

40th Sanskrit Traditions Symposium

1.

A little known illustrated manuscript of the *Vālmiki*

Rāmāyaṇa

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Paintings and drawings illustrating the narrative of the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* — and indeed of other versions of the Rāma story — can be divided into three categories: sets or series of illustrations narrating at least the highlights of the story (commonly without any further indication of what is depicted and also quite commonly with just a brief caption either in the top margin or on the verso, often though inaccurately termed manuscripts); single illustrations of particular episodes (some of which may well be the only known example from an otherwise unknown set); and illustrated manuscripts in the strict sense. The last category is the least frequent but in some ways the most significant. This paper will provide a brief survey of the major examples of this third category before introducing a further but little known instance: the Uniara *Rāmāyaṇa* manuscript.

The existence of the Uniara (Uniyārā, a minor kingdom bordering Jaipur, Bundi and Kotah) manuscript has been known outside India for half a century, when Milo Cleveland Beach published a brief comment on it in his study of painting at Bundi and Kotah (though an offshoot from the Jaipur dynasty, the painting style patronised at Uniara derives from that of neighbouring Bundi). The paintings were commissioned by Rao Raja Rajendra Singh (r. 1740-77) and attributed to Mira Bagas (Mir Baksh); though unfinished, they appear once to have totalled several hundred folios.

Three years ago a group of eight paintings came onto the art market in India, followed two years ago by another group of eight from the same auctioneers, Pundole's. Along with the paintings themselves on the rectos, the versos of the latter group were also published on the auctioneer's website. This revealed for the first time that the Uniara manuscript is indeed a true manuscript, with a continuous text filling the verso. Transcription and identification of this text form the basis of the main part of this paper which will undertake an analysis of the implications.

2.

When a Bengali Parrot Narrates the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata*: Modernization and Mādhurya-nization in Guṇarāj Khān's *Śrīkṛṣṇavijay*

Prof. Kiyokazu Okita (Sophia University)

Since the pathbreaking works of Sheldon Pollock (1998, 2006 etc.), the process of vernacularization in South Asia has been much discussed. But what happens when this process occurs specifically to devotional Sanskrit literatures such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the much-famed Purāṇa that rose to prominence in the late medieval period? Is there anything unique in this process, and how might such uniqueness affect its modern representations in the form of printed editions? Some of these questions were addressed in the special issue of the *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 22.1 (2018), which explored the renderings of the *Bhāgavata* in Brajbhāṣā (Monika Horstmann, Heidi Pauwels, Neeraja Poddar) and Persian (Stefano Pellò), emphasizing 'ongoing innovation (p. 3)' in them. Elsewhere, a Marathi rendering of the *Bhāgavata* has been examined by Narsalay and Potnis-Damle.

However, surprisingly little has been explored in scholarship available in English when it comes to the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijay* attributed to Guṇarāj Khān (Maladhar Basu), which is the first Middle Bengali rendition of the *Bhāgavata* composed in the late fifteenth century. The first printed edition of the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijay* was published in 1887 by Kedar Nāth Datt Bhaktivinod, a Bhadrakol who was well-known for his revivalist interest in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. After it went out of print, Khagendranath Mitra published his edition from University of Calcutta in 1947. This was further followed by Amitrasudan Bhaṭṭācārya and Sumaṅgal Rāṇā, who published the third and the latest printed edition from Viśvabhāratī in 1990.

Although these three printed editions all attempt to reconstruct the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijay*, a careful examination reveals that they vary substantially as they are based on different manuscript sources. By comparing (a) the Rāsālilā section in the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata* (10.29-33), (b) its Bengali counterpart in the three printed editions of the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijay*, and (c) the manuscripts used for the printed editions (University of Calcutta #950, Viśvabhāratī Ratan Library collection #3484), I shall make the following two observations that are unique in this Bengali 'transcreation' of the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata*: (1) the Bengali rendition by Guṇarāj Khān contains

additional elements of stimulant factors (*uddīpana-vibhāva*) which are not present in the Sanskrit original; (2) this type of innovation contributed to the fluidity in the text's transmission—that is, although the *Śrīkṣṇavijaya* was written before the advent of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism in the early sixteenth century, a large interpolation happened in the post-Caitanya period, in order to emphasize the element of passionate attachment toward Kṛṣṇa, which we may call 'mādhurya-nization.' While someone in search of the Ur text may consider these interpolations to be 'contaminations' that need to be rejected and removed, I suggest an alternative perspective: It is possible and perhaps more productive to see this process of 'mādhurya-nization' as being consistent with the very ethos of the Sanskrit Bhāgavata, which, according to Śrīdhara Svāmī, is compared to a fruit made sweet by the peck of parrot as it was narrated by Sage Śuka (*Bhāvārthadīpikā* on *Bhāgavata* 1.1.3: *loke hi śukamukhasprṣṭam phalam amṛtam iva svādu bhavatīti prasiddham / atra śuko muniḥ /*).

3.

Sexual versus devotional (Festival of) Love in 13th-14th century Kerala

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Festivals of (the God of) Love (*kāmotsava*) in ancient India, their connections with larger spring festivals (*vasantotsava*), and the survivals of the latter in modern Holi (*holākā*), are topics which have already been discussed at length by scholars. In Kerala, popular forms of *kāmotsava* still survive, especially through the *pūrotsavas* ('Pooram') conducted in several places of Northern Kerala. The present study at first concentrates on peculiar sexual aspects of the Kāma festival and worship as described in a *bhāṇa* (the *Viṭanidrābhāṇa*, that I am in course of critically editing) and a *saṃdeśakāvya* (Lakṣmīdāsa's *Śukasamdeśa*), both composed in central Kerala sometime in the first half of the 14th century. These two works, like a few other Sanskrit and Maṇipravāḷam ones of the 13th-15th c. Kerala, are intimately linked to the local highly-educated and -eroticized urban courtesan culture, which itself has to be appreciated anthropologically in the light of the close interconnections developed between the Nampūtiri brahmin elite and the Nāyar ruling caste, which

one, as it is well known, was matrilineal and characterized, for women, by sexual freedom and polyandry. However, these ‘sexual’ aspects of the *kāmotsava* here underlined are, contrastively, not found in the picture of the same festival given in a noble *nāṭaka* (the *Pradyumnābhyudaya*) penned at the very end of the 13th century by a pious (Padmanābha-devotee) South Kerala king, supporter of moral *dharma*, for whom Kāma has to be seen first as the one incarnated into Kṛṣṇa’s son Pradyumna. And an unpublished epic poem (purported to be a *purāṇa*, that I am also in course of editing) probably composed under the same king, explicitly condemns the adharmic visit to courtesans through a retelling of the *pativratoṣākhya*. Moreover, on the subject of love, a sharp contrast can be highlighted between the erotic Śukasamdeśa (extending *vipralambha-* to *sambhoga-rasa*) and, on the other hand, the Haṃsasamdeśa composed, some time before (in the beginning of the 14th c.), by the *saṃnyāsin* and Viṣṇu-*bhakta* Pūrṇasarasvatī. The latter, who is also the author of the most sensitive commentary of the *Meghasamdeśa*, anticipated Gauda Vaiṣṇavism by transforming *śṛṅgāra* into *premabhakti* as the main sentiment in that kind of message (/messenger) poem (the ‘loved one’, asked to be reached by the separated she-devotee, being here Kṛṣṇa). Ultimately, it is as if two very different conceptions of Love itself – one sophisticatedly sexual, the other purely devotional – had clashed within Kerala high society and reflected in the literature attached to one or another royal court of that time.

4.

To be confirmed