

Exploding the Myth of the Gūjara Identity of the Imperial Pratihāras

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Abstract

Presenting new evidence from lately discovered inscriptions and a critical investigation of the earlier available epigraphic and literary material, this article conclusively disproves the Gūjar identification of the Imperial Pratihāras.

Keywords

Gūjara, *gurjareśvara*, Imperial Pratihāra, Rāṣṭrakūṭa, Vatsarāja, Nāgabhaṭa I

The origin of the Pratihāras has been a much debated subject over the years with several eminent scholars expressing their views on the issue, each proposing a different theory citing considerable epigraphic and literary data to prove his hypothesis. Scholars such as D.R. Bhandarkar¹ and R.C. Majumdar² ascribed a Gūjara origin to them. G.H. Ojha³ and D. Sharma⁴ strongly argued that the word Gurjara held a territorial connotation. Of late, the Gūjara hypothesis has resurfaced and various facets of their activities have been projected as a reflection of their attempts to gain legitimation. Since it is not possible to reject or concur with either of these views without an analytical perusal of the evidence, the article first undertakes a fresh critical examination of the vast database collated by these scholars, and then takes note of the latest available epigraphic evidence to arrive at an up-to-date perspective.

The prime argument advanced by Bhandarkar and Majumdar in favour of the Gurjara origin theory is the occurrence of the designations *gurjara*, *gurjareśvara* and *gurjjarendra* in certain inscriptions of Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Pālas, which are taken to refer to the Imperial Pratihāras. A reappraisal of this inscriptional evidence is therefore imperative to assess the nature of these references and the connotation of the term ‘gurjara’ as used therein. The earliest of these references occurs in the undated fragmentary Daśavatāra inscription of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler Dantidurga, wherein verse 29 appears to

¹ Bhandarkar, ‘Gurjaras’, pp. 413 f.

² Majumdar, *K.M. Munshi Diamond Jubilee volume*, II, pp. 1–18.

³ Ojha, *Rājputāne kā Itihās*, pp. 176–78.

⁴ Sharma, *Rajasthan through the Ages* (henceforth *RTTA*), pp. 108 f.

mention a *saudha* or palatial building which was beautified by the *Gurjjarendra* and occupied by Dantidurga after the conquest of Tirakṣiti by his troops.⁵ Nowhere does the inscription itself identify the *Gurjjarendra* as an Imperial Pratihāra ruler. Verse 23 gives a long list of the conquests of Dantidurga, among which figure victories over Vallabha, Kāñchī, Kaliṅga, Kośala, Śrī Śailadeśa, Mālava, Lāṭa and Ṭaṃka,⁶ but no success over either the Imperial Pratihāras or Gurjaras finds mention therein. Nor does the Sāmangaḍ grant of Dantidurga, Śaka 675(CE 753–754), wherein it is duly recorded that he conquered Vallabha and defeated the army of Karṇāṭaka,⁷ credit Dantidurga with either a victory over the Imperial Pratihāras or a Gurjara ruler. The conclusion that he defeated the Pratihāra ruler who is to be identified as Gurjareśa is based on laboured corroboration of disparate contemporary epigraphs with the indeterminate evidence of the much later Sanjān plates.⁸ No such identification or claim exists in the inscriptions of Dantidurga himself. Epigraphs of the later Rāṣṭrakūṭa rulers other than the Sanjān plates eulogise Dantidurga, but none of the references to his achievements can be even remotely construed as a victory over a Gurjara or Pratihāra ruler. The only achievement of Dantidurga mentioned by the Karhād plates (verse 9) of Kṛṣṇa III⁹ is his wresting of supreme sovereignty from the Cālukyās. The omission of the claim to a victory over the Pratihāras is particularly significant as it indicates that no such triumph was known even to the panegyrist of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.

The lack of identification of the Gurjara and Pratihāra is again evident in the Nesarikā grant of Govinda III, dated Śaka 727(CE 805).¹⁰ Verse 15 states that as the rains cease on the approach of autumn, so the Gurjara in fear vanished, nobody knew whither, so that even in a dream he might not see battle.¹¹ Later, verse 22 of the grant claims that Govinda III deprived fourteen kings of their royal insignia, one of whom was the *Gurjareśvara*. The editor of the inscription, P.L. Gupta, held that the passage containing further reference to the insignia of the Gurjareśvara, that is, *Gūrya(rja)reśvarāt phalakaṃ prativadhārya* occurring in this context is faulty, and may be amended as *phalakaṃ prātihāryam*, meaning a tablet (*phalaka*) having the figure of a *pratihāra* (doorkeeper).¹² D.C. Sircar, who wrote a detailed note on the inscription later, gave the reading as ‘*pha(pha)lakam pra(prā)tipa(d)-dhāryam*’, interpreting it as meaning that the insignia carried away from the Gurjara king was a *phalaka* or board bearing (the figures of) the *pratipad* or kettle-drum and the *hārya* or snake. But reverting to the issue just a few lines later, he drew attention to the Sāgartāl inscription of Bhoja

⁵ *Archaeological Survey of Western India*, 1879, pp. 92–96.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Fleet, ed., ‘Sanskrit and Old-Canarese Inscriptions’ no. CXXI, *Indian Antiquary* (henceforth *IA*), XI, April 1882, pp. 108–15.

⁸ This matter has been discussed in the text on page 4.

⁹ Bhandarkar, ed., ‘Karhād plates of Krishna III; Śaka-Samvat 880’, *Epigraphia Indica* (henceforth *EI*), IV, 1896–97, pp. 278–90.

¹⁰ Gupta, ed., ‘Nesarikā grant of Govinda III, Śaka 727’, *EI*, XXXIV, 1960–61, pp. 123–34.

¹¹ *Sharadṛtum parjanyaavadgurjaro naṣṭaḥ kvāpi bhayāt(tt)athā na samaram svanepi paśyedyathā. Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

representing the Pratihāra family as *Pratihāra-ketana-bhṛt*, that is, having the banner bearing the figure of the Pratihāra, stating that ‘if it is believed that the same emblem was referred to in our record, we have to correct the passage in question as *phalakam pratihār-āṅkam*’.¹³ Since, however, such an emendation would look rather arbitrary and a royal family could have more than one emblem for their banner, he then stated that it is difficult to be sure on this point.¹⁴ Quite evidently the scholars were unable to establish the identity of the Gurjara and Pratihāra emblems even by recourse to substitution of the original epigraphic text by possible alternative readings.

The lack of identification of the Gurjara and Pratihāra that we come across in the Nesarikā grant is yet again evident in the Waṇi grant dated Śaka 730 for 728 (CE 806–07),¹⁵ the Vyaya *saṃvatsara* and Rādhanpur plates of Govinda III, dated Śaka 730 (CE 808).¹⁶ It is significant that identical verses occurring in both the epigraphs describe at length the defeat of Vatsarāja by his Rāṣṭrakūṭa predecessor, Dhora (Dhruva), his matchless armies having quickly driven into the trackless desert Vatsarāja, who had boasted of having with ease appropriated the fortune of the royalty of Gauḍa. Here the writers of the inscriptions have faithfully recorded the name of the Pratihāra ruler Vatsarāja, but there is no association of the appellation *Gurjara* with him. He is neither called a Gurjara nor *Gurjareśvara*. Verse 15 of the Rādhanpur inscription supplies the same information as verse 15 of the Nesarikā inscription claiming that the Gurjara in fear vanished nobody knew whither, so that even in a dream he might not see battle. The ruler is generally taken to be Nāgabhaṭa II on the basis of historical references in the Baroda plates of Karkarāja II.¹⁷ But the omission of the name of the Gurjara, especially if the Gurjara was the Imperial Pratihāra ruler Nāgabhaṭa II, is astonishing, since the recording of such a great achievement should have been the first task of the panegyrist who composed the inscription. It is also significant that the Waṇi grant makes no mention of the Gurjara. Fleet suggested the inference that Govinda III conquered the Gurjara between the dates of the Waṇi and Rādhanpur grants. But since the Gurjara reference forms part of the earlier Nesarikā grant, this explanation does not stand.

The identity of the Gurjara defeated by Govinda III solely rests on the Śaka 734 (CE 812–13) Baroda plates of Karkarāja II,¹⁸ the Gujarat Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler in which he (a) boasts that his father Indra (c. 810 AD) alone caused the Gurjara lord (*Gurjareśvara*) to take to the (distant) regions as if he were a deer and (b) that he ‘for the purpose of protecting Mālava.....caused his (Karkarāja’s) arm to become an excellent door-bar of the lord of the Gurjaras (*gurjareśvara*) who had become evilly inflamed by conquering

¹³ Sircar, ed., ‘Note on the Nesarikā grant of Govinda III’, Śaka 727’, *EI*, XXXIV, pp. 135–40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁵ Fleet, ed., ‘Sanskrit and Old-Canarese inscriptions’ no. CXXIV, *IA*, XI, June 1882, pp. 156–63.

¹⁶ Kielhorn, ed., ‘Rādhanpur plates of Govinda III; Śaka-Saṃvat 730’, *EI*, VI, pp. 239–51.

¹⁷ This matter has been discussed on the following page.

¹⁸ (a) *yen-aikena ca Gūrijareśvara-patir-yyoddhum samabhyudyataḥ śauryya- proddhata- kandharo mṛga iva kṣipraṃ diśo grāhitaḥ*. (b) *Gauḍendra-Vaṅgapati-nirjjaya-durvvidagdha-sad-Gūrijareśvara-digarggalatām ca yasya. nītvā bhujam vihata-Mālava-rakṣaṇ-ārtham*. Fleet, ed., ‘Sanskrit and Old-Canarese inscriptions’, no. CXXVII, *IA*, XII, June 1883, pp. 156–65.

the lord of Gauḍa and the lord of Vaṅga. Though the attributed achievements are highly exaggerated, the reference here is certainly to the Pratihāra ruler Nāgabhaṭa II, who however has not been named in this inscription either. Quite significantly, the ruler has not been identified as a Gurjara but as *gurjarśevara* connoting lord of the Gurjaras or *gurjaradeśa*. There is no ethnic connotation.

The hyperbolic description in the Bagumrā plates of Dhruva III of the Gujarat branch of Rāṣṭrakūṭas, dated Śaka 789(CE 867) refers twice to the Gurjaras.¹⁹ The first reference is in verse 37 which records that Dhruva III had to face the Gurjaras on one side and Vallabha on the other. The second reference is in verse 38 which states that Dhruva III put to flight the very powerful army of the Gurjaras that was eager (for the fray) and reinforced by his kinsmen. Both the references do not give the name of any Gurjara ruler. The statement in verse 41 that ‘though Mihira was united to fortune and surrounded by crowds of kinsmen, though owing to his courage, he conquered the regions of the world, he nevertheless disappeared, his face being covered by defeat’, has been generally accepted as a reference to the Imperial Pratihāra ruler Bhoja known to bear the epithet Mihira. But it does not refer to the ruler as a Gurjara.

The Sanjān plates of Amoghavarsha dated Śaka 793(CE 871),²⁰ verse 9, as noted earlier, extols the much earlier ruler Dantidurga stating that kings such as the *Gurjareśa* (literally Gurjara lord) and others were made doorkeepers by him, when in Ujjayinī the Hiraṇyagarbha was performed by the Kṣatriyas. This *Gurjareśa* is generally identified as the Imperial Pratihāra Nāgabhaṭa I on the basis of contemporaneity and the matching of different historical references. However, in case this identification is accepted, the statement in verse 22 of the Sanjān plates that the Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler Govinda III carried away in battles the fair and unshakable fame of Kings Nāgabhaṭa and Chandragupta, which apparently records a reverse in battle faced by another Imperial Pratihāra ruler Nāgabhaṭa, this time without the Gurjara appellation appended to his name, is even more puzzling. To add to the bewilderment of a reader of the inscription, verse 32 records that Govinda III brought destruction to the valour of the head of the thundering Gurjaras (*garjjadgurjjaramauliśauravilayo*), but does not name any specific ruler. This omission is particularly glaring when one takes into consideration the fact that the Sanjān plates belong to the time of Amoghavarsha, who was the immediate successor of Govinda III, and as such the name of the Imperial Pratihāra ruler or Gurjara ruler defeated by Govinda III must have been definitely known to the writer of the inscription.

The Śaka 862 (CE 940) Deolī plates of Kṛṣṇa III, verse 13, assert that Kṛṣṇa II frightened the Gurjara, destroyed the pride of the Lāṭa and taught humility to the Gauḍas. Later on, the plates, while describing the conquests of Kṛṣṇa III, claim in verse 25 that ‘on hearing of the conquests of all the strongholds in the southern region by means of his angry glance the hope of conquering Kālañjara and Citrakūṭa dropped

¹⁹ Buhler and Hultzsch eds, ‘Rāthor grants No. III-A Grant of Dhruva III of Bharoch’, *IA*, XII, July 1883, pp. 179–90.

²⁰ *Hiraṇyagarbham rājanyairujjayanyām yadāsitam Pratihārikṛtam yena Gurjareśādirājakam*. Bhandarkar, D.R., ed., ‘Sanjān Plates of Amoghavarsha I: Śaka-Saṃvat 793’, *EI*, XVIII, 1925–26, pp. 235–57.

away from the heart of the Gurjara'.²¹ Identical verses find place in the Karhād plates of Kṛṣṇa III, dated Śaka 880(CE 959).²² Neither of the plates elaborates on the victory achieved over the Gurjara or the name of the Gurjara ruler referred to.

The only reference generally accepted as establishing the identity of the Imperial Pratihāras and the Gurjara ruler is literary. According to the *Vikramārjunavijaya* or *Pampabhārata* written by the Kanarese poet Pampa, the father of his patron Arikeśarin, the Cālukya ruler Narasiṃha, who probably accompanied the Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler Indra III in his campaigns, 'plucked from the Ghūrjara king's (*ghūrjararāja*) arms the goddess of victory, whom though desirous of keeping, he had held too loosely. Mahipāla fled as if struck by thunderbolts, staying neither to eat, nor rest, nor pick himself up'.²³

A solitary Pāla reference to the term Gurjara comes from the undated Badāl pillar inscription of the time of Nārāyanapāla,²⁴ assignable to the end of the ninth or commencement of the tenth century CE, which is really a laudatory *praśasti* of the Brāhmaṇa Gauravamiśra and his ancestors. Devoting five verses of praise to his father Kedāramiśra, the inscription claims that 'attending to his counsel the lord of Gauḍa eradicated the race of the Utkalas, humbled the pride of the Hūṅas and scattered the conceit of the ruler of Draviḍas and the lord of the Gurjaras (*khavvīkritadraviḍa Gurjara-nātha-darppa*)' (verse 13). It is noteworthy that some of the terms used by eminent historians for the claims put forward in the inscription are 'extravagant pretensions',²⁵ 'hyperbolic descriptions' and 'mere bombast'.²⁶ Though surmised to refer to the Pāla ruler Devapāla and the Pratihāra ruler Bhoja, the verse in the inscription does not contain a direct reference to either the identity of the Gauḍa lord or the lord of the Gurjaras.

It is equally striking that not even an allusion to a Gurjara association is to be found in the inscriptions belonging to the Imperial Pratihāra lineage. The Gwalior *praśasti*, which is the only *praśasti* of the Imperial Pratihāras that has been discovered so far, praises 'Lakṣmaṇa who served as a door-keeper (of Rāma), owing to his commandment not to allow others to enter' (literally to repel others), following it up with the statement that 'in that family, which bore the insignia of Pratihāra, the king Nāgabhaṭa appeared', indicating that they claimed descent from Lakṣmaṇa. Further, regarding Vatsarāja, grand nephew of Nāgabhaṭa I, it is stated that 'he, the foremost amongst the most distinguished Kṣatriyas, stamped the noble race of Ikṣvāku with his own name by virtue of his blameless conduct'. His successor Nāgabhaṭa II is said to have performed a series of religious ceremonies according to the custom of the Kṣatriya families.²⁷ The playwright Rājaśekhara, who was the *guru* of the Pratihāra ruler

²¹ *galitā Gūrjaraḥṛdayātkālāñjaracitrakūṭāsā*, v.30. Bhandarkar, ed., 'Deolī plates of Krishna III; Śaka-Samvat 862', *EI*, V, 1898-99, pp. 188-97.

²² Bhandarkar, ed., 'Karhād plates of Krishna III; Śaka-Samvat 880', *EI*, IV, pp. 278-90.

²³ *Vikramārjunavijaya*, ed. Lewis Rice, pp. 3-4, cited by Tripathi, *Age of Imperial Kannauj*, p. 260.

²⁴ Keilhorn, ed., 'Badāl Pillar inscription of the Time of Nārāyanapāla', *EI*, II, 1894, pp. 160-67.

²⁵ Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, p. 116.

²⁶ Tripathi, *Age of Imperial Kannauj*, p. 140.

²⁷ Majumdar, ed., 'The Gwalior Praśasti of the Gurjara-Pratihāra King Bhoja' *EI*, XVIII, 1925-26, pp. 99-114.

Mahendrapāla and later on composed the *Bālabhārata* for his successor Mahīpāla, calls Mahendrapāla ‘*Raghukulatilaka*’, that is, ‘the ornament of the Raghu lineage’ in the *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*²⁸ and ‘*Raghugrāmañī*’ or leader of the Raghu family in the *Bālabhārata*.²⁹ He further refers to Mahīpāla as *Raghuvaṃśamuktāmañi* or pearl-jewel of the Raghu lineage. The universal identification of the *raghukula bhūcakravartī* who according to the Harṣa inscription³⁰ came in person to liberate Śiṃharāja Cāhamāna, the predecessor of Vīgraharāja II, as an Imperial Pratihāra ruler indicates that the Cāhamānas of Śākambharī also regarded them as *Raghuvaṃśins*.

The dichotomy in the testimonies presented by these Rāṣṭrakūṭa and Pratihāra inscriptions is clearly noticeable. Though the Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscriptions do not make a direct identification of any of the Imperial Pratihāra rulers as Gurjara, they do contain the terms *gurjareśvara*, *gurjareśa* and *gurjaranātha* which have been accepted as references to the Imperial Pratihāra rulers. The Pratihāra inscriptions on the other hand claim a Kṣatriya descent. Dasharatha Sharma sought to explain this apparent dichotomy by drawing attention to the fact that the term Gurjara at that time signified ‘the people from the land called Gurjara’, either as an inhabitant or a ruler.³¹ He collected a number of references, literary as well as epigraphic, in support of his statement. Some of these are being taken up here, with certain additional details and comments, to highlight the valuable evidence presented by him. Various accounts of foreign travelers mention the country called Jurz or Gurjara. Among these is the seventh century account of Hieun Tsang, which mentions Ku-che-lo, taken to be a transliteration of Gurjara, of which the capital was Bhīllamāla, and the ruler a Kṣatriya.³² This not only attests to the existence of a territory known as Gurjara but testifies to the presence of a Kṣatriya ruler in a Gurjara territory. Al Biladuri’s account of the Arab governor Junaid’s conquest of Bailman and Jurz (c.AD 725),³³ of which the latter has been identified with Gurjara confirms the existence of a region well known as Gurjara. Sulaiman (AD 851) noted that the king of Jurz was unfriendly to the Arabs and the greatest foe of the Mohemmadan faith among the princes of India.³⁴

Indigenous literary evidence is provided by the *Kuvalayamālā* of Uddyotana Sūri, composed at Jalor in AD 778 during the reign of the Pratihāra ruler Vatsarāja, which speaks of the visit of his teacher ancestor Śivacandra Gaṇi, removed from him by four generations, to Bhīllamāla and his disciple Yakṣadatta Gaṇi whose pupils beautified the *Gurjaradeśa* with temples.³⁵ The existence of a territory famed as *Gurjaradeśa*

²⁸ the prologue of the play *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*.

²⁹ Durga Prasad and Parab, eds, *Bālabhārata*, I. 11.

³⁰ Kielhorn, ed., ‘Harsha stone inscription of the Chāhamāna Vīgraharāja’ *EI*, II, 1894, pp. 116–30; Bhandarkar, ed., ‘Some published inscriptions reconsidered. I-Harsha stone inscription of Vīgraharāja’, *IA*, XLII, 1913, pp. 57–64.

³¹ Sharma, *RTTA*, pp. 108–19; 472–85.

³² Beal, ed., *Si-yu-ki, Buddhist records of the Western world*, II, pp. 269–70.

³³ Al Biladuri, in Elliott and Dowson (henceforth ED), *The History of India*, Vol. I, p. 126.

³⁴ *ED*, I, p. 4.

³⁵ Upadhye, ed., *Kuvalayamālā*, p. 282.

in that period is explicit in the reference. Equally noteworthy is the testimony of the *Prabhāvākārita*, which states that ‘there is a country called Gurjara, the abode of wealth and auspiciousness’.³⁶

Contemporary epigraphic testimony is available in the Daulatpurā inscription of the Imperial Pratihāra ruler Bhoja dated VS 900 (CE 843). It expressly records the commands issued to the several officers and inhabitants assembled at the *agrahāra* village of Sivā in Ḍeṇḍavānaka–viṣaya of the *Gurjaratrā bhūmi* or Gurjaratrā country to the effect that the earlier grants made in the time of Vatsarāja and Nāgabhaṭa had been restored by Bhoja.³⁷ The Ghaṭiyālā inscription of VS 918/CE 861 states that the Mandor Pratihāra ruler Kakkuka obtained great renown in Travaṇī, Valla, Māḍa, Gurjaratrā, Lāṭa and Parvata.³⁸

Drawing attention to the evidences presented earlier and other substantial data from the Aihole inscription, Bāṇa, the *Skanda Purāṇa* and the *Yaśastilaka Campū* (CE 959), Dasharatha Sharma opined that the Pratihāras were called Gurjara because they belonged to the geographical tract Gurjara. He also drew attention to the fact that the connotation of Gurjara contracted in later times, leading to the transfer of the Gurjara designation to the Caulukyās.³⁹ The epigraphic reference to the *Gūrjararāṭa* Bhīma Caulukya of Anhilwad⁴⁰ as well as the use of the words *Gurjararāja* and *Gurjareśvara* for Kumārapāla Caulukya by Yaśahpāla, author of the *Moharājaparājaya*⁴¹ bear testimony to this. This is a clear indication, he averred, that the term *Gurjareśvara* had no ethnic value, remarking that the Gurjara designation of the Caulukyās has not led anyone to maintain that they were Gūjars.

Recent attempts to project varied aspects of Pratihāra religious perception, such as projection of devotion to a specific deity by each ruler and grants of land to brāhmaṇas as attempts to obviate adverse impact of their tribal antecedents⁴² sadly lack historical perspective and a proper understanding of the prevalent religious milieu. The changing of tutelary deities from generation to generation was a reflection of the prevalent religious syncretism in Rajasthan which found expression in (a) the syncretist Hari Hara and Hari Hara Pitāmaha images, (b) pañcāyatana temples and (c) invoking of different deities in the opening verses of the same epigraph.⁴³ Correlation of the catholic attitude of rulers and their granting of land to brāhmaṇas with gurjara antecedents would foist a Gurjara identity even on Harṣavardhana, whose father Prabhākaravardhana was a

³⁶ Sharma, ed., *Prabhāvākārita*, p.128, verse 4.

³⁷ Kielhorn, ed., ‘Daulatpurā plate of Bhojadeva I of Mahodaya’, *EI*, V, 1898–99, pp. 208–13.

³⁸ Bhandarkar, ed., ‘Ghaṭiyālā Inscriptions of Kakkuka; Saṃvat 918’, *EI*, IX, 1907–08, pp. 277–81.

³⁹ Sharma, *RTTA*, pp.108 f.

⁴⁰ Buhler, ed., ‘The Udepur Praśasti of the Kings of Mālava’ *EI*, I, 1892, p. 235.

⁴¹ *Moharāja-Parājaya*, pp.106, 112, 129, 130, 132, cited by Sharma, ‘The Terms ‘Gurjara’ and ‘Gurjareśvara’, *IHQ*, XIII, no.1, 1937, p. 140.

⁴² Sharma, ‘Negotiating Identity and Status’, pp. 181–219.

⁴³ cf. Sharma, ‘Evolution of Deities and Syncretism in Rajasthan’, pp. 18–30; Sharma, *Society and Culture in Rajasthan*, chapter V.

‘troubler of the sleep of the gurjaras’.⁴⁴ Not only did Harṣa donate land to brāhmanas⁴⁵ but he is said to have offered worship to different deities, the Buddha, Sun (Ādityadeva) and Śiva on consecutive days on the occasion of the Prayāga assembly.⁴⁶

A verse in the eighth century inscription of Gallaka, discovered and published quite some back in the *Epigraphia Indica*,⁴⁷ which has so far escaped the attention of scholars on the history of Rajasthan settles the controversy conclusively. The veracity of the inscription is heightened by the fact that it constitutes a contemporary record very near in date to the event, belonging to a person very close to the Pratihāras. This inscription of Gallaka, who was a ruler subordinate to the Imperial Pratihāra Vatsarāja ruling in AD 795, as recorded by the inscription, explicitly refers to Nāgabhaṭa I as one who had acquired victory over the invincible Gurjaras and was famed in the world. Revealing the presence of a strong contemporary Gurjara power in the eighth century, that was distinct from and in opposition to the Imperial Pratihāras, the inscription provides unambiguous testimony that Nāgabhaṭa I was not a Gurjara. It hardly needs to be emphasised that the inscription hence establishes once and for all that the Imperial Pratihāra rulers were not Gurjaras. Consequently they were definitely not Gūjars.

It is now easy to perceive the means by which the Gurjara appellation came to be associated with the Imperial Pratihāras. The defeat of the Gurjaras, quite evidently a momentous achievement since the Gurjaras are described as invincible, well merited the association of the epithet *gurjareśvara* with the Imperial Pratihāra rulers. The Pratihāra rulers themselves may not have attached too much importance to the success as they had victories over the distant and powerful Kannauj and the Gauḍa rulers to their credit. This would explain why they did not care to mention the Gurjara victory in their inscriptions.

Evidence relating to the Caulukyias has already been cited earlier to demonstrate that the term *gurjareśvara* was transferrable, as it was acquired by the Caulukyias in later times. Evidence of similar ascription of the epithet ‘ruler of the Gurjaras’ exists in the Śravaṇa-Belgola epitaph of the Ganga chief Mārasimha II ascribed to AD 975 which states that he became known as *gurjarādhirāja* by conquering the northern regions for Kṛṣṇarāja (III).⁴⁸

The writers of the eulogies of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa rulers, on the other hand, may have been tempted to exaggerate the achievements of their respective rulers by claiming temporary successes over the Pratihāras to be victorious over the *Gurjareśvara*, even going to the extent of belittling them as Gurjaras. The reason why they refrained from naming any individual Pratihāra ruler such as Nāgabhaṭa II as a *Gurjareśvara* could have been either (a) that they did not want to highlight the military achievements of their opponents, or (b) the defeated Gurjaras were not Imperial Pratihāra rulers, or

⁴⁴ *Harṣacarita*, ed. by K.P. Parab, Bombay, 1925, p. 120.

⁴⁵ Buhler, ed., ‘Madhuban Copper-plate grant of Harsha, dated Saṃvat 25’, *EI*, I, 1892, pp. 67–75; Buhler, ed., ‘Banskhera plate of Harsha: the year 22’, *EI*, IV, 1896–97, pp. 208–11.

⁴⁶ Li, *Life*, p. 185, cited in Tripathi, *Age of Imperial Kannauj*, p. 159.

⁴⁷ Ramesh and Tiwari, eds, ‘An inscription of Pratihāra Vatsarāja, Śaka 717’ *EI*, XLI, pp. 49–57.

⁴⁸ Fleet, ed., ‘Śravaṇa-Belgola epitaph of Mārasimha II’, *EI*, V, 1898–99, pp. 151–80.

(c) they preferred to get away with the vague claim of victory over the Gurjaras, which may have been largely poetic hyperbole. Certainly the questionable identification of the *Gurjjarendra* of Dantidurga's Ellora plates with Nāgabhaṭa I, which was noted earlier, is even more open to question in the light of Gallaka's inscription. That the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Gujarat made especially tall claims is also certain, since in view of the slender resources they must have had in their possession, they could have hardly defeated the powerful Pratihāra ruler single-handedly. Whatever may be the explanation offered and accepted for the Rāṣṭrakūṭa references to the term Gurjara, it cannot be gainsaid that the new light shed by Gallaka's inscription conclusively disproves the Gūjara identification of the Pratihāras.

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