack of context. Notably, we don’t know the divinity to which the temple was dedicated. Nevertheless, these three niches provide new and precious data in the study of guardian divinities and the early conception of temple iconography. They further appear to be the earliest evidence, dating in our view from the 6th century, of single representation of these old deities on temple walls in India.

CONCLUSION

Our survey of the remains at Rāmgarh has touched on various aspects of its landscape setting, architecture and imagery. Attempts to interpret some of these aspects have briefly been made. Besides specific and problematic features, the general significance of the place in historical, religious and cultural terms remains a complex issue necessitating investigation from several disciplinary perspectives. For the time being, the aim of this article is essentially to provide primary data about this interesting and important site. This survey leads us to the following observations and questions:

(1) At Rāmgarh, a most conspicuous feature is the repetition of Viṣṇu images, carved side by side on a continuous line of rock. This appears as a visual expression of an important development in religious and ritual practice during the Gupta period, and one in which the carving and worship of images are perceived as the core part of religious life, replacing at last the Vedic practices of sacrifice. The insistent repetition of Viṣṇu icons – which means the repetition of ritual too – suggests the great value set on this divinity and his seeing (darśan) and, moreover, points to the sacred significance of the site.

(2) It might be more than a coincidence that the images carved at Rāmgarh represent an iconographic pattern seen at Udayagiri, a place of great influence in the religious and cultural history of the region (Willis 2004). The reference to Udayagiri notably concerns the juxtaposition, into a community of worship, of Viṣṇu, the Warrior Goddess and Gaṇapati, carved together near Śiva-liṅga caves. This not yet fully understood association is also known from the religious complex on the hill at Ramtek in the kingdom of the Vākātakas (Bakker 2002). The origin and development of the cult to these divinities probably lie in Kuśāṇa age in the region of Mathurā, but also in Vidiśā, where cults connected with yakṣa and with Vāsudeva were prevalent during the early historic period, as was the veneration of Śiva in his phallic form (Shaw 2004). The reference to Udayagiri is further apparent in the iconography of Viṣṇu and his incarnations as Varāha and Narasimha, both carved according to iconographic features resembling the reliefs still preserved at Udayagiri. The recent interpretation of Udayagiri hill as a sacred place connected with Viṣṇupada worship, also suggests that the images of Trivikrama, and probably those of Viṣṇu standing too, were also derived from prototypes, now lost, at Udayagiri (Dass 2001). More generally, Udayagiri perhaps also defines the whole religious conception of the Rāmgarh complex, as a place made sacred by the presence of the Lord’s footprints. No doubt the sacred significance of Udayagiri hill was highly renowned and favoured by the political elites of the society.

(3) The environment at Rāmgarh is an important aspect in the religious conception of the site, including the vision and concrete realisation of the gods. The reliefs are well integrated into the natural features. Except for occasional framings, there was no attempt to shape the rock, and the sculptors were content to be constrained by the rock shape: thus, at the right extremity of the lower strip, a Varāha appears in reverse format due to the lack of space on the rock face.
(4) An interesting aspect of the imagery in the sculptural registers lower down on the hill is the absence of a clear iconographic or conceptual programme and the lack of mythological staging and narrative details. The images appear as cultic objects repeated many times. This aspect takes us to the question of the patronage pattern that led to the creation of the place. Are we dealing with a series of additions by pious donors? Furthermore, could the relatively small size and provincial character of the structures and reliefs suggest that they were conceived under a local patronage of little standing?

(5) The chronology of the making of the sanctuary hill at Rāmgarh complex is an important issue bearing on the various questions formulated above. No epigraphic sources – except for a śaṅkhalipi inscription (a signature?) engraved beside one of the standing four-armed Viṣṇu (the most beautiful relief in terms of execution) carved into the lower rock tier at the lower site – have been found in association with the remains. As we already suggested, the site was not shaped in a single campaign, but over a long period of time through the 5th and 6th century. The study of the material reveals that the small shrine at the base of the hill and those on the top date from the same period in the 6th century after the conception of the reliefs and the caves. How are these temples to be interpreted in relation to them? And moreover, how is the hill-sanctuary overall to be interpreted in relation to Badoh-Pathari, the main seat of the area at that time?

(6) The environment of the site also included water. As was briefly noted, archaeological and natural features suggest that water manipulation was a major aspect of the site. Water was contained in a reservoir at the foot of the hill to enhance the mythology of the imagery, to provide for the practical and ritual needs of the inhabitants, and also probably for irrigation, all of which needs to be explored further. However, the discovery of the dam and its association with the religious complex brings new and important data to the understanding of the site in a wider socio-economic and political context. It suggests that the religious development of a new cult centre in the area of Badoh-Pathari was not an isolated process, but connected with the patronage of an agricultural building project, and was thus part of a wider set of economic developments, such as new agrarian policies.
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