

Article

The King Never Dies: Royal Renunciation and the Fiction of Jain Sovereignty

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Abstract: To theorize Jain sovereignty, this essay takes up Ernst Kantorowicz's underlying query of what happens when a king dies. In turning to medieval Jain authors such as Jinasena, we see how sovereignty and renunciation were mutually constituted such that the king's renunciation completely subverts the problem of the king's death. If the fiction of Jain kingship properly practiced culminates in renunciation, then such a movement yields up a new figure of the ascetic self-sovereign. Renunciation does not sever sovereignty but extends it into a higher spiritual domain. Worldly and spiritual sovereignty share a metaphorical language and set of techniques that render them as adjacent but hierarchical spheres of authority. In so doing, Jain authors provide a religious answer to a political problem and make the political inbuilt into the religious, thereby revealing their interpenetrating and bounded nature.

Keywords: sovereignty; kingship; renunciation; asceticism; Jainism; Digambara; Kantorowicz; political theology; Jinasena; *Ādipurāṇa*



Citation: Taylor, Sarah Pierce. 2021. The King Never Dies: Royal Renunciation and the Fiction of Jain Sovereignty. *Religions* 12: 986. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110986>

Academic Editor: Caleb Simmons

Received: 28 September 2021
Accepted: 22 October 2021
Published: 11 November 2021

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1. Introduction

Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* (1957) takes as its premise the seemingly simple question: what happens when a king dies? With this question, Kantorowicz points us to the perennial problem of the crisis of continuity, which names not simply the issue of who will take control of the kingdom but what happens in that fragile moment when there is no flesh and blood in power at all. Kantorowicz argues that English medieval jurists solved this problem by producing a legal fiction of "the king's two bodies"—the king's natural body and the body politic—to ensure that while the corporeal body of the king may die, the king who embodies the body politic is eternal. The king's two bodies, in effect, meant that the kingdom was never absent a king because while the king is dead, he can never truly die, making possible the statement "The King is dead! Long live the King!" (Kantorowicz 2016).

Kantorowicz's seminal volume has made several reappearances since its publication in 1957, most notably in the work of Michel Foucault and, more recently, Giorgio Agamben cited in (Jussen 2009, p. 104), see also Foucault (2012, pp. 18–19) and Agamben (2017). During this time, Kantorowicz's uptake into the study of South Asia has been scattershot at best, appearing frequently in the bibliographies of books but rarely coming in for sustained engagement (Berkemer and Frenz 2015; Devadevan 2009; Flood 1996; Gilmartin et al. 2020; Hansen 2001; Hansen and Stepputat 2005; Inden 2000a; Kalpagam 2015; Knutson 2014; Mocko 2016; Moin 2014; Simmons 2020; Tambiah 1976). Perhaps this is not such a problem. After all, what can a tome-like monograph on medieval English jurisprudential thought on kingship and sovereignty tell us about South Asia? As Caleb Simmons and other scholars have noted, the tentacles of medieval English jurisprudence naturally found their way into British India and into the ways in which royal power was being reconfigured (Simmons 2018, pp. 66–67; Banerjee 2018, pp. 16, 27, 311; Banerjee 2019, p. 96; Kent 2014, p. xi; Sen 2002, p. xxiv). Simmons, in particular, has begun to show us the productivity of a non-applicationist mode of thinking with Kantorowicz in the context of the Mysore Wodeyar kings' articulation of kingship in the colonial period (Simmons 2018; Schnepel 2021).

But what of India before the British—before the time that one could plausibly make an historicist argument that the English fiction of the king's two bodies might have, in fact, been a colonial fiction? How might Kantorowicz be theoretically rather than historically useful to scholars of South Asia? How does reading alongside and with Kantorowicz let us think from a different perspective or ask of material from premodern South Asia?

One major vector of reception of Kantorowicz is through political theology and his interplay with the work of Carl Schmitt as indexed by his subtitle *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. As Kantorowicz shows us again and again, the theory of the king's two bodies borrows a certain language and logic from Christological discussions found in early Christianity. If at the end of the book, we are presented with a "secular" form of kingship that differentiates between a person and their office, it is only because of Christianity's ongoing and improvisational relationship with the law and the shifting understanding of the relationships between God and Christ, on the one hand, and the king, the pope, and the jurist, on the other. Indeed, for Kantorowicz, kingship was a place of theorizing the political and the religious together or, put somewhat differently, the unthinkability of theorizing them apart (Kantorowicz 2016, p. 193). It is here, in this interpenetrating nature of religion and kingship, that I think we can bring the study of South Asian religions and, in my case, Jainism into conversation with Kantorowicz.

In Digambara Jainism, the king never dies.¹ This proposition was theorized and elaborated on by Digambara Jains in the medieval Deccan, in contemporary south-west India, most notably during the reign of Rastrakuta king Amoghavarsa (814–878 C.E.).² Jain authors in this particular time and place were intensely interested in cultivating formal relationships with kings alongside forwarding a vision of Jain kingship primarily through literature rather than through law. These investments meant that Jain authors also grappled with the same question as Kantorowicz: what happens when a king dies? Digambara Jains resolve the crisis of continuity through the king's renunciation such that the king never actually dies. Jinasena, the preeminent Jain poet to emerge from Amoghavarsa's court, composed the first Sanskrit *Ādipurāṇa*, a genre that narrates the soul of the first *tīrthaṅkara* of the Jain tradition as it moves through transmigration to liberation.³ Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* and the genre more broadly are saturated with the life stories of kings who renounce their kingdoms. Jinasena was by no means the first to suggest that kings should dispense with their kingdoms; indeed, the concept of royal renunciation was long current in Buddhist, Brahmanical, and Jain traditions.⁴ For Digambara Jain authors like Jinasena, the renunciation of the king was not simply to stabilize the kingdom and ensure its continuity, it was a Jain answer to a political problem that became inbuilt into Jain soteriology. Mundane Jain kingship properly practiced culminates in renunciation and, indeed, the experience of kingship itself engenders renunciation. In turn, the Jain practice of royal renunciation provided a solution to the crisis of succession.

Renunciation became a routinized aspect of Digambara Jain sovereignty and a key component through which Jains inexorably bound the political and religious spheres together. This binding, however, was not symmetrical, as Digambara Jain poets further sought to position kingship and renunciation as hierarchically adjacent spheres of activity. One clear way in which this positioning occurred was through the adoption of the language of kingship as a metaphorical logic through which to figure renunciation, Jain ascetic practices, and, ultimately, the telos of liberation. The appropriation of the language of mundane kingship to describe such religious practices yields a new figure: the spiritual king or self-sovereign. This parallelism between the mundane king and the spiritual king is sustained throughout Jinasena's and Pampa's *Ādipurāṇas*, in which these two forms of sovereignty are compared, contrasted, and, ultimately, assembled into a hierarchy with spiritual sovereignty superseding mundane sovereignty as the more enduring form of power.

In this essay, I focus primarily on Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* (860 C.E.) and, to a lesser extent, his uptake in Old Kannada in the works of Pampa's *Ādipurāṇaṇi* (941 C.E.) and the *Ādipurāṇa* chapter of the *Cāvunḍarāya Purāṇaṇi* (978 C.E.). Each of these texts narrates

the soul biography of the first Tīrthaṅkara Adinatha as it moves through eleven births alongside an entangled group of souls. I refer to this generic soul as Adinatha and its individual incarnations by their human names (for example, Adinatha's final incarnation is Rsabha). In terms of these three *Ādipurāṇa* texts, they all share the same narrative, but differ in points of poetic elaboration and contraction, with Jinasena's text being the longest and Cavundaraya's being the shortest. I dedicate the least amount of analysis to the *Cāvundarāya Purāṇam* given its brevity and also, in part, because it often closely repeats passages from Pampa's earlier Kannada version (Taylor 2016, pp. 315–24). I read these three texts together as much for their convergences as for their divergences in constructing a distinctly Digambara Jain theory of kingship. While much emphasis has been put on Kantorowicz's legal analysis in formulating his argument about the king's two bodies, here I follow his practice of reading literary materials like Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Richard II* and the works of Dante Alighieri. Kantorowicz says about Shakespeare:

The legal concept of the King's Two Bodies cannot, for other reasons, be separated from Shakespeare. For if that curious image which from modern constitutional thought has vanished all but completely, still has very real and human meaning today, this is largely due to Shakespeare. It is he who has eternalized that metaphor. He has made it not only the symbol, but indeed the very substance and essence of one of his greatest plays: *The Tragedy of King Richard II* is the tragedy of the King's Two Bodies. (Kantorowicz 2016, p. 26)

For Kantorowicz, literature is a site of ideological capture where we can see visions of sovereignty put into practice. In the case of Shakespeare, he archives the fiction of the king's two bodies that endures even though this fiction has now dissipated. The Jain *Ādipurāṇas* that form the focus of this paper too archive another kind of fiction, that of Jain sovereignty wherein kings renounce their mundane sovereignty in favor of spiritual self-sovereignty. The imperative to give up one's kingdom was undoubtedly a hard sell to the kings of the medieval Deccan and occurred historically in an extremely limited fashion.⁵ The genre of the *Ādipurāṇa*, however, tells us more about what Jains desired sovereignty to be rather than how it empirically was, and, like any theory of sovereignty, it is a fiction.

The first half of this paper begins with the premise that Digambara Jains did not start from scratch in theorizing sovereignty, but rather drew upon widely circulating tropes and idioms in a metaphorical repertoire that could be assembled in novel ways and to novel Jain ends. Through this repertoire, kingship is rendered a deeply ambivalent status to be enjoyed and renounced. Jinasena, however, did not simply engage in metaphorical discussions of kingship, but developed a normative definition of Digambara Jain kingship that also participated in broader debates around kingship and renunciation. The metaphorical and the normative work together here to show how Jain kingship was both deeply familiar and yet utterly distinct within the broader landscape of medieval India. The second half turns to the relationship between fathers and sons as the central driver of Jain sovereignty, which depends on a seemingly endless cycle of fathers renouncing in favor of their sons. The repetitious act of royal renunciation appears as a stabilizing rather than destabilizing force, which Jinasena highlights through its tropic disruption. Indeed, succession gone awry induces a narrative tension that exposes the potential problems that Jain sovereignty presents, but, in the end, resolves itself through a return to or confirmation of said sovereignty. The pairing of fathers and sons leaves off with the proper vision of the son governing his mundane kingdom and the father governing himself as self-sovereign.

The work of Ernst Kantorowicz helps frame a larger conversation about sovereignty in premodern South Asian religions in which Jains were a dynamic if often occluded interlocutor. This points us to the problem of which archives and which subject positions get theorized and from which we can theorize from. Jainism historically is not one of those sites for thinking the field of South Asia religions, despite the best efforts of scholars working on Jainism.⁶ While the argument of this paper tracks the development of one geographically and temporally bounded theory of Digambara Jain sovereignty, in so doing it illuminates conversations and debates about sovereignty between South Asian religions

from a new angle. Kantorowicz is, of course, simply one among many ways to frame such a conversation, but, for my purposes, his work lets us draw together multiple religions of South Asia by tracing the constructed nature of the fiction of sovereignty through a shared grammar and cultural logic and by orienting us to religious literature as a site for thinking the political. The understanding of one iteration of Digambara Jain sovereignty developed in this paper is facilitated by reading with Kantorowicz's questions and methods not to achieve a tightly drawn comparison but for the illuminating differences that they reveal and the modes of reading they inspire.

2. A Jain Metaphorical Repertoire of Kingship

The idea that Jainism would be interested in kingship or sovereignty at all is not a given. And yet, both Svetambara and Digambara Jains had an ongoing engagement with both kings and kingship in the medieval period, perhaps most famously captured through Svetambara improvisations with the *kṣatriya* warrior figure engaged in an internal battle who eventuates in the *cakravartin* or world-conquering sovereign (Dundas 1991, pp. 174–81).⁷ The centrality of kingship is immediately apparent in the opening salvos of Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* and is repeated throughout. Jinasena emphasizes that kingship itself is the fruit of Jain *dharma*, that kingship is the product of Jain religious practice and belief:

One who is desirous of *dharma* is desirous of everything.

One who is desirous of *dharma* possesses the happiness of wealth.

Indeed, *dharma* is the basis of the achievement of

all wealth, success, and happiness.

Dharma is a wish-fulfilling cow.

Dharma is a mighty wish-fulfilling gemstone.

Dharma is an everlasting wish-fulfilling tree.

And *dharma* is an eternal treasure.

Behold the greatness of *dharma* that guards against calamity!

The gods from afar cannot violate man who is abiding in it.

Oh, intelligent one! Interiority, the status of a king, fame in the world, the experience of the self, and the obtainment of supreme knowledge are achieved through the inconceivable greatness of *dharma*.

Dharma prevents man's calamity

and confers an elevated status and perpetually increasing happiness.

The meaning of the *purāṇa* is *dharma*. (Shastri 1992, vv. 2.33–2.38)⁸

Counter to its common depiction as a religion with an austere ascetic focus and extreme otherworldly orientation, the image of Jainism described here is of a religion whose practice leads to great worldly benefits including happiness, social status, and every conceivable desire, be that material or spiritual.⁹ This equation of *dharma* and worldly success is reiterated throughout the text in various formulations, such as: "*Dharma* guards against misfortune. *Dharma* yields the desired fruit. *Dharma* is conducive to happiness in the life to come and through *dharma*, there is happiness in this world" (*JĀP*, v. 42.116). In this perfected world only accessible through Jain *dharma*, kingship functions as the pinnacle of social and political hierarchy and pleasurable excess in a civilization described by Ronald Davidson as one "whose medieval expression is a concern for (and sometimes obsession with) status, hierarchy, political power, religious authority, and personal indulgence" (Davidson 2002, p. 187). Jinasena is even more specific in binding Jain *dharma* to kingship broadly conceived: "Through *dharma* alone, one can become a king of gods, a king of men, or king of the monastic assembly. Through *dharma*, one can become a *tīrthaṅkara* or even achieve supreme liberation" (*JĀP*, v. 10.108). Kingship is yoked here into a hierarchical

system of sovereignty over gods, men, and monks that culminates in the liberated soul of the *tīrthaṅkara*. Staged successively in this way, mundane kingship anticipates liberation.

If Jain dharma yields the status of king, what does Jainism think kingship is? What does a Jain theory of kingship or sovereignty look like? If we look to one of the most impactful monographs in our field, we might be tempted to not bother with these questions at all: “[t]here was no specifically Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava political practices, no specifically Jain political philosophy...no specifically Mahāyana theory of political power” (Pollock 2006, p. 431). Underlying these claims is a presupposition about genre: to engage the political is to theorize it explicitly in a discursive form immediately legible as philosophical, a-religious, and, ideally, in Sanskrit. Or, alternatively, we can access the political through aestheticized power found in Sanskrit court poetry (*kāvya*) that is delaminated from a specific religious community (Pollock 2006, p. 89). Jain authors are left out on both counts: apart from a few examples,¹⁰ there is no tradition of writing technical treatises on Jain political philosophy, nor did Jains regularly engage in writing *kāvya* that did not explicitly and intentionally enact a Jain world.¹¹ Are we simply to assume that Jainism, because it does not approach the political in generically familiar modes, does not concern itself with power or politics? In generic terms, are we to believe that political texts do not make religious claims and that religious texts like Jinasena’s *Ādipurāṇa* do not make political claims? The short answer, I would argue, is no.

In attempting to take Jain literature seriously as doing important conceptual, philosophical, and theoretical work, we encounter a common refrain: Jains are “derivative” and simply recycle from non-Jain authors (Kulkarni 1990, p. 3). This is, paradoxically, a generative starting point for unpacking a Jain theory of kingship because Jain authors like Jinasena do, undoubtedly, draw on well-established tropes in Sanskrit literature as well as widely circulating understandings of the nature of kingship itself. Jinasena incorporated the images, experiences, and structures of extant forms of kingship and assembled them into a distinctly Jain vision of kingship as a position born of meritorious activity in a previous life, the experience of which leads to renunciation. This Jain impulse to know about other communities and textual traditions often results in texts that look unoriginal or even plagiaristic,¹² but, I would suggest that such readings neglect the innovative and even subversive practices that Jains employed to enact textual and literary worlds all their own (Cort 1995, p. 85).

It is understandable why scholars would find a Jain theory of kingship unthinkable given the tradition’s seemingly austere ascetic focus when medieval courts were anything but. Very little then has been made of the fact that rather than lean away from courtly sumptuary culture, Jains leaned into it. Jain kingship is not depicted through the arts of governance; with the exceptions of Rsabha and his son Bharata, we rarely see the kings of the *Ādipurāṇa* engaged in the nitty-gritty mundane realities of royal administration,¹³ nor does there seem to be an overriding emphasis on the moral stature of the king (*pace* Stein 1998, p. 177). Instead, sovereignty is typically expressed through symbolically charged ritual practices including the *abhiseka*, *digvijaya*, and *homa* rituals and through legitimatizing fictions of auspicious physical marks on the body and the possession of symbols (the umbrella, etc.). Most potently, we recognize a king not through administrative practice, but through his privileged access to an erotically charged sumptuary lifestyle. Take, for example, King Vajrajaṅgha who Jinasena describes as luxuriating with his wife in all the pleasures that kingship has to offer. One night while in the throes of passion on silken sheets, they asphyxiate from incense smoke when their maid forgets to open their jewel-encrusted window (*JĀP*, vv. 9.21–9.32). Pampa adds to this story that the couple never releases their loving embrace and die from the “poison of pleasure” (Shamaraya and Nagarajah 1991, v. 5.24).¹⁴ Ironically, they go on to be reborn together in the Land of Pleasure (*bhoga-bhūmi*) where they experience even more pleasure and then encounter a pair of Jain monks who guide them further on the proper path of Jainism (*JĀP*, vv. 9.97–9.158). The example of this particular rebirth demonstrates both the dangers of royal excess but, also, how that very experience facilitates spiritual growth.

The repeated emphasis on the pleasures of kingship makes clear that these experiences are necessary as well as fleeting and perilous.¹⁵ Jināsena thematizes the fraught nature of kingship by invoking the Goddess Srilakṣmi, the female personification of the qualities of beauty, fortune, and success. As the embodiment of prosperity, Lakṣmi naturally became associated with kingship from a very early period and is frequently depicted as a consort of the king.¹⁶ While Lakṣmi represents the positive aspects of worldly success, she also bears its aspirational and fleeting nature as captured by her unsteady and fickle temperament (*lola; cañjala*). Lakṣmi is a force that generates sovereignty, prosperity, and so on, and, just as quickly, takes it away and, as such, became a well-known trope for the plight of kingship and a critique of the political domain (Ali 2011, p. 114; Shulman 1986, p. 304). Indeed, the image of Viṣṇu as paramount god-king with Lakṣmi residing on his chest was so potent that it became delaminated from specifically Vaiṣṇava contexts. While the mediums of literature and epigraphy at times depict incongruous discursive worlds, this was not the case with the metaphoric valence of Lakṣmi: quite literally wedded to the figure of the king and seated on his chest, she moves seamlessly across multiple discursive mediums and religious communities following her beloved wherever he goes. Inhabiting this imagery, the Jain kings of Jināsena's *Ādipurāṇa* are also frequently described as having chests that are "the abode of Srilakṣmi" (*JĀP* v. 15.19; also vv. 6.23, 6.50, 6.199). While Jināsena liberally borrows from this type of established political imagery, he puts to use the familiar figure of Lakṣmi for decidedly Jain ends.

For Jināsena, Lakṣmi is not simply a metaphor for the instability of the kingdom, beauty, age, and wealth. Rather, a king's encounter with Lakṣmi facilitates a moment of epiphany when the *Ādipurāṇa*'s kings realize the broader futility of the world and renounce their kingdoms. Here, what makes kingship distinctly Jain are, again, not necessarily the practices that kingship entails, but the experiences of kingship that lead to a realization of its transience that then prompts renunciation. As Rśabha pointedly tells his younger sons who are fighting with his eldest son Bharata over control of the kingdom, "The kingdom is ephemeral, and he too will eventually abandon it" (*JĀP*, v. 34.121). The issue of whether one will renounce their kingdom is a question of when and not if.

The text makes this connection between the ephemerality of kingship and renunciation—again, often through the trope of Lakṣmi—most explicit in the moments of realization that precipitate renunciation. For example, King Vajrabahu observes the dissipation of a palace-shaped cloud,

Then, on another day, standing on the terrace of his palace,
the great and lustrous King Vajrabahu
reflected upon a rising autumnal cloud.
Within the span of a single moment,
he observed its dissolution into a mass of clouds.
His affect went to extreme indifference, and he was burdened by heavy thoughts.
Beholding this sight, he thought:
How did I see this autumn cloud in the shape of a palace and,
within a second, it was gone?
Just like that, our riches can disappear in a moment.
Lakṣmi, the embodiment of wealth and youth,
is like a flash of lightning.
Beauty and pleasure are only momentary
and cause pain in the end.

Age drips away every second like a leaky water pipe. (*JĀP*, vv. 8.50–8.54)¹⁷

Upon the realization that his kingship and kingdom are no more enduring than a castle built out of clouds, Vajrabahu renounces his kingdom, wealth, and youthful beauty

named by Laksmi. Examples of this could be proliferated. Consider a similar moment that artfully reflects upon the nature of kingship: King Vajradanta is presented with a flower by his gardener. He leans in to inhale the fragrance and is confronted with the sight of a dead bee nestled within the blossom. The parallelism that the image evokes—of the king and the bee in lusty pursuit of pleasure—demonstrates the futility, and perhaps even the danger, of the sumptuary indulgences of royal life, which are, again, tied back in these verses to the instability of Laksmi (*lolā-lakṣmī*) (*JĀP*, v. 8.68). And yet, the king would not have renounced had he not leaned in, desirous of lingering over the flower's scent. If Jinasena's characters ultimately negate the fragility of worldliness personified by Laksmi, this negation is earned by kings who embrace the world—all of it—as only kings can.

The trope of Laksmi, a topic that I will return to at the end, became part of a wider Jain repertoire that describes the nature of the mundane power of kingship, but this repertoire can seem contradictory and incongruous. Indeed, the instability and ephemerality of kingship epitomized by Laksmi is seemingly contravened by another favorite image of Jinasena: the transfer of the burden of the kingdom. Yet, as Sanders Hens points to, Laksmi herself participates in this transfer as she is passed from father to son (Hens 2020, p. 77). Indeed, Laksmi is one personification of this burden of kingship. For example, King Vajradanta, after casting around for a suitable heir and finding none, crowns his infant grandson Pundarika as king and leaves him in the care of his wife, Laksmimati, and his younger sister, Anudhari. While the *Ādipurāṇa* is littered with kings who renounce their kingdoms, what further distinguishes this scene from others like it is the anguish-laden message (*sandēśa*) that the women send to their son-in-law Vajrajāṅgha, pleading with him to take over as king. On the one hand, the women express concern about how they will raise the child ruler without the proper support and, on the other, they evince trepidation about the precarious position of the kingdom absent a sovereign:

Since the emperor went to the forest with his sons and relatives,
the lotus faced Pundarika is now established in this kingdom
How great is the kingdom of the emperor?
Yet, how small is this extremely weak child,
an unbroken young bullock yoked to a burden that should be carried by a bull?
We two are feeble women and this is a child, so this kingdom is without a leader.
The protection of this kingdom, which is in disarray, is your responsibility.
Therefore, out of compassion, please come without wasting time.
With your presence, the kingdom will be free from calamity. (*JĀP*, vv. 8.95–8.98)

These densely loaded three verses immediately reveal that royal power and authority are the domain of adult men and should not be left to women and children. Indeed, a kingdom left in unqualified hands is described as leaderless and in disarray and, elsewhere, the text recounts its plunder by allies and occupation by other powerful kings (*JĀP*, v. 8.91). But what is the real problem here? Why do two women serving as regents to a minor king present such an issue? If we look to other contexts such as the Sanskrit commentarial tradition, children and the uneducated are often collectively grouped together because of their inability to grasp the sophistication of Sanskrit in the original while women are excluded as a possible audience altogether (Patel 2011, p. 257).¹⁸ While a cognitive or even emotional component makes women and children unsuitable readers, the issue with them as rulers lies not just with their minds but also with their bodies.

The issue of embodiment and bodily capacity points us towards an important image of sovereignty. While the two women self-identify as physically feeble, they expand upon the child Pundarika's weakness by comparing his childlike body to an unbroken young bullock. If we unpack this metaphor further, the kingdom itself is compared to a burden that is most appropriately shouldered by a full-grown bull.¹⁹ Like other tropes of sovereignty that Jains invoke, the image of a kingdom as a weight or burden is in no way specific to Jain authors and the compound "the burden of the kingdom" or, alternatively, "the burden of rule"

(*rājya-bhāra*; *rājya-bhara*) appears in both Sanskrit and Kannada as a complete lexical unit (Apte 2004, pp. 799–800; Kittel 2010, p. 1338). That said, given Jain interest in theorizing materiality that frequently involves thinking of things as weights and chains, Jain poets employ and routinize this image in their works as part of a larger project of theorizing sovereignty.

This Jain preoccupation with the image of the kingdom as a physical burden can be read in conversation with the Buddhist conception of the *cakravartin*: the chariot symbolizing the world only moves forward when its two wheels—the wheel of law turned by the *cakravartin* and the wheel of *dharma* turned by the Buddha—are properly functioning (Strong 2008, pp. 91–92). Both images of a Jain king bearing the weight of the world on his shoulders and the Buddhist *cakravartin* as one wheel of a chariot bearing the weight of the world share in the irreducible materiality of kingship. Both Jain and Buddhist kings are yoked to their worldly kingdoms, but their underlying conception of sovereignty is different. In the Buddhist context, it is bifurcated wherein the mundane power of the Buddhist *cakravartin* requires the simultaneous spiritual power of the Buddha. In contrast, for Jainism, mundane and spiritual sovereignty are successively staged wherein the burdened mundane Jain sovereign succeeds to the position of disburdened spiritual self-sovereign.

Jinasena's use of the tropic language of the burden of the kingdom appears and is amplified in Kannada rewritings of the same narrative. In Pampa's *Ādipurāṇam*, like in Jinasena before him, every Jain king gives up his throne to become a Jain monk save one who takes lay initiation. Again, royal renunciation in the text is prompted by a number of experiences ranging from an encounter with a monk or memories from a past life to the fragility of the kingdom as exemplified by Lakṣmi. Whatever the inciting cause, the resulting royal renunciation follows an almost identical pattern: the king gathers his family and political allies around him, formally passes down the kingdom, and embarks on ascetic practice. The following Kannada prose passage from King Mahabala's royal renunciation exemplifies this sequence of events repeated elsewhere in the text:

Mahabala performed the Mahāmaha Festival with great pomp for eight days in the Jina temple in the garden of his house. Afterward, he beckoned for his inner circle and feudatories. He entrusted the burden of the kingdom to his son Prince Atibala who was now able to wear armor. (excerpt of *PĀP*, v. 2.49 *vacana*)

The events that precede renunciation happen quickly, which is formally captured in the texture of the text itself. Pampa's text moves between metrical verses (*ṛtta*) and swathes of prose writing (*vacana*) in a style known as *campū kāvya*. Different meters convey different modes and set up the narrative in distinct ways that distillate on particular images, moments, or encounters. In contrast, prose passages tend to favor the narration of a sequence of events over description in a style that works to accelerate the narrative. Given that renunciation is a central goal within Jainism and that the king's renunciation is the culmination of kingship itself, it is somewhat odd that such an event is devoid of thick description and ornamentation. However, within the metrical ecology of mixed prose and verse, prose acts as the natural mode to capture the swiftness of renunciation that is reliant, as it were, on conventional tropes and established idioms. While thick description directs the reader to stop and linger at certain narrative moments, the use of such tropes and idioms in prose suggests that lingering is not a prerequisite of understanding; the workings of kingship are conventional and are thus rendered conventional in language. To return to the Kannada prose passage above, the absence of complex meter, poetic ornamentation, and thick description does not render this moment trivial. On the contrary, the brevity and economy of language—in this case, the burden of kingship—suggests that the importance and meaning of royal renunciation has become part of language itself.

Most notably, this verse returns us to the concept of handing over the burden of the kingdom by a father to a son. For example, in the case of King Mahabala, Pampa describes how he entrusts his son Atibala with the burden of the kingdom (*nija-sutan atibala-kumāraṇam rājya-bhāradol nirīṣi*).²⁰ We also find an alternative Kannada idiom that conveys a very similar meaning: “He gave the burden of the kingdom (*rājya-bhāramam*)

koṭṭu) to his son Mahikampa and accepted the state of being a student of Jagannandana Guru (excerpt of *PĀP*, v. 3.62 *vacana*). What is notable here is that, in contrast to Jinasena who typically employs the “burden of the kingdom” as a nominal compound, Pampa most commonly uses this expression in a verbal phrase.²¹ The circulation of this image also occurs in the next Kannada rewriting of the *Ādipurāṇa* that occurs as the first chapter of the *Cāvuṇḍarāya Purāṇam*. In this latter text, we find the final transformation of Pampa’s verbal usage into a complex predicate: “to put down the burden of the kingdom” (*rājya-bhāra-nirīsu*) and “to hand over the burden of the kingdom” (*rājya-bhārāppaisu*).²² The verbalizing of this nominal compound in the *Cāvuṇḍarāya Purāṇam* presages the idiom that takes hold in modern Mysore Kannada dialect where “to rule” is expressed by the complex predicate “to manage the burden of the kingdom” (*rājya-bhāra-māḍu*).²³ This deep dive into how Jain Sanskrit and Kannada authors used this expression is revealing insofar as Jains, as forerunners of Kannada language and literature, supply this particular image of sovereignty to the language, which still bears this imprint today.

3. A Jain Definition of Kingship

The complex repertoire of Jain images of kingship explored in the previous section—from the instability of Lakṣmi to the burden of the kingdom—sets up a normative definition of Digambara Jain kingship that Jinasena places in the mouth of Bharata, Rṣabha’s son:

Therefore, this kingdom is endowed with *dharma* and filled with activity,
with his protection, it flourishes in this life and in the next.

He protects the people and the guardians of the people in this manner for a long time.

With consciousness arising at that time and place, he should undertake renunciation.

The assembled class of gods repeatedly explains that

when he feels dispassion for his kingdom,

he should desire the act of Jain initiation.

With other kings as witnesses, he entrusts the acquired kingdom to his oldest son.

He then instructs him on the protection of the people. (*JĀP*, vv. 38.265–38.268)

Following this description, Jain kingship requires an investment in the kingdom’s stability and success in the present and in the future. The temporality here is significant: Jain kings invest in the kingdom not simply for the duration of their reign but in perpetuity. It is that investment in the kingdom that, I argue, facilitates the king’s encounter with the fragility of kingship as described above. This encounter leads to the development of a specific kind of consciousness (*utpanna-bodha*), that further leads to the king’s emotional reorientation: the experience of the weighty instability of the kingdom is precisely what facilitates its renunciation. With this desire to renounce, the king hands over the kingdom to his oldest son. Bharata continues by saying that the ideal-type Jain king, a king of kings (*raja-rāja*), is now transformed into a royal sage (*raja-rṣi*) who goes to the forest (*JĀP*, v. 38.284). The vision of kingship that Bharata puts forward neatly aligns with the figure of the king or kings that occur in each karmic cycle of Jinasena’s *Ādipurāṇa*. This formal definition of kingship casts the position in a distinct temporality that is reflected in the broader narrative as well; kingship is to be renounced at the end of one’s life. Both in Bharata’s definition and enacted in the lives of the *Ādipurāṇa*’s kings it is only after kingship is practiced and its fruits fully experienced that one develops a renunciatory subjectivity.

This normative definition of Jain kingship participates in larger ongoing debates about renunciation within South Asian religions. The Jain side of this debate is neatly captured through the figures of Rṣabha and Mahavira, the first and last *tīrthaṅkaras*. The Digambaras believe that Rṣabha was an exemplary householder who married, had children, and, ultimately, renounced the world in old age. In contrast, they believe that Mahavira remained celibate and disinclined towards worldly affairs throughout his entire life. Bookending the tradition, these two *tīrthaṅkaras* represent quite radically different visions of a life well lived and the place of renunciation within it. As reflected in Jinasena’s *Ādipurāṇa*, Rṣabha’s life is

perhaps best understood as a Jain assimilation of worldly life into a renunciatory trajectory. On the other hand, Mahavira's innate renunciatory impulse is deeply antinomian, and potentially even societally destabilizing, as P.S. Jaini notes at length:

It has earlier been noted that all eleven of the original disciples of Mahāvīra were of the brahman caste, also that they entered his order together with hundreds of their students. This kind of large-scale movement of young people into the monastic life must have had a tremendous effect upon the society of the time; several lectures of the *Uttarādhyayana* (for example, x, *Nemipravrajyā*; xiv, *Īśukārīyam*; xx, *Mahānirgranthīyam*, xxi, *Samudrapālīyam*; xxii, *Rathanemīyam*) attest to the presence of a widely felt uneasiness among householders in the face of such a phenomenon. Renunciation of the world was ordinarily not considered appropriate until an individual had fulfilled his societal duties and reached a fairly advanced age; those who violated this norm to follow Mahāvīra must have done so despite tremendous familial and societal pressures to “enjoy worldly pleasures first”. (Jaini 1979, p. 11)²⁴

Jaini's quote captures the concern of early Jain sources over the possible destabilizing effect of youth renunciation en masse. Rsabha and Mahavira represent two distinct paths to renunciation; the former rather than the latter was deemed preferable. This is a largely conservative position that did not challenge societal norms or expectations, but rather illuminates the ways in which Jains assimilated worldly life and made it functional for Jain practice and, inversely, found ways to fit asceticism into normative societal and relational structures.

If Jains had to creatively theorize worldly and otherworldly goals in complement, the classical Brahmanical tradition was faced with the challenge of assimilating renunciatory life that was very much counter to the traditional Vedic householder's obligations to marry, to procreate, and to discharge debts (Olivelle 1993, pp. 41–53; Olivelle 1995, p. 7). Even when accepted as a form of practice, the proper time for renunciation remained a point of controversy among brahmin communities.²⁵ For example, Yadavaprakasa's *Yatidharmasamuccaya* (c. 11th C.E.) expands upon two possible renunciatory trajectories. On the one hand, one could fulfill their Brahmanical obligations of marriage, procreation, debt discharge, and then renounce. Or, on the other hand, one could renounce at any time as long as they were detached from worldly things. These two paths to renunciation neatly parallel similar debates in the Jain community through the figures of Rsabha and Mahavira. While Yadavaprakasa ultimately endorses the latter option of renunciation at any time, the debate continued to play out in epic literature, which captures Brahmanical ideals in a similar way that the *Ādipurāṇa* renders an ideal Jain world. Coming from two very different perspectives, these specifically literary expressions of religious traditions ultimately come to the same conclusion: renunciation is a practice for the end of life. Patrick Olivelle describes the absorption of this temporality in epic literature:

Abdication in old age and the consequent retirement of the old king to the wilderness are considered central features of the royal ethic. The *Rāmāyaṇa* (2.20.21) states that the custom of a king abdicating in old age in favor of his son and retiring to the wilderness was established by ancient royal seers. The *Mahābhārata* (3.186.2–3) likewise says that Kalki Viṣṇuśaśa, the first king of the Kṛta age, started this practice, which has been followed ever since. The epics contain numerous accounts of famous kings who followed that custom. The only death suitable for a royal person is death either in the battlefield or in the forest (MBh 15.8.12). (Olivelle 1995, p. 166)

The textual citations that Olivelle gives could be proliferated. The vision of kingship expressed in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* agrees with the *Ādipurāṇa* genre that the proper time for a king's renunciation is at the end of life. However, the practices and rationale that prompt a king's renunciation in Digambara Jainism versus Brahmanical Hinduism are notably quite different. In Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa*, royal renunciation is not

just a custom to be followed because it is the established path for political stability, a required phase of life, or, as the *Yatidharmasamuccaya* suggests, the consequence of worldly detachment. Rather, for Jinasena and Digambara authors who follow him, renunciation is the consequence of kingship itself.

Jinasena's vision of Jain kingship is not simply derivative of similar visions that we find in Brahmanical Hinduism but, rather, was engaged with a much larger and ongoing conversation about kingship and renunciation that many different communities, thinkers, and texts participated in and contributed to. This debate was even internal to Jainism itself as exemplified by the contrasting biographies of the first and last *tīrthaṅkaras*. Through the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* read alongside the *Ādipurāṇa* we see points of contact and continuity of thinking across a continuum of South Asian religions that resolve in similar and yet utterly distinct ways. Jains were active participants in such conversations and Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* actively sought to intervene into the larger questions of what it meant to be a king, how kingship and renunciation related to each other, and when was the correct moment of a king to renounce their kingdom.

4. Fathers and Sons, or Succession Gone Awry

Before a king can retire to the forest, the not-so-small matter of the kingdom remains. Bharata's normative laying out of Jain kingship evinces a concern over the stability of the kingdom after the king's renunciation; the kingdom's renunciation is only possible once the kingdom's future is secured by the oldest male heir's assumption to the throne (Scharfe 1989, pp. 27, 63).²⁶ For the majority of kings who renounce in the *Ādipurāṇa*, this vision of succession goes exactly as planned. Yet, in the text's inducement to show how kingship engenders renunciation, the repetition of the father's renunciation and the son's succession sets up an expectation, the subversion of which generates narrative tension. The moments where succession goes awry illuminate the challenges proffered by Jain sovereignty and the resolution of which reconfirm the normative model of Jain kingship properly lived.

To return to the example of King Vajradanta, who handed over his kingdom to his baby grandson Pundarika with his wife and his sister as regents, we see a version of renunciation that does not go as planned. Vajradanta is forced to select Pundarika because his adult sons do not want to take over the kingdom and, instead, want to follow their father in taking Jain ascetic initiation. The sons point out that if the kingdom is inevitably to be renounced then there is no motivation to accept this burden in the first place, a danger that is built into Jain kingship (*JĀP*, vv. 8.81–82). If kingship always ends in renunciation, then why not circumvent kingship entirely and go straight to ascetic initiation? From a soteriological perspective, mundane kingship ignites and catalyzes dispassion. At the moment of royal renunciation, the Jain perspective is deeply invested in both the mundane political order and the otherworldly order of liberation. While Vajradanta's crowning of an infant king is the logical extreme of Bharata's normative definition in which the kingdom must be secured by whatever means possible above and beyond the commencement of austerities, the problems with the female regency of Pundarika's rule illustrates why the kingdom is most secure when handed over to the eldest male heir or, at the very minimum, an adult male within the family. Vajrajāṅgha's assumption of the kingdom at the invitation of his in-laws, Pundarika's female regents, corrects this crisis of succession by returning the kingdom to a proper vision of Jain sovereignty.

Like Brahmanical authors, Jinasena's prescription of crowning an heir before the death of a king serves as a stabilizing mechanism for the kingdom itself. If we consider the broader political context in which Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* was written, the death of a king—sudden or otherwise—was a moment of great vulnerability; royal succession was frequently contested among sons or even by other branches of the royal family, and a kingdom in such disarray was susceptible to attack or even takeover by competing dynasties (Olivelle 1993, p. 116). A carefully timed late-in-life royal renunciation cancels out such vulnerability and stabilizes the kingdom at a fraught moment of political transition. Jain renunciation, then, offered a

soteriologically efficacious solution to the question of what happens when the king dies by circumventing the very problem such that, as Kantorowicz put it, “the king never dies” (Kantorowicz 2016, pp. 13, 407–9, 412, 418–19).²⁷ For Jain and epic writers, the king never need die because he abdicates before that happens. Yet, in the Jain case, abdication is not simply a convenient workaround to a political problem, but rather is foundational to Jain kingship itself.

Vajradanta’s crowning of the baby Pundarika is a generative example of kingship gone awry in its illustration of the unsuitability of anyone but an adult male heir to rule. It also opens up another problem with normative Digambara Jain kingship. In the *Ādipurāṇa*, kings commonly take initiation accompanied by their wives, children, courtiers, and even feudatories in numbers that hyperbolically reach the thousands. Renunciation is thus rendered to be a profoundly collective if not familial act.²⁸ Such collective renunciation alongside a king is predicated on the assumption of at least one son assuming the throne. In the case of Vajradanta’s renunciation, this does not go as planned as the collective will towards renunciation is too great and does not fulsomely account for the future of the kingdom. The total renunciation of the direct family presents a problem for Jain kingship, but, as the story of King Rsabha’s sons after his renunciation illustrates, the inverse is equally destabilizing.

In Adinatha’s final birth as King Rsabha, he marries a pair of beautiful sisters named Yasasvati and Sunanda. Between them, Rsabha’s wives staggeringly bear him a hundred sons and two daughters. Of particular note, Yasasvati gives birth to a son named Bharata and Sunanda a son named Bahubali. After a long reign during which he properly educated his sons and daughters, Rsabha decides to renounce his kingdom after watching the performance of the extremely gifted but aged courtesan Nilanjana.²⁹ He establishes his oldest son Bharata as king (*ādi-rāja*) and his other son Bahubali as heir apparent (*yuva-rāja*). With Rsabha’s renunciation, the narrative suspends its interest in the future *tīrthaṅkara* and turns to his two sons Bharata and Bahubali, the heir and the spare, who end up engaged in one-on-one combat over the rights of royal inheritance.

Inhabiting his newly elevated status as a *cakravartin*, Bharata embarks on a *digvijaya*, a ritual conquering of the directions, one of the preeminent acts of medieval Indian kingship. Traversing the subcontinent with his *cakra* majestically floating in front, Bharata easily conquers the directions across a span of sixty-thousand years. He returns to his capital city Ayodhya, but his *cakra* stalls outside the gates and bafflingly refuses to enter. Bharata calls his priest for answers. He regales him with his worries that one of his own kinsmen must be the cause, which the priest confirms. To illustrate the point, he declares that Bharata has conquered the “external sphere” (*bahir-maṇḍala*) but has yet to conquer the “internal sphere” (*antar-maṇḍala*) (*JĀP*, v. 34.40). This language, laden with double valency, describes Bharata’s current political situation of having conquered the directions but not his brothers as well as his current state of moral development in which the external sphere of mundane power is the focus rather than the internal sphere of the soul’s development.³⁰ To resolve this situation, the priest directs Bharata to send a messenger to his brothers with an ultimatum: either submit to Bharata’s authority or take Jain renunciation. Rather than submit to his rule, they accept asceticism at the feet of their guru and father, Rsabha, except for Bahubali.

This sets up one of the most famous scenes from the *Ādipurāṇa* narrative (Dundas 2002, p. 120; Strohl 1984; Taylor 2016, pp. 309–70). The two brothers prepare their armies for mortal combat but are persuaded by their respective ministers to participate in a non-violent dharmic battle through a series of three one-on-one contests. Bahubali quickly bests Bharata in a staring match and a water fight. He then roundly defeats him in a wrestling match by picking up the humiliated king and holding him aloft over his head. Bharata, deeply embarrassed, vengefully shoots his *cakra* at his brother. Instead of striking Bahubali, the *cakra* simply circles him and stands still, thereby recognizing Bahubali’s supremacy. Shocked by his own behavior, Bharata falls to the ground, clasps his brother’s leg, and begs him to take over the kingdom. Bahubali tells him that he has no use for kingship

and that the Laksmi of the kingdom (*rājya-lakṣmī*) is his alone to enjoy (*JĀP*, v. 36.97). He then focuses his mind on austerities. He stands for a span of one year in meditation (*pratimā-yoga*) during which time creeper vines climb up the length of his body. After his brother Bharata comes to him, Bahubali overcomes his pride, his final obstacle to liberation, and achieves the liberatory knowledge of *kēvala-jñāna* (*JĀP*, vv. 36.185–188).

The example of Vajradanta and Rsabha's renunciation engenders two interrelated types of succession crises. On the one hand, Vajradanta's inability to find a suitable heir given his sons' own disinclination to rule illustrates an improper impulse to renunciation. On the other hand, Bharata and Bahubali's contestation over the kingdom demonstrates an improper attachment to the kingdom. Both examples disrupt the proper temporality of Digambara Jain kingship. The majority of royal renunciations in the text go exactly as planned: the father relishes the kingdom, realizes its impermanence, hands over the burden of the kingdom to his oldest son and, with the future of the kingdom secured, renounces. The counterexamples explored in this section disrupt the proper unfolding of kingship, succession, and renunciation and, in so doing, reinforce the normative model by exposing the instability posed by renunciation and kingship out of sync.

5. Self-Sovereignty

When Jain kingship is properly synced, the son assumes the throne as king and the father becomes a Jain ascetic. If, as I have argued, the experience of kingship brings about renunciation then the renunciant king enters a new domain of spiritual sovereignty, one that is superordinate to mundane sovereignty. The domain of spiritual sovereignty draws on and is intertwined with the metaphorical repertoire of mundane kingship. As we have seen, Laksmi appears frequently in Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* tightly bound to the kingdom and its success as: Laksmi of the kingdom (*rājya-lakṣmī*), Laksmi of the king (*raja-lakṣmī*), Laksmi of victory (*jaya-lakṣmī*), Laksmi of triumph (*vijaya-lakṣmī*), and Laksmi of heroism (*vīra-lakṣmī*). Jinasena also deploys the conative force of Laksmi to animate the domain of asceticism and its success. She takes on an increasingly specifying force in her various guises as: Laksmi of asceticism (*tapo-lakṣmī*), Laksmi of the forest (*vana-lakṣmī*), Laksmi of liberation (*mokṣa-lakṣmī*), and Laksmi of emancipation (*mukti-lakṣmī*). Jinasena's many invocations of Laksmi are used to figure the worldly sphere of kingship (the king, the kingdom, victory, triumph, and heroism), and the spiritual world of Jain religious practice (asceticism, the forest as the site of ascetic activity, liberation, and emancipation). It is through the trope of Laksmi that Jinasena most potently brings these spheres into conversation.

Consider this scene of King Vajranabhi's royal assumption, which is precipitated by his father Vajrasena's renunciation of the throne and initiation into Jain ascetic practice. The father and son set off on the seemingly opposed paths of asceticism and kingship that Jinasena here brings together through the figure of Laksmi:

At the time of his renunciation, Indra appropriately worshiped Vajrasena,
the delight of Laksmi of liberation,
while in a mango grove garden, bowing down in a multitude of thousands
the kings received Jain initiation at the same time as Vajrasena.
Vajranabhi kept the kingdom free from thorns
while the King of the Yogis performed flawless asceticism.
Vajranabhi experienced pleasure from the embrace of Laksmi of the kingdom
while the Guru was delighted by his commitment to Laksmi of asceticism.
Vajranabhi possessed the support of his brothers
while the most excellent Yogi possessed the lasting support of his virtues.
With his courtiers, King Vajranabhi ruled other kings.
With the austerity of *yoga*, the King of the Sages nourished virtuous people.
The son was residing in his own abode of the kingdom

while the guru was residing in the final abode.

These two were intensely focused on the well-being of others
and the protection of the people of the realm.

A shining weapon appeared in Vajranabhi's armory of victory
while a lustrous weapon of meditation appeared in the Yogi's armory-like mind.
With this weapon, the lord of the world conquered the entire world
while the sage achieved greatness in the three worlds through his victory over *karma*.
Those two appeared victorious as if they were engaged in mutual competition,
but the victory of one was short-lived
and the victory of the other overcame the entire world. (*JĀP*, vv. 11.47–11.56)

In this set of verses, the activities of King Vajranabhi are contrasted with those of his father, the yogic ascetic Vajrasena. The king and the ascetic are quite literally depicted in competition with each other. Through the technique of formal poetic twinning, Jinasena here draws kingship and asceticism into adjacent, but hierarchically structured spheres of activity through their respective embrace of the Laksmi of the kingdom and of asceticism, the support of the brothers and of moral virtue, the assistance of courtiers versus *yoga*, residence in the kingdom as opposed to the final abode of liberation, and the weapon of war in contrast to the weapon of meditation. The formal parallelism that charges these verses comes to crisis at the extent of their realms: Vajranabhi's imperial power is momentary and limited to this world, whereas Vajrasena's ascetic power is eternal and extends across the three worlds.

Following Jinasena, Pampa too deploys Laksmi to name the sphere of liberation and, just as kings' lust after Laksmi as the personification of the kingdom, so too do renunciant kings' lust after Laksmi as the personification of asceticism. When, for example, King Vajrabahu renounces his kingdom, Pampa describes how his sole goal is the side glances of the Laksmi of liberation (*mokṣa-lakṣmī-kaṭāksaika-lakṣyaṇ ādan*) (*PĀP*, v. 4.67 *vacana*). Here, we have a curious image of a monk, described as naked and asexual as a newborn baby, in pursuit of liberation personified as the amorous Goddess Laksmi.³¹ Even in his monastic form, Vajrabahu longs for her side glances just as any romantic hero would. Pampa poetically exploits the fact that liberation is, in fact, only legible through desire: renunciant kings in the *Ādipurāṇa* genre are described as desiring liberation. Pampa intimates that the structure of feeling that animates this desire for liberation is analogous to the erotic in its intensity. For both kings and ascetics, the object of their desire is always Laksmi in her different manifestations, but those manifestations are themselves not commensurate; the Laksmi of the kingdom is always subordinate to the Laksmi of liberation.

Jinasena, and later Kannada poets such as Pampa, capture the aesthetically saturated world of kings and then play with the very language and experience of kingship to describe the goal of liberation. The play of this language has a poetic force that palpably renders the connection between kingship and renunciation as adjacent, but hierarchical spheres of human experience; a true king is a liberated soul. Disburdened of that fickle and unstable Laksmi who represents these qualities of the kingdom, the renunciant king pursues Laksmi whose fleeting and difficult to capture persona now represents the challenges of reaching liberation. A king married to Laksmi of the kingdom will inevitably desire the Laksmi of liberation. As much as a mundane king and a spiritual king are oppositional figures, their shared vocabulary of power suggests that they are not so much opposites, but rather figures along the same moral continuum to which the language of power equally applies.

The metaphorical collapse between mundane and spiritual sovereignty has a number of conceptual consequences that reflect how Digambara Jain authors understood the relationship between the two. In Jainism, all souls with liberatory potential (*bhavyas*) have the capacity for liberation. However, to be born as a king itself suggests a soul's moral progression on the path to liberation. In their past lives, kings have done something karmically advantageous to warrant birth as a king; kingship itself is already a soteriologically

privileged position. However, Jain literature explores how the qualities and skills of a good king alongside the experience of kingship itself specifically predispose these figures to renunciation and, by extension, liberation.

The repurposing of the language of political sovereignty to describe Jain religious practice creates a space for a new worldly figure, a self-sovereign. If Jain authors like Jinasena and Pampa were disinclined to linger over the nitty-gritty practices of the governance of a kingdom, they were verbose in their descriptions of, particularly, Rsabha's renunciation and asceticism as forms of self-governance and sovereignty. The self-sovereign cares not for mundane sovereignty as authority and rule but is instead engaged with sovereignty as spiritual authority and ascetic forms of rule. His authority is similarly embodied through auspicious marks on the body, the possession of symbols (the umbrella, etc.), and the practices of celibacy and austerity. The self-sovereign's domain is his own body, his enemy combatants are *karma*, and his military might takes the form of asceticism. Even while inhabiting the vocabulary of kingship, self-sovereignty then is the negation of mundane kingship and is rightfully borne by one who has forsaken kingship like the kings of the *Ādipurāṇa*. The paradigmatic king of this genre is, of course, Adinatha's last incarnation as Rsabha, who goes on to receive liberation. Jinasena spends several chapters detailing his bodily practices from the proper way to accept and eat food as a Digambara mendicant, the proper acceptance of charities (*dāna*), the five types of vows (*vrata*), the principles and practices of celibacy (*brahmacarya*), the five kinds of correct conduct (*cāra*), asceticism (*tapas*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and so on and so forth (*JĀP* chapters 17, 18, 20, 21, and 24). Critically, in this context, sovereignty is repurposed from command over others to command over the self. It becomes a higher form of sovereignty in the world that is only available through Jain religious practice.

6. Conclusions

The incitement for this essay is Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* in the context of a special issue on sovereignty in South Asian religions. The possible iterations of engagements with Kantorowicz are practically endless and there are certainly examples that more closely parallel his case study of medieval Christianity (Inden 1998, 2000b). Rather than attempting to draw historicist connections between medieval Europe and South Asia, I take a different tack in this essay. As a starting off point, I am interested in how Jains take up Kantorowicz's question: what happens when the king dies? The answer that Jain authors propose is inherently different than what medieval Christianity yields; the king renounces and thus never dies. While the substantive details are different, they share in offering up a religious solution to a political problem.

Jain authors such as Jinasena produce a fiction of sovereignty by yoking a familiar and widely circulating set of tropes of kingship to Jain soteriology. In making Digambara Jain kingship a paradigmatic and idealized path to renunciation and asceticism, the experience of kingship becomes experientially efficacious. This is not a matter of disgust wherein the repetitious feature of erotic sumptuary lives of kings' engenders aversion. Rather, it is something of the opposite; the experience of kingship—the leaning in to inhale a flower's perfume, a castle built of clouds, the fickleness of Laksmi—are necessary to the cultivation of a renunciatory sensibility. Kingship as leaning into the world facilitates the process of getting out. But, if Jain kingship culminates in renunciation, it is a temporally conditioned form of renunciation predicated on an heir that serves to stabilize the kingdom. The son as king and the father as ascetic represent powerful visions of mundane and spiritual sovereignty in which the spiritual self-sovereign reigns supreme. The unfolding of this iteration of Digambara Jain sovereignty appears both familiar and distinct—in conversation with Buddhists and brahmins but utterly Jain at the same time.

One might ask: Does this analysis and argument require the citation of Kantorowicz at all? After all, kingship and sovereignty are well-trodden terrain in the study of medieval India. For me, the answer is yes. I worked on this material for a decade, and it was only in rereading Kantorowicz that I saw the issue of kingship, royal succession, and

renunciation from this angle. Thinking with Kantorowicz in this essay is not so much a matter of citation—*The King's Two Bodies* admittedly only appears in a limited fashion in the body of the paper—but rather in the way that the process of comparison returns us to our materials anew, armed with new questions, and able to see hitherto unexamined arguments. Kantorowicz's simple question—what happens when a king dies?—naturally results in a very different answer in the context of medieval Digambar Jain literature from the Deccan from that of medieval Europe. It is clear, however, that these Jain authors were grappling with this question too and, in attempting to answer it, produce their own fiction of sovereignty.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Gregory Clines, Andrew Ollett, Leslie Orr, Caleb Simmons, and Anand Venkatkrishnan for fielding questions, providing citations, and participating in conversations that proved foundational to this article. I am also grateful for the careful attention and feedback of the two anonymous reviewers.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ It is important to note that the proposition that the king never dies does not hold true for the Svetambara sect of Jainism in which the ideal Jain king is the prototype of the ideal layman. I have written more about the difference between Svetambara and Digambara understandings of ideal Jain kingship in [Taylor \(2020\)](#). For more on Jain kingship primarily in north-west India see ([Babb 1996](#); [Cort 2001a](#), pp. 27–50; [Cort 1998](#), pp. 85–110).
- ² The Rastrakuta period has been understood as a high point for Jainism in premodern South Asia. For the history of this interpretation and its problematization, see ([Taylor 2016](#), pp. 51–116).
- ³ The Jain tradition is centered around the worship and emulation of twenty-four liberated souls called *tīrthaṅkaras* (ford-makers) or *jinas* (conquerors) ([Dundas 2002](#), pp. 12–44).
- ⁴ For the specific phrase “royal renunciation” to name this phenomenon, see ([Appleton 2017](#), p. 138–69; [Gold 1989](#), p. 770; [Doniger 1986](#), pp. 141–42; [Shulman 1986](#), p. 65).
- ⁵ For an overview of the epigraphical evidence of the renunciation of medieval kings from the Deccan see ([Stein 1998](#), pp. 147–52).
- ⁶ The locus classicus of scholars of Jainism putting the tradition in conversation with the larger field of South Asian religions is ([Cort 1998](#)).
- ⁷ In general, Jainism has long been associated with the *kṣatriya* caste because of the tradition's preference that *tīrthaṅkaras* are born *kṣatriya* (rather than brahmin) and its presumed emergence in a *kṣatriya* milieu as reflected in the internalization of a warrior ethos. However, caste in Digambara Jainism in the medieval Deccan more commonly staged a tension between brahmins, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras* rather than *kṣatriyas* and brahmins. In fact, discourse about *kṣatriyas* is almost entirely absent in the Jain literature and inscriptions from this place and period. For more on caste in Digambara Jainism see ([Taylor n.d.](#)).
- ⁸ Henceforth abbreviated as *JĀP*.
- ⁹ Consider, for example, Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson's statement that, “Like Buddhism and Brāhmanism, Jainism might be defined as a ‘way of escape’ not from death but from life; but unlike either of them, it hopes to escape into nothingness nor into absorption, but into a state of being without qualities, emotions, or relations, and removed from the possibility of rebirth. ([Stevenson 1915](#), pp. 89–90). Written in 1915, it is stunning how such a picture of Jainism continues to endure despite the best efforts of Jain Studies to complicate it. For example, ([Cort 2001b](#); [Reynell 1984](#), pp. 20–33).
- ¹⁰ See for example, Somadevasuri's *Nītivākyāṃṛta* and the *Laghavarhanīti* attributed to Hemacandra.
- ¹¹ The Digambara Jains in the Deccan were the great anomaly in this regard. As least two Kannada Jain poets, Pampa and Ranna wrote seemingly non-Jain *kāvya*s based on the *Mahābhārata* ([Lorndale Forthcoming](#)).
- ¹² See ([Jaini 2000](#), pp. 363–74). For a recent corrective to Jaini's reading of the *Pāṇḍavapurāṇa* see ([Clines 2020](#), pp. 1–23).
- ¹³ Rsabha notably responds to a devastating drought that kills off the wish-fulfilling trees on which the people of the world are reliant. He establishes three lower castes (*kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*) along with their hereditary occupations. When Bharata takes over his father's throne he establishes the brahmin caste. The account of Bharata's rule is the most detailed account of the practices of governance that a Jain king should undertake.
- ¹⁴ Henceforth abbreviated as *PĀP*.
- ¹⁵ One explanation for the widespread prominence of love, sex, and marriage in Jain literature is that this was a strategy to generate disgust and to thereby guide the reader towards dispassion and worldly renunciation ([Monius 2004](#); [Ryan 1998](#)).
- ¹⁶ *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2. 4. 4. 6 as cited by ([Gonda 1966](#), p. 46).

- For similar imagery see JĀP, vv. 4.142–4.150 and vv. 8.6–8.79.
- People with cognitive disabilities (*mūraka-jana*) are also frequently added to such lists
- Interestingly, Jināsena uses an almost identical analogy to describe his desire to write the *Ādipurāṇa* as a great weight (*mahān-bharaḥ*) akin to a young bullock (*dame*) who desires to carry a burden born by a bull (*puṅgavair bhāram udhṛtam*; JĀP, v. 1.27).
- According to Kittel, *nirīsu* means to cause to stay, to put, to employ (Kittel 2010, p. 196).
- Pampa also uses *rājya-bhāra* nominally, see PĀP, v. 9.72 *vacana*.
- In the PĀP see *rājya-bhāradol nirīsi* (v. 2.49); *rājya-bhāramam nirīsi* (v. 4.67 *vacana*); *dharā-bhāradol nirīsi* (v. 5.27); and *vasundharā-bharamam nirīsi* (v. 6.36). In the *Cāvuṇḍarāya Purāṇam* see *rājya-bhāra nirīsi* (18); *ātāṅge dharā-bhāramam koṭṭu* (27); and *rājya-bhāramam koṭṭade* and *rājya-bhārāppaisi* (94) (Hampana and Seshagiri 1983). Henceforth abbreviated as CP.
- Kittel notes that modern Mysore dialect uses *rājya-bhāram gey* and *rājya-bhāra māḍu* (Kittel 2010, p. 1338). In my experience, the latter usage is more common and occurs widely from academic writing to Karnataka legislative assembly records.
- Also of note, the Svetambaras believe that Mahavira was an exemplary householder with both a wife and a daughter. In this sect, Mahavira also delayed renunciation until his parents had both died.
- Wendy Doniger notes in her introduction to the *Kāmasūtra* that debates over the proper age to engage in sexual love (*kāma*) reflected or satirized similar debates over the proper time to engage in renunciation (Doniger and Kakar 2002, p. xiv).
- This vision of succession is an idealized scenario that was more complicated in practice wherein dynasties often shuffled and grafted, in the language of Henige, various family members into the line of succession for the sake of continuity (Henige 1975, pp. 536–37). Thank you to Leslie Orr for directing me to this reference.
- This statement and the title of this article cite the title of Kantorowicz’s seventh chapter “The King Never Dies”.
- For the role of family and gender relations in monastic settings see (Chatterjee 2013).
- She dies mid-performance only to be quickly replaced by the God Indra so as not to disturb the mood. Rsabha is the only one to notice and her failing beauty and fragility become an optic for him to reflect on the impermanence of himself and his kingdom (Taylor 2016, pp. 247–53).
- Jain writers used the contrastive power of the “internal” versus the “external” to great literary effect. For example, Haribhadra’s *Samarāiccakahā*, written at a very different time and place, commences with, “Blessed One, how can I make my way safely through the forest that is the cycle of rebirths? And once I cross the forest, where will I be?” The monk replied, ‘Listen. There are two forests; one is the forest that exists outside us, in nature, and the other is the forest that is within us, the tangle of our thoughts and desires. Let me use the forest that exists in nature as a parable to teach you of the other, equally treacherous forest ...’ (Granoff 1998, p. 1).
- Here the word for “naked” (*jāta-rūpa-dhara*) in reference to a Digambara Jain monk literally means “bearing the form of birth” (PĀP, v. 4.67 *vacana*).

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