Significant Others, Significant Encounters

Essays on South Asian History and Literature

Philippe Bornet • Nadia Cattoni (eds.)

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Edited by

Philippe Bornet and Nadia Cattoni

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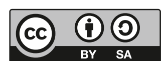

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Shahzia Sikander is a MacArthur award winning artist celebrated for subverting premodern and classical Central and South-Asian miniature painting traditions with contemporary international art practices and launching the form known today as “neo-miniature.”

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Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Maya Burger: our significant encounter with her impacted our intellectual lives in no small way.

Note on Transliteration

The contributions collected in this volume stem from different backgrounds, languages, and scholarly approaches. Therefore, while quotations in Indian languages follow the usual conventions, the mode of transliteration for proper names and foreign expressions may vary from one article to another; for example, Śivā, Śiva, and Shiva are all accepted. These variations reflect an individual author's choice to use a specific spelling.

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Philippe Bornet and Nadia Cattoni

Introduction

This volume is dedicated to Maya Burger, professor emerita at the Faculty of Arts, University of Lausanne. It gathers contributions from friends, colleagues, and former students who have shared some of their intellectual journey with her. Initially planned as presentations to a symposium in 2021, the contributions not only illustrate several aspects of Maya's wide-ranging intellectual interests, as in the classical *Festschrift* genre, but also provide innovative material that explore the relevance of a study of encounters for the fields of South Asian studies and history of religions. We hope that the volume will in turn kindle the curiosity of Maya and other scholars, and perhaps open up new perspectives of research in the collaborative, interdisciplinary, and iconoclast spirit that she has always championed.

After studying at the University of Lausanne and at Rajasthan University as a doctoral fellow, Maya defended her doctoral thesis in 1985 on the study of two villages in Rajasthan. She completed her training at the University of California, Berkeley, and became a private docent at the University of Lausanne in 1987. In 1995 she was awarded the chair of Professor of Comparative History of Religions in the Faculty of Theology at the same university. She taught for many years classes on methodological issues in the study of religion, Hinduism, and Hindi. Convinced of the necessity of a strict separation between the study of religions and theology, she decided to move to a different faculty and since 2009 has been working in the Department of Slavic and South Asian Languages in the Faculty of Arts.

Throughout her career, Maya has been particularly committed to the institution, to teaching and transmitting her knowledge to the next generation. She was the driving force behind the Interfaculty Department for the Study of Religion when it was created in 1995, a particularly original interfaculty unit at the University of Lausanne. She introduced the study of the Hindi language, first as an elective module, then as part of the full curriculum. She has invested a great deal of time and effort in teaching and supporting her students, and has trained many doctoral students and researchers to whom she has communicated her curiosity, her taste for languages, and her methodological rigour. For a generation of young women scholars, she has also represented a model career in an academic world that is still struggling to achieve full gender equality. Maya has been president of the Swiss Society for the Study of Religion (SGR-SSSR) for many years, and was

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president of the European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR) between 2008 and 2013.

As can be seen from her bibliography below, Maya's research stands out due to its broad thematic scope: comparative history of religions, history of yoga, history of bhakti movements, modern and premodern Hindi literature, cultural history of Swiss–Indian relations, and so on. She has opened up many new fruitful perspectives for further research by using original methodological tools and focusing on neglected sources. She has co-directed two projects of the Swiss National Science Foundation: "Yoga between Switzerland and India: The History and Hermeneutics of an Encounter" (with Peter Schreiner) and "Travels, Missions, Translations: Mechanisms of Encounters between India and Switzerland (1870–1970)" (with Angelika Malinar).

The present volume

The volume is organised to echo the multiple dimensions of Maya's work, with a division into four parts: Indology, History of Religions, History of Orientalism, and Hindi and Translation. The contributors explore different examples of encounters with "significant others", a concept that we take in a broad sense; that is, not only with spouses or partners but friends, teachers or students, scholars, opponents, movements, literary motifs, languages, texts, images, or objects. We conceived this framing as an invitation to contributors to focus on various processes of interactions and exchanges between the Indian subcontinent and the wider world and within the subcontinent itself, through the examination of relevant cases.

The study of such interactions has often been discarded as of secondary importance for two reasons: the conception of Indology as focusing exclusively on Indian history and cultures (with a preference for the old period) and practical disciplinary boundaries. Since the groundbreaking work of Wilhelm Halbfass's *Indien und Europa* (1981), however, it appears clear that there cannot be a history of Indian traditions and cultures without taking into account connections with the rest of the world. Such a perspective has helped to "decompartmentalise" Indology and turn it into a discipline that is well prepared to deal with the dynamic processes of exchange between India and the rest of the world: grounded in philology and linguistic skills, the discipline is indeed uniquely situated to address questions of intercultural exchange without giving in to generalist and vague discourses. This evolution is perfectly in line with historical disciplines, where a focus on interactions, encounters, and connections appears more important than ever. Breaking away from "national" boundaries, which still often (most of the time, implicitly) command the selection of topics and methods, many historians have

been advocating for various declinations of transnational history writing and "global micro-history", from Carlo Ginzburg to Christopher Bayly and Sanjay Subrahmanyam.

Thus the historical study of encounters with "significant others" – from the same or a different cultural background – can prove particularly helpful: it highlights the highly dynamic nature of identity and knowledge production, a concern that has been in the heart of most of Maya's work. This perspective also shows us a way out of the aporias of "postmodern" approaches, which have (inadvertently) tended to compartmentalise cultures even more, by bringing the actual data back to the centre.

Encounters are at the heart of literary texts, and the analysis of intertextual references is a major axis of literary studies. Paying attention to encounters with foreign or external elements to a literary milieu or genre – which can be external elements such as a foreign style, motif, or "code-switching" but also references to foreign protagonists, locations, or cultures in narratives – is a particularly fruitful way to analyse a textual object: besides the narrative role that the literary inclusion of external elements can play (as in the figure of a *Deus ex machina*), such an approach emphasises the open-endedness of textual traditions and their ability to enrich an audience with novelty rather than providing it with "domesticised" content. This can act as a powerful corrective against stereotypical views that emphasise the purity of a literature or language, often for political reasons. Similarly, translations are in themselves witnesses to processes of encounters with a textual significant other. Sometimes at the origins of "creative misunderstandings", they are by necessity produced in a perspective that deals with the otherness of the translated text and constructs commensurability between different cultural and textual universes. As Maya has often emphasised, translation studies can offer important insights for the study of cultural encounter.

Taking inspiration from these perspectives and analysing specific cases of encounters with all kinds of "significant others", the contributions in this volume attempt to connect local and global dimensions, different linguistic and cultural contexts, and/or different disciplines. They explore cases studied on the basis of historical or literary sources, highlighting their importance to our understanding of broader processes and remaining critical in the evaluation of the phenomenon: situations that one would imagine to be crucial can turn out to be entirely unproductive – and conversely, seemingly negligible serendipitous encounters can have important legacies. The book is also an opportunity to reflect on the methodological dimension, both in the presentation of sources and in the interpretation of these examples: comparisons and contrasts, reflections on conditions, concepts and theories – these are all in the background of the featured studies.

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PART I

INDOLOGY

Mary Brockington

When Rāma Met Viṣṇu: Problems of Transforming a Heroic Narrative into a Devotional Text

Abstract. In this contribution I plan to examine the metaphorical “encounter” between the view of Rāma as supreme warrior-king presented in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, and the understanding of him as a god in various more developed sectarian instructional treatments. This process often amounted to a collision between the inherited narrative (too popular to be discarded) and the new religious context. Some changes could be absorbed without too much difficulty; as a minor example, the human Rāma’s original final departure to the world of Brahmā left very few traces in the text when it was replaced by his triumphant return as Viṣṇu—but the identity and nature of his wife Sītā is much more complicated, often producing a view of Rāma at odds with the original concept. The ways needed to accommodate such a wide-ranging transformation had profound and sometimes startling consequences on the well-loved traditional narrative.

Keywords. Rāma, *Rāmāyaṇa,* Viṣṇu, Sītā

I count it a great privilege to have been asked to pay tribute to my long-standing friend, Maya Burger, and to honour her in a chapter designed to compliment and to complement her valuable work on the Rāma story in New Indo-Aryan (NIA) languages. I well remember her wide-ranging survey of the field in a keynote lecture she presented at Liverpool in 2013.

The plot of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is—thankfully—now widely known throughout Europe through the agency of the South Asian diaspora, not merely by those students who have profited from Maya’s teaching; it is also much used in primary schools as part of their programmes to promote inclusive race relations. Should there, however, be any of my readers ignorant of the most basic details of the story, perhaps I should explain that Prince Rāma is unjustly banished to the wilderness, accompanied by his wife Sītā and his brother Lakṣmaṇa, when one of his stepmothers, Kaikeyī, persuades King Daśaratha against his will to make her son, Bharata, his heir (*yuvarāja*, or “young king”). All goes well until Sītā is abducted by the lustful Rāvaṇa, king of the *rākṣasas* (monsters) with the help of a decoy deer; Rāma makes an alliance with *vāṇaras* (mostly anthropomorphised

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monkeys and bears) and succeeds in recovering her, largely thanks to the exploits of Hanumān.

The Rāma story was conceived, about the fifth century BCE, as the story of the human Rāma's struggles against almost impossible odds. Over the subsequent two-and-a-half millennia, no matter what additions were incorporated, the main lines of the narrative had to be retained. Rāvaṇa must always be defeated. The human must always win. The earliest Sanskrit tellings, themselves compiled over nearly a thousand years, are now collected into seven *kāṇḍas*, or books, known for convenience as the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (*VRm*), of which the first, the *Bālakāṇḍa*, and the last, the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, are widely accepted by scholars to be additions to the basic narrative.[1]

When the tale had been well known and well loved for about five centuries, a drastic change began to take place in the developing narrative, with the human Rāma gradually but unequivocally being presented as Viṣṇu and eventually as Rām, a God in his own right. Of course, this status was utterly incompatible with the original narrative, where Rāvaṇa had a boon that guaranteed that he could only be defeated by a man, not a god. I shall examine the paradox involved in the metaphorical "encounter" between Rāma and Viṣṇu, and detail a few of the attempts that have been made to resolve it, focusing on a representative sample of the later devotional texts, particularly but not exclusively the Sanskrit *Adhyātma*[2] and *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇas*, after the original tale had been circulating for something like two thousand years within the now fluid Rāma narrative tradition.[3]

The author of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (*AdhyRm*) chose to focus on devotion to the god Viṣṇu, now unambiguously identified as the hero, rather than on the narrative as such. Substantial differences from the original *VRm* narrative are rare; his plot is interspersed, and frequently interrupted, by philosophical reflections and hymns of praise to Rāma.[4] The author of the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* (*ĀRm*) gains his impact from a much more adventurous narrative technique, with unfamiliar episodes intertwined and recounted at length, many of them analogues of existing

1 References to the *VRm* are all to the critical edition.

2 The *AdhyRm* is particularly well known to scholars of NIA languages for its influence on the narratives of such authors as Tulsīdās. Fuller details of similar motifs in other pre-nineteenth century versions can be found by searching the Oxford Research Archive for *Development and spread of the Rāma narrative (pre-modern)* deposited by John Brockington and Mary Brockington (section C. "Narrative Elements").

3 Scholars of ancient and mediaeval Sanskrit will recognise the impossibility of providing completely authoritative dates of composition of any constituent part of the now extant texts. Scholars of traditional narrative development and of motif transfer will recognise the additional impossibility of dating particular areas of content, even of supposedly datable texts.

4 I deal only with the narrative, not any of the theological or philosophical elements involved in such a profound and far-reaching change of direction.

episodes almost amounting to parody. Some of the insertions give a more homely, human touch to the *ĀRm*'s now-divine characters.

Reflecting the religious understanding of the time, the metaphorical "encounter" between Rāma and Viṣṇu is no secret in either the *Adhyātma* or the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇas*: both are completely permeated with the knowledge that Rāma is Viṣṇu on earth. Not only does the audience know the hero's identity, so do every one of the characters; commonly, each of the *Adhyātma*'s episodes is rounded off by a hymn of worship offered by the one he encounters. Svayaṃprabhā, a female ascetic who has met only Rāma's representatives—the *vānaras* searching for Sītā, whom she helps when they enter her cave—must undertake a long journey to meet the god in person; she is not satisfied by an encounter by proxy.

Grafting one more of Viṣṇu's repeated interventions on earth on to the existent story of the human Rāma's deeds proved a deceptively simple task, creating many anomalies. Within the established *VRm*, references to the hero's identity with Viṣṇu had been rare, limited to his incarnation, his return to heaven, and a few areas of Agastya's post-victory narratives,[5] with Rāma himself unaware of any non-human identity. As Viṣṇu, he is now fully aware of his divinity, and that its implications involve a revision of the hero's purpose: no longer to rescue Sītā from Rāvaṇa, but to use her abduction as a pretext to enable him to rescue the whole cosmos from the all-powerful *rākṣasa* king. Before his aborted consecration as *yuvarāja*, Rāma assures Nārada that he has not forgotten his duty to kill Rāvaṇa and is preparing to embark upon it the next day.[6] So what now is the point of the immediately succeeding summary of the exile episode, evoking in the audience's minds the form established long before in the *VRm*? With its stress on upholding personal integrity whatever the cost, with all its drama, with Daśaratha's dilemma and death so pathetic and degrading, now with the added intervention of the gods via Vāṇī to ensure that it occur with the minimum damage to the human characters' reputation, that episode had secured the moral and ethical high ground for the heroes. It is now worse than unnecessary. It is all false. And Viṣṇu callously allows this torment to be inflicted on his earthly family: Rāma has already decided to leave for Daṇḍaka.[7] The three-way encounter between tradition, author, and audience expectations far outweighs the logical consequences of this "encounter" between Rāma and Viṣṇu.

It is clear that such a radical transformation of the main character in the narrative could only have been made with a corresponding transformation of the two chief subsidiary characters, Rāvaṇa his enemy, and, more especially, Sītā his wife. The rest of this chapter will focus on them.

5 *VRm* 1,14–16; 6,105; 7,1–36 (see M. Brockington, forthcoming); 7,94–100.
6 *AdhyRm* 2,1.36–1.39.
7 *AdhyRm* 2,2–3; cf. *ĀRm* 1,6.33–73.

1 Rāvaṇa

The effect on Rāma's adversaries, above all Rāvaṇa himself, is particularly striking. No longer are evil-doers punished by being automatically consigned to Yama's abode, but are governed by the belief that any sinner who has ever thought about Rāma, even if only in anger or fear, enters into him after death.[8] This belief has a startling—even ludicrous—effect on the traditional narrative, particularly in the *AdhyRm*, where death at the hero's hands is now universally welcomed, for example by Mārīca, the decoy deer,[9] and actively sought by Rāvaṇa.

Realising that the man capable of slaughtering Khara, Dūṣaṇa (two of Rāvaṇa's brothers) and their whole *rākṣasa* army can only be Viṣṇu incarnate, Rāvaṇa resolves to abduct Sītā, arrogantly assuming that death or triumph are equally likely and equally rewarding.[10] At a late stage in the development of the *VRm*, an episode in which Rāvaṇa was declared to have lost all desire to rape another victim entered the tradition,[11] so a new excuse for his menacing behaviour to his captive is clumsily devised: impatient when Rāma does not arrive on Laṅkā as quickly as he hopes, and having dreamt about the imminent arrival of Hanumān, he decides to allow the monkey to overhear his threats, assuming that they will be reported back and hasten Rāma's arrival.[12] Towards the end of the final battle, he reveals to his wife his plan to achieve liberation (*mokṣa*) when he rejects her pleas that he make peace with Rāma[13]; the equivalent scene in the *ĀRm* is followed by Rāvaṇa's instruction to share his bliss by entering his funeral fire, an instruction she piously observes.[14] Rāvaṇa's faith has not been misplaced, and he duly gains liberation.[15]

Despite this radical modification of Rāvaṇa's objective, as far as the basic narrative is concerned nothing much changes. Anomalies abound. Rāvaṇa continues to urge his troops to action, despite—perhaps reinforced by—warnings of Rāma's divine identity,[16] mourns the deaths of his warriors,[17] and displays increasing personal anxiety, fear and dejection as his own defeat approaches.[18] Is this emotion

8 *AdhyRm* 6,11.88.
9 *AdhyRm* 3,6.36–37.
10 *AdhyRm* 3,5.58–61; 3,6.30–32. Another version of this motif involves Sanatkumāra (*AdhyRm* 7,3.29–43, cf. *VRm* 7,App.3.131–340).
11 *VRm* 7,26.47; cf. *MBh* 3,264.58–59; 3,275.32–33.
12 *AdhyRm* 5,2.15–20.
13 *AdhyRm* 6,10.55–61.
14 *ĀRm* 1,11.242–244, 285.
15 *AdhyRm* 6,11.79–89; *ĀRm* 1,11.283.
16 *AdhyRm* 6,2; 6,5.37–40.
17 *AdhyRm* 6,6.1; 6,8.53.
18 *AdhyRm* 6,3.58–59; 6,11.44; 6,11.58.

all sham? Does he not want his family and followers to share his eventual bliss? Does he not trust them to make the same necessary self-sacrifice? There is no indication in the text of any such devious subtlety in the *rākṣasa* king's nature. Will his plan fail if his opponent no longer perceives him to be a serious threat to the cosmos whose safety he has become incarnate to secure? Evidently the pull of the traditional narrative is too strong for such a wholesale re-direction.

In fact, neither the "encounter" between Rāma and Viṣṇu, nor the "encounter" between Rāvaṇa and Viṣṇu, have much impact on the plot-line of *kāṇḍas* 1 to 6. Rāma still goes to the forest; lustful or not, Rāvaṇa still abducts Sītā; Rāma still defeats Rāvaṇa, rescues Sītā, and becomes king of Ayodhyā. What leads to major, far-reaching—sensational even—developments of plot and character is the "encounter" between Sītā and Viṣṇu, on which the rest of this chapter will now focus.

2 Sītā

The Sītā of the earlier stages of the Rāma story had always been portrayed as a strong woman, assertive but dutiful, and capable of enduring severe hardship. At first she is simply Janaka's daughter, but soon recognised as daughter of Earth, to whom she defiantly returns when the purpose of her birth has been fulfilled and her sons have been acknowledged as Rāma's true-born successors.[19] Only when the logical consequence of her husband's unequivocal identification as Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa is acknowledged does she begin to be identified as a personification of Śrī or Lakṣmī,[20] necessarily undergoing striking developments in character and narrative.

As a woman and a wife, preserving her chastity in reputation and deed from Rāvaṇa (and even from Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān)[21] had been of paramount importance to her; as Rāma takes up his duties as a human king (as explored particularly in the *VRm Uttarakāṇḍa*), he must not be polluted by an impure wife. Now that he is a god, the pressures are much more urgent. The steadfast human Sītā had protected herself by strident words and by placing a blade of grass between herself and her assailant (a widespread apotropaic symbol).[22] Viṣṇu's wife evidently could not be trusted to succeed in her resistance, and a stark dichotomy in portrayal now begins to develop: on the one hand, she becomes weaker; on the other, morally

19 *VRm* 7,86–88.

20 This identification had been suggested at only two verses of the *VRm* (6,105.25 and 7,99.6).

21 *VRm* 3,43.1–24 and 5,35.30–68 respectively.

22 *VRm* 3,54.1; 5,19.2–3. Motif retained at *AdhyRm* 5,2.31; *ĀRm* 1,9.77. See J. Brockington 1985–1986; Thompson no date [1955–1958] motif G.272.2 *Protection against witches*.

and sometimes even physically superior to Rāma, she learns to demonstrate her independent status. But both she and her husband are demeaned.

The sexual behaviour of the heroes and heroine is regularly a matter of deep sensitivity. In the *Ānanda*, the sage Mudgala informs Daśaratha in strict secrecy, before Rāma is exiled, that Rāvaṇa and one of his brothers will abduct Sītā, then be killed by Rāma, but that she will remain chaste:[23] clearly, this consideration outweighs any concerns about her suffering. Cursed and no longer lust-driven, Rāvaṇa has not lost his sexual desire; he still wants Sītā to become his wife. The basic plot-line of the exile, abduction, search and war of rescue remains largely unchanged.

What is changed is Rāma's behaviour. Scandal regarding Sītā must be avoided at all costs—short of destroying the traditional narrative; evidently the goddess, unlike her human counterpart, cannot be trusted to resist Rāvaṇa's advances. She can no longer be abducted—or not completely. The *Adhyātma* and *Ānanda* present two different ways of achieving this object.

3 Substitute Sītā (*AdhyRm*)

For a reason not explained in the texts, Rāma knows about Rāvaṇa's plan to abduct Sītā, and instructs her to take counter-measures. The long-established narrative, and his need for an excuse to kill Rāvaṇa and annihilate the *rākṣasas* will not allow him to ensure that no abduction takes place at all, so in the *AdhyRm* he tells Sītā to create an identical substitute of herself; it is this counterfeit Sītā who is abducted, while the real one is kept safe by Agni.[24] It is this counterfeit who eventually immolates herself in the sacrificial fire so that Agni can return the real one, unpolluted and unpolluting. To make doubly sure of her purity (or more probably, merely to retain the earlier motif) Rāvaṇa is said to treat the substitute Sītā "as if she were his own mother";[25] his motive is no longer personal lust, but to provoke Rāma to kill and liberate him.

23 *ĀRm* 1,4.111–114.
24 *AdhyRm* 1,1.38; 3,7.1–4. A substitute Sītā also appears in a number of Purāṇas, some occurrences possibly earlier than when the motif comes to the fore in the *AdhyRm* (see footnote 2 above); the motif is a particular feature of the *Rāmcaritmānas* of Tulsīdās (3,23.1–3).
25 *AdhyRm* 3,7.65.

4 Narrative adaptation of the concept of the three *guṇas* (*ĀRm*)

A more fanciful and highly-developed form of this protective device, equally dependent on Sītā's possession of supernatural powers, is adopted in the *ĀRm*. Instructed by Rāma, she transforms herself into the three *guṇas*: it is in her form as *rajoguṇī* that she safeguards herself by entering the fire[26] and as *tamoguṇī* that she remains in Pañcavatī, asks Rāma to follow the marvellous deer, abuses Lakṣmaṇa, and is abducted by Rāvaṇa;[27] but as *sattvaguṇī* she resides in Rāma's left limbs.[28] Again, after vindication by Agni, the three forms reunite:[29] presumably the impurity suffered by the abducted *tamoguṇī* (unlike that of the *AdhyRm's* counterfeit) has somehow been mitigated.

The "encounter" between Rāma and Viṣṇu has become fraught with difficulties. To save the whole cosmos from destruction, the god is to undertake a devastating war, to rescue a woman whom he knows is not his wife, from the lust of a monster now devoid of lust, but simply wishing to be killed by the god. The Rāma story was conceived as a Wonder Tale, a genre that by its very nature cannot be governed by logic; now that the narrative is being transformed into a serious theological and devotional treatise, it is in danger of subsiding into absurdity. In an ill-conceived effort to rescue the beloved tale from degenerating into complete farce, the concept of *līlā* (or "motiveless play") is introduced. Rāma, Sītā, and Rāvaṇa all attain their ends by deliberately acting a part. As far as the basic inherited narrative outline is concerned, nothing much changes; but the new approach is in danger of ruining the reputations of hero, heroine and villain alike, almost to the point of caricature.

Anomalies continue to abound. It is not only Rāvaṇa who is robbed of all humanity. Sītā is now admired as a wonder-worker, no longer valued for her staunch virtue. Worst of all, Rāma himself is made to seem indifferent to the feelings and sufferings of Lakṣmaṇa, in a way that accords poorly with the image of benevolence currently being projected to his devotees and enemies alike. The ever-loyal, self-sacrificing brother is still required to mourn and search for Sītā while bearing the guilt for her [non-]abduction, supporting and consoling his apparently-mourning brother, and he still fights to the edge of death to recover a woman who has not been lost—all because Rāma has not told him of the substitution and the *līlā*. And Rāma is no longer required to yearn for the physical presence of his wife, so movingly portrayed by the erotic symbolism at *VRm* 4,1 and 4,27; in the *Ānanda*

26 *ĀRm* 1,12.7–10.
27 *ĀRm* 1,7.94–96, 107–108.
28 *ĀRm* 1,7.67–68, 89–90; 4,3.52–54.
29 *ĀRm* 1,12.11.

he can enjoy her presence any time he desires her (preferably in the absence of Lakṣmaṇa).[30] Indeed, the traditional Rāma story has been robbed of much of the poetry that made it great.

5 *Uttarakāṇḍa*

In the *VRm,* the basic narrative of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (*sargas* 37–100) explores the theme of sovereignty, leading to the succession of the next generation. Kuśa and Lava and their cousins must be enabled to grow up before their parents leave them, so Sītā, still the humanoid daughter of Earth, is called upon to defend her conduct during captivity. When her sons are old enough to be recognised as undoubtedly Rāma's sons (not Rāvaṇa's) they are accepted back into Rāma's court from banishment. Sītā is still under some suspicion, and Rāma unreflectingly invites her to make some public attestation of her virtue that will leave no doubt as to her sons' legitimacy. Sītā, however, has both outlived her usefulness to the narrator and has learned much in her years of exclusion, dramatically and defiantly outwitting her unsuspecting husband to vindicate her conduct but also to return to the safe care of her mother, Earth.[31]

Once Sītā has "encountered" Viṣṇu and become Śrī, this plot is no longer appropriate, but it is a beloved element of the inherited narrative, and must be retained in some form. The *Adhyātma* and *Ānanda Rms* elaborate the banishment motif in very different ways, each bringing Sītā to the fore and giving her a much greater role in directing her own destiny. The author of this part of the *AdhyRm* tries to reconcile Sītā's return to Earth with her status as Śrī. Pregnant, she has been asked by the *devas* to return to Vaikuṇṭha (Viṣṇu's heaven), in order to entice Rāma to follow her and resume his role as Viṣṇu; together the devoted couple plan their strategy. In the full knowledge and approval of each other, he will banish her on the pretext of the townspeople's gossip; eventually she is to enter the earth in the traditional way (i.e. as daughter of Earth), but then gain as it were a back-door

30 This situation inevitably leads to the standard discovery scene, that backbone of the bedroom farce genre. During the monsoon delay, the *sattvaguṇī* is once discovered by Lakṣmaṇa in company with Rāma; she hurriedly disappears back into his left side: *ĀRm* 1,8.74–76. On the comic possibilities of counterfeit characters in some classical *Rāmāyaṇa nāṭyas* see M. Brockington 2020.

31 *VRm* 7,86–88. Thompson no date [1955–1958], Thompson/Balys 1958, motif: *F 942.3.1.* There can be little doubt that this episode antedates the fire-suicide and restoration now incongruously inserted into the end of the *VRm Yuddhakāṇḍa*. I have a study of the narrative structure of the *VRm Uttarakāṇḍa* in preparation; I hope to publish the results in a future update of our ORA archive (see footnote 2, section F. "New Beginnings").

entry into heaven as Śrī, where he will later rejoin her.[32] Still engaging in *līlā*, all emotion—Sītā's despair at banishment and Rāma's rage at her disappearance into Earth—will again be feigned. The ploy, however, is not implemented in every detail. The pull of the received narrative is too strong. Sītā disappears into the earth,[33] but is also present when Rāma leaves for heaven in the traditional mass suicide in response to Brahmā's summons via Kāla, flanked by Lakṣmī and Earth.[34] This anomaly is resolved in the *Ānanda*: when Sītā is received into the earth, Rāma's rage is so extreme that Earth is frightened into returning her daughter so that she may later return to heaven in the Sarāyu at Rāma's side as Lakṣmī.[35]

The *ĀRm's* treatment of Rāma's life post-consecration is much more relaxed and all-inclusive. The account contained in the first six *kāṇḍas* of the *VRm*, ending with his triumphant return to Ayodhyā, is reflected in all but the last *sarga* of the first of the nine *kāṇḍas* of the *Ānanda Rm*, the *Sārakāṇḍa*; the rest of the text (about three-quarters of the whole) is a sprawling compendium, loosely corresponding to the *Uttarakāṇḍa* material but supplemented by many unfamiliar episodes that sometimes seem incompatible with the traditional picture of Rāma and Sītā, whether human or divine. The understandable suspicions voiced by a washerman that caused her banishment in the *VRm* and the *AdhyRm* are repeated at *ĀRm* 5,3.21–31, but incongruously supplemented by a calumny perpetrated by Kaikeyī in a renewal of her plot to disable Rāma and place Bharata on the throne. Sītā is tricked into an appearance of hankering after Rāvaṇa as a lover. This motif is shared in many forms with a wide number of other versions, and particularly developed with savage consequences in Southeast Asia; but this is the only one I have met that is robbed of all drama and pathos because the two victims (Rāma and Sītā) are well aware of the deceit aimed at them, while themselves practising a huge deceit upon the guileless Lakṣmaṇa and the population as a whole.[36]

We are now presented with a fundamental modification of the character of Rāma. Known from his earliest appearance as a human to be both sexually passionate and the model of endurance, constantly supported in the absence of Sītā by his understanding brother, now that he is a god he admits to being too weak to be capable of any self-control when presented with the social restrictions commonly associated with childbirth and nursing mothers; in a polygamous culture one wife can be secluded for a considerable time, protecting her health and that of the child until a second pregnancy can be contemplated; the husband is not deprived, but the monogamous Rāma cannot trust himself to deal with such a long abstinence. The

32 *AdhyRm* 7,4.36–44.
33 *AdhyRm* 7,7.16–20,40–45.
34 As *VRm* 7,99.6; *AdhyRm* 7,9.39–40, 58.
35 *ĀRm* 5,3.9–11; 9,6.1–30; cf. *VRm* 7,App.13.
36 *ĀRm* 5,3.36–59; 4.1–20.

banishment therefore becomes a pretext to allow Sītā to retire to live in luxury for five years cared for by her parents in Vālmīki's hermitage,[37] while Rāma's difficulty is solved by resorting again to the device of *guṇas*. This time, instructed by Rāma, Sītā transforms herself into two *guṇas*, one to retire to Vālmīki's hermitage to keep up appearances, and the other to remain in his left side—the third not being needed at this stage of the plot.[38] Rāma is not deprived of sexual comfort during her seclusion, nor Sītā of luxury. Nonetheless, Rāma keeps in touch with the banished Sītā, and visits her secretly after the birth of Kuśa.[39]

Even when we first meet her in the *Vālmīki* text Sītā exhibits an assertive side to her nature, while never lacking in respect to her husband, until her defiant reentry into the earth. Throughout the tradition, instances of this characteristic begin to become more marked: the *ĀRm* has two of very different tone. In a surprisingly indelicate episode Sītā questions Rāma's sexual restraint, in a parody of the unwarranted allegations to which she had been subjected: wrongly suspecting Rāma of adultery with the prostitute Piṅgalā, she demands he make a solemn declaration of his innocence before Vasiṣṭha. That he agrees to perform this act of abasement accords ill with his position as a powerful and righteous king; it also covers Sītā with shame, and she punishes Piṅgalā spitefully,[40] in a stark contrast to her earlier forgiving nature when she refused Hanumān permission to wreak vengeance on her *rākṣasī* captors.[41] Husband and wife are both demeaned in this male-centred episode: the blame rests squarely on both women, but the man, though virtuous, is spineless.

6 Sītā-centred narratives

In a Kāśmīrī reworking of lengthy devotional songs, the late-eighteenth century poet Prakāśa Rāma presents a defiant but essentially feminine Sītā. Many parts both of the narrative and the devotional songs are specifically Sītā-centred, bringing her sufferings to the fore, while many others demonstrate an understanding of a female approach to life; it is sometimes hard to believe that they were composed by a man.[42] Torn between duty to her family and appraisal of the realities of her

37 *ĀRm* 5,2.33–54, 3.1–13.
38 *ĀRm* 5,3.14–17.
39 *ĀRm* 5,4.21–35.
40 *ĀRm* 4,8.48–99.
41 *VRm* 6,101.23–39.
42 Hanumān, for example, shows a tender concern for the young assailant (his unknown son) who tries to prevent him entering Mahīrāvaṇa's subterranean realm to rescue Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa from captivity, in an affecting, extensive passage (*Rāmāvatāracarita*: 79–82) more typical of a mother than a warrior. The terror of the distraught Mandodarī (Sītā's

own situation, Sītā at last refuses to return to Ayodhyā after her sons have been acknowledged by their father, but remains in her hut in the hermitage, adamantly refusing to unbolt the door, leaving the King of All the Earth outside, humiliated and desperate, begging her in vain to admit him.[43] Prakāśa Rāma presents Sītā in a moving evocation of the female condition. This is no comic parody. This is not *līlā*. It is not feigned. This emotion is real.

The work of Candrāvatī (end of sixteenth century) presents another moving and undeservedly little-known example of a woman at last finding a voice: a rare example of a woman's *Rāmāyaṇa* still extant, with the focus largely on Sītā and her sufferings, rather than on Rāma's military achievements. The translators present a searching and illuminating examination of this Bengali reworking of the traditional narrative, together with information about her other two known works.[44]

7 Militant Sītā

In an entirely different revisioning of Sītā's submissive character, a number of tellings attribute a physically militant component to Sītā's nature, both in relation to Rāvaṇa himself and to newly created would-be avengers. In the *Ānanda* this motif had been linked to the episode where Sītā is born as the daughter of Rāvaṇa and Mandodarī, as a rebirth of the abused Vedavatī/Padmā;[45] at verses 246 to 247 the newborn baby had threatened to return, after causing the slaughter of Rāvaṇa, to personally kill a number of *rākṣasa* monsters (some of them multi-headed), a threat which initiates a chain of incidents leading to her adoption by her foster-father, Janaka. A similar threat is repeated by Sītā as a captive.[46] Later in the narrative Rāma himself easily disposes of one new enemy, a Rāvaṇa with one hundred heads,[47] but is thwarted by Mūlakāsura (posthumous son of Kumbhakarṇa, one of Rāvaṇa's brothers, anxious to avenge his father's killing by Rāma); his secret

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birth mother), mingled with a sense of responsibility both to daughter and to unknowingly incestuous husband (Rāvaṇa) are repeatedly explored with sensitive understanding (e.g. *Rāmāvatāracarita* 2001: 37–39, 55–56, 98–104).

43 *Rāmāvatāracarita* 2001: 131–142. This motif of the once-submissive wife, now distrustful of her husband and happy with the independent life she has built for herself in the forest is shared with many other versions, within India and beyond; it is particularly developed in the Southeast Asian Buddhist-derived texts, unhampered as they are by the concept of Rāma as God.

44 Candrāvatī 2013. A large number of further studies, by Mandakrānta Bose, too many to list here, can be found by consulting our ORA archive: Section B. "Bibliographic Inventory".

45 *ĀRm* 1,3.222–254.

46 *ĀRm* 1,9.91–97.

47 *ĀRm* 7,4.80–85.

weapon is not multiple heads, but a boon from Brahmā that he can be killed only by a woman.[48] With Rāma's active encouragement, Sītā again resorts to her *tāmasī guṇa*, which fights Mūlakāsura (alone) for seven days before beheading him with an arrow, to the delight of the gods.[49] A more elaborate narrative relates essentially the same tale in the *Jaimini Bhārata*.[50] In both, the terrific form adopted to perform this feat by Sītā as Śrī/Lakṣmī, but now as a form of the Devī, clearly reflects *śākta* influence. Her status has now become so high that she can be unquestionably accorded any of the attributes of divinity.

This process is carried to the extreme in the *Adbhuta Rm,* a text devoted to extolling Sītā as the Supreme Goddess, with the Rāma-based *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative abbreviated almost to extinction (so well was it known that this narrator felt no need to repeat its details). It is not a magic boon that prevents Rāma from defeating his multi-headed adversary in this text: Rāma is defeated by military power. The supreme warrior's supremacy is questioned, and he falls unconscious[51] until revived by the touch of Brahmā after the victorious Sītā has exterminated the demon.[52] Trampling Śiva beneath her feet,[53] Sītā is then engaged in such a ghoulish dance of triumph that the stability of the world is threatened. Rāma learns from Brahmā that he can do nothing without her[54] and recites her one thousand and eight names to praise her;[55] appeased, she reverts to her pleasing form in the next *sarga*. This Sītā has the power to become Parameśvarī Kālī and rule supreme over the whole cosmos.[56]

It seems almost as if Rāma's "encounter" with Viṣṇu has presented him, in different narrative contexts, with two wives of diametrically opposite natures. Both natures are based on the character of Sītā as originally presented in the *VRm*, where she is not only submissive to Rāma but unashamedly assertive. When developed to the extreme, it is not just Sītā who is affected. The "encounter" can leave Rāma himself, acknowledged first as Viṣṇu incarnate, then as the God Rām, on the one hand indiscriminately benevolent, but also sometimes pietistic rather than trustful, uxorious rather than loving; at other times the supreme warrior is impotent, terrified by his wife.

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48 *ĀRm* 1,3.246–247; 9.94; 7,4.86–89.
49 *ĀRm* 7,4.84–144; 5.74–77; 6.1–23.
50 *JMbh* vol. 2, *Sahasramukharāvaṇacaritam* 1.16; 10.28–30; 6.16–30; 8.8–9; 26.16–17; 44–47.
51 *AdbhRm* 22.50.
52 *AdbhRm* 24.26.
53 *AdbhRm* 24.30.
54 *AdbhRm* 24.42.
55 *AdbhRm* 25.
56 Examined by Raghavan (1988: 3–22); for further treatments of this episode see Smith 1988: 136–145.

But Rāvaṇa Daśagrīva has got what he wants out of the "encounter". He is in heaven. So has Rāvaṇa won?

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Basile Leclère

Devabodha and the Jain Scholars: Friendships and Rivalries at the Caulukya Court

Abstract. It is a well-known fact that several members of the Jain Śvetāmbara community wielded great influence at the Caulukya court during the reigns of kings Jayasiṃha Siddharāja (r. 1094–1142) and Kumārapāla (r. 1142–1172): not only did the great polymath Hemacandra benefit from their patronage and produce many major works on a wide range of subjects, but other Jains were also held in high esteem, like the debater Devasūri or the poet laureate Śrīpāla. What is more unexpected is that, according to Prabhācandra's *Prabhāvakacarita* (1278), Devasūri and Hemacandra apparently befriended a Hindu renouncer named Devabodha, the former inviting him to a temple consecration, the latter helping him to pay off his debts. This chapter attempts to understand how and why these friendships might have developed by contrasting them with other friendly or unfriendly relationships known to have existed at the same period.

Keywords. Hinduism, Jainism, medieval India, Prabandhas, friendship

1 Introduction

In the *Prabhāvakacarita* (*PCa*) or "Deeds of the Exalters of the Doctrine", completed in 1278, the Jain monk Prabhācandra retold the life stories of twenty-two illustrious Śvetāmbara teachers who spread the Jain doctrine and protected the Jain community. To do so, these monks overcame various kinds of threats, such as the tyranny of a ruler for Kālakasūri, or the supernatural powers of a god for Vīrasūri;[1] more often, however, they had to fight against the representatives of rival communities and the advocates of other creeds in the official and codified context of debate (*vāda*). For instance, the monk Śāntisūri, whose life is narrated in the sixteenth chapter of the *Prabhāvakacarita*, was known at the court of Caulukya king Bhīma the First (r. 1022–1064) as the "universal sovereign of debaters" (*vādi-cakrin*) and even earned the more impressive and frightening title of

1 Dundas 2002: 130–132; Granoff 1989: 368.

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"ghoul for debaters" (*vādi-vetāla*).[2] In a similar way, the monk Vīrācārya is said, in the twentieth chapter, to have defeated many debaters throughout northern India (Buddhists at Bodh Gayā, other rhetoricians at Gwalior, and so on) before he came to Gujarat, then ruled by Bhīma's grandson Jayasiṃha Siddharāja (r. 1094–1143). Then a Sāṃkhya master named Vādisiṃha arrived at the court and produced in a spirit of provocation a leaf with a thorny verse written on it,[3] but Vīrācārya eventually reduced him to silence in a debate.[4] In the same period, a freshly ordained monk called Rāmacandra was also touring north-western India in order to challenge the representatives of rival systems and develop his rhetorical skills:

> In the city of Dhavalaka, he debated with and won over the Brahmin Dhandha, who preached shaivite non-dualism; in the city of Satyapura, over Sāgara who hailed from Kāśmīr. In the same way he crushed the Digambara Guṇacandra at Nāgapura. At Citrakūṭa came the turn of the Bhāgavata named Śivabhūti. At Gopagiri, it was Gaṅgādhara, at Dhārā, Dharaṇīdhara, at Puṣkariṇī, the Brahmin Padmākara, whose pride was unrestrained in debates. In the illustrious city of Bhṛgukaccha, he won over the Brahmin leader named Kṛṣṇa: this is how Rāmacandra became unrestrained through joy because of his victories in debate on this earth.[5]

Thereafter Rāmacandra was elevated by his teacher Municandrasūri to the dignity of pontiff and given the name of Devasūri, under which he became one of the most famous Śvetāmbara debaters of medieval Gujarat by defeating in 1125 the Digambara teacher Kumudacandra at the Caulukya court.[6] Another debater Devasūri happened to meet there a few years earlier was the Vaiṣṇava renouncer Devabodha,[7] and a likely outcome of their encounter would have been a similar

2 *PCa* 16.21, 131.

3 athātra vādisiṃhākhyaḥ sāmkhya-vādī samāgamat | patraṃ pradattavān idṛk likhita-śloka-durghaṭam || (*PCa* 20.37).

4 *PCa* 20.31–32, 61.

5 śaivādvaitaṃ vadan dhandhaḥ pure dhavalake dvijaḥ | kāśmīraḥ sāgaro jigye vādāt satyapure pure || tathā nāgapure kṣuṇṇo guṇacandro digambaraḥ | citrakūṭe bhāgavataḥ śivabhūty-ākhyayā punaḥ || gaṃgādharo gopagirau dhārāyāṃ dharaṇīdharaḥ | padmākaro dvijaḥ puṣkariṇyāṃ vāda-madoddhuraḥ || jitaś ca śrī-bhṛgukṣetre kṛṣṇākhyo brāhmaṇāgraṇīḥ | evaṃ vāda-jayonmudro rāmacandraḥ kṣitāv abhūt || (*PCa* 21.39–42). All the translations from Sanskrit are mine unless specified otherwise. Translations from Latin and French are partly or totally borrowed from the sources mentioned in the bibliography.

6 The narration of the controversy represents the largest part of the account of Devasūri's life in the twenty-first chapter of the *Prabhāvakacarita*. The event is also known from several other sources, such as a play written by the Jain poet Yaśaścandra a few decades after it took place, the *Mudritakumudacandra*, or "Kumudacandra Reduced to Silence" (on the dating of this text, see Leclère 2013: 27), or another compilation of historical anecdotes, Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, or "Wishing-Stone of Chronicles" (1305).

7 Even though Prabhācandra refers most of the time to Devabodha as a poet (*kavi*), he specifies at the very beginning of the episodes involving him that he was a member and

humiliation of the Jain monk's competition, but in a quite unexpected way they became friends. An even more friendly relationship developed between Devabodha and the great Jain polymath Hemacandrasūri despite the former's open hostility towards the latter's co-religionist Śrīpāla, then chief poet of king Jayasiṃha Siddharāja. After highlighting why Devabodha was entitled to be Devasūri's and Hemacandrasūri's enemy, I will try to figure out what could have led these people to become friends by scrutinising Prabhācandra's account and comparing it with other stories of friendships retold in Indian literature.

2 How Devabodha challenged Jain scholars

In the biographies of both Devasūri and Hemacandrasūri, Devabodha appears as a very learned man (*mahā-vidvān*) who has indulged in arrogance because of his many successes in debates[8] and who comes to the Caulukya court at Patan to challenge the scholars attached to Jayasiṃha Siddharāja. In Devasūri's biography, he hangs on the door of the royal palace a leaf bearing a verse that is barely comprehensible even to wise men, strongly recalling Vādisiṃha's appearance some years earlier.[9] In Hemacandra's biography, Devabodha also emulates Vādisiṃha's provocative attitude when he asks the king to come and sit on the ground while he is himself installed on a royal throne,[10] and immediately manifests his hostility towards the chief poet of the Caulukya court, the Jain layman Śrīpāla, and his intention to remove him from his position: "'Who is that man unfit for this assembly,' he said while pointing at the king of poets with his hand."[11] Jayasiṃha Siddharāja then details the literary achievements of his favourite, but Devabodha, far from

even a leader of the Bhāgavata community (cf. Leclère 2016: 517; also footnote 9 below). An allusion to Devabodha's initiation as a renouncer (*yati*) can also be found in the *Prabhāvakacarita*: the spies sent out by Śrīpāla to gain information about his enemy's behaviour report that the Brahmin Devabodha burned his sacred thread and drank water from the Ganges when he took the vow of the Bhāgavatas: veda-garbhaḥ soma-pīthī dagdhvā yajñopavītakam | apibad gāṅga-nīreṇa prātta-bhāgavata-vrataḥ || (*PCa* 22.240). Consequently, he was supposed to conform to the rules of conduct associated with the renouncers' stage of life (yaty-āśrama, *PCa* 22.241).

8 Śrīdharadāsa quotes in the section titled "Pride of the Talented Ones" (*guṇi-garvaḥ*) of his poetic anthology *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* (1205) a verse extolling with much emphasis the eloquence of Devabodha. For a translation, see Leclère 2016: 494.

9 anyadā devabodhākhyaḥ śrī-bhāgavata-darśanī | bhūri-vāda-jayonmudraḥ śrī-pattanam āyayau || avalambata patraṃ ca rāja-dvāre madoddhuraḥ | tatra ślokaṃ durālokaṃ vibudhair alikhac ca saḥ || (*PCa* 21.61–62)

10 *PCa* 20.43; 21.193.

11 parṣado'nucitaḥ ko'yam iti hastena darśite kavi-rāje (*PCa* 22.203).

showing more respect, makes fun of Śrīpāla's blindness in a satirical verse.[12] As a logical consequence, Śrīpāla is incensed and starts to investigate,[13] soon discovering through his spies that his rival's behaviour is not beyond reproach: despite his vows, he goes to the shore of the Sarasvatī River by night and drinks alcohol there with his followers.[14] Śrīpāla denounces him to Jayasiṃha Siddharāja, who resolves to go and see all this with his own eyes, but Devabodha notices his presence and spontaneously offers him a cup filled with a liquid looking like milk.[15] He thus dispels quite successfully suspicions about his morality, and when he pretends the day after to leave the country, he is begged by the king not to do so. Śrīpāla thus does not get his revenge but finds another opportunity to do so three years later when Devabodha finds himself overwhelmed with debt.[16]

One might expect that Devabodha would have then met the same ignominious fate as other unbearably arrogant teachers. For instance, Vādisiṃha was thrown to the ground by Jayasiṃha Siddharāja himself and would have gone to jail had Vīrācārya not asked the king to set him free.[17] However, both Devasūri and Hemacandra behaved towards Devabodha in an even more charitable and friendly way than Vīrācārya did towards Vādisiṃha.

3 Two benevolent Jain monks

After six months of fruitless efforts by the scholars of the Caulukya court to solve Devabodha's riddle, Devasūri arrives and successfully unfolds the meanings of the verse in a prose commentary that Prabhācandra inserted in his work. By doing so, not only did he win the friendship of the king,[18] but he also became a subject of esteem for Devabodha: when they met later on at Nāgapura, Devabodha paid his respects to Devasūri and composed a stanza in *āryā* metre to celebrate him.[19] Moreover, it is said in Hemacandra's biography that Devasūri invited Devabodha

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12 *PCa* 22.204–208; cf. Parikh 1938: cclix; Sandesara 1964: 253 n. 3.

13 āprāk tadīya-vairasyāt śrīpālo'pi kṛti-prabhuḥ | vṛttāny anveṣayaty asyāsūyā-garbha-manā manāk || (*PCa* 22.237).

14 asau yaty-āśramābhāsācāraḥ sārasvate taṭe | niśīthe sva-parīvāra-vṛtaḥ pibati vāruṇīm || (*PCa* 22.241).

15 *PCa* 22.260–262. It is not clear whether the king is given a cup of real milk or if the renouncer has used some sort of magic to turn alcohol into another kind of beverage.

16 *PCa* 22.277–278.

17 *PCa* 20.61, 67.

18 rājñā mataḥ suhṛt (*PCa* 21.66). The affection of the king for the teacher can be seen later in the text when Jayasiṃha considers that he cannot seize the fortress of Nāgapura as long as his friend Devasūri stays within its walls: madhya-sthite'tra tan-mitre durgaṃ lātuṃ na śakyate (*PCa* 21.79).

19 *PCa* 21.75–76.

to the consecration of a Jain temple he had built after his victory over Kumudacandra:

> At another time, the illustrious Devasūri won the debate, and the king gave him a sum of money out of joy; the monk withdrew one lakh from the total, and with the remaining sum he had a Jain temple elevated; then he cared for the organisation of the great festival called the installation of the flag, and, besides the king who came there with him, he was happy to invite Devabodha himself as someone deserving gifts, because they were the same as regards religion.[20]

What is particularly remarkable here is the fact that Devabodha is considered by an eminent Jain monk a "good recipient" for gifts (*sat-pātra*), although according to Jain theoreticians a person deprived of the correct belief (*samyaktva*)—that is, the Jain faith—is usually considered a "poor recipient" (*ku-pātra*) if he has some morality or a "wrong recipient" (*a-pātra*) if he indulges in vices such as drinking alcohol.[21]

As regards the much more serious rivalry between Śrīpāla and Devabodha, it was unexpectedly settled by Hemacandrasūri: "The master then called Śrīpāla over and made him have affection for Devabodha; it is the first duty of ascetics to pacify quarrels."[22] The outcome of the story is all the more surprising since Śrīpāla had requested support from Hemacandra in his attempt to kick Devabodha out of the Caulukya court,[23] and the Śvetāmbara teacher should have been on his side as they had the same belief. Indeed, it was expected from any member of the Jain community to feel an affectionate fraternity towards their co-religionists (*sādharmika-vātsalya*).[24] With no regard to Śrīpāla's request, Hemacandra rather welcomes Devabodha, makes him understand that he knows all about his financial problems, and persuades the king into giving him one lakh to pay off his debts.[25]

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20 anyadā śrī-devasūri-jita-vāda-kṣaṇe mudā | datte vitte narendreṇa lakṣa-saṃkhye tad-uddhṛte || apareṇāpi vittena jaina-prāsāda unnate | vidhāpite dhvajāropa-vidhānākhya-mahāmahe || *devabodho'pi* sat-pātraṃ tatrāhūyata harṣataḥ | samāyātena bhūpena dharme te syuḥ samā yataḥ || (*PCa* 22.222–224; cf. Parikh 1938: cclix).

21 The distinction between good and bad recipients is strongly stressed by the Śvetāmbara monk Somaprabha in the *Kumārapālapratibodha*, or "Awakening of King Kumārapāla", a didactic work in Prakrit completed in 1185 (cf. Balbir 1982: 85–86). The full list of three or, if the undesirable ones are included, five types of recipients can be found in treatises written by Digambara authors between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries (Williams 1963: 17, 150–153).

22 tataḥ śrīpālam ākāryyāsnehayat tena sa prabhuḥ | ādyo dharmo vrata-sthānāṃ virodhopaśamaḥ || (*PCa* 22.306). The second part of the translation is borrowed from Parikh 1938: cclx.

23 *PCa* 22.278–286.

24 Chojnacki 2011: 211–213.

25 *PCa* 22.307–308. Nobody else than a friend helps people when they are in distress, as expressed in a stanza inserted in the second book of the *Pañcatantra*: sarveṣām eva

4 Esteem and mutual fascination as basis for friendship

What can account for the friendly behaviour of the Jain monks? First, these monks perfectly illustrate the equanimity which members of their community are striving to reach. But it is also clear that these friendly relations are grounded on esteem for intellectual abilities. If Devabodha pays his respects to Devasūri, it is probably out of consideration for the brightness the latter displayed in elucidating his enigmatic stanza, and Devasūri himself may have appreciated the subtlety of Devabodha's stanza when elaborating on its gloss. As regards Hemacandra, he admits that Śrīpāla speaks the truth when he criticises Devabodha's unbearable pride, but he nonetheless keeps in mind his qualities:

> Then the spiritual master said: "What you said is just that way, but there is one quality of this man we hold in high esteem, and not any other. In this epoch, no-one else than this man can display such a unique and complete eloquence which is even more increased by the quality of transference. That is the reason why this wise man must be given a hospitable reception if he comes to me with no more pride, like a snake deprived of venom."[26]

That Devabodha was eloquent is amply testified by many stanzas attributed to him in the *Prabhāvakacarita*, and his poetic style remained in fashion long after his death, as proven by the quotation of several other stanzas of his in anthologies from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But what Hemacandra is precisely alluding to here is the capacity Devabodha had to transfer his eloquence even to someone of poor education. Not only does Prabhācandra underline this quality from the outset of the account, but Devabodha himself displays it at court when he makes a buffalo-driver who does not know more than two syllables recite a verse simply by touching his head with his hand.[27]

This recalls the way Hemacandra inspired friendship to Jayasiṃha's cousin and successor Kumārapāla (r. 1142–1172): according to Merutuṅga's *Prabandha-cintāmaṇi* (*PCi*), a famous compilation of chronicles from the beginning of the

martyānāṃ vyasane samupasthite | vāṅ-mātreṇāpi sāhāyyaṃ mitrād anyo na saṃdadhe (frame story, v. 12, p. 99). Assistance (*upakāra*) is one of the causes of attachment enumerated by the tenth-century theoretician Bhoja when he describes the different types of friends who can act as messengers (*dūta*) between two lovers in the twenty-eighth chapter of the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, or "Light on the Erotic Sentiment". Knowing about someone's secrets (*rahasyāni*) and weak points (*marmāṇi*) also appears in the list (cf. Raghavan 1963: 52).

26 athocur guravo yūyaṃ yaj jalpata tad eva tat | ekatrāsya guṇe nas tu bahumānaḥ paratra naḥ || dṛśyate'nanya-sāmānyaṃ sāṃkrāmika-guṇottaraṃ | sārasvataṃ na kutrāpi samaye asminn amuṃ vinā || tato'sau nirviṣaḥ sarpa iva ced āgamiṣyati | mlānamānaḥ kuto dhīmān labhyā'nenāpi satkṛtiḥ || (*PCa* 22.287–289).

27 *PCa* 22.182, 229–236, cf. Parikh 1938: cclx.

fourteenth century, Kumārapāla had his heart charmed or seized by the monk's qualities (*guṇa*),[28] and for that reason he openly strived for friendship with Hemacandra[29] and kept on cultivating it despite the "innate jealousy" of the Hindu ascetics from the Tripuruṣa temple,[30] the "hostility" of the king's chaplain, the Brahmin Āliga,[31] and the enmity of the courtiers who could not stand the monk's accumulation of glory and spread calumnies about him.[32] As said Cicero in his treatise on friendship, "there is indeed nothing more lovable than virtue, nothing which leads more than virtue to an affection deliberately chosen",[33] and thus the outstanding intellectual and moral qualities displayed by Hemacandra not only captivated Kumārapāla but also proved to be the firmest foundation for their friendship.[34]

But there is one more factor that can account for the friendship between the Jain monks and the Hindu renouncer, something like identification or mutual fascination. That is at least what Prabhācandra seems to have pointed at by making use of the same expressions to qualify these characters. Remarkably enough, Devabodha is presented right away as "unrestrained through joy because of his many victories in debate", with the same sophisticated compound that Prabhācandra has previously applied to Devasūri when dealing with his victories as a freshly ordained monk.[35] But if we now consider the relationship between Devabodha and Hemacandra, it is even more flagrant that the Hindu renouncer and the Jain monk are reflected in each other, especially in the denouement of the story, when Hemacandra heartily welcomes Devabodha with many compliments.

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28 tad-guṇa-rañjita-hṛdā (*PCi* 82.20); śrī-hemacandrasya lokottarair guṇaiḥ parihṛta-hṛdayo nṛpo (*PCi* 83.1); tad-guṇair unmīlan-nīlīrāga-rakta-hṛdayas tam ekam eva saṃsadi praśaśaṃsa saḥ (*PCi* 84.16–17). The king's heart is literally coloured (*rañjita* or *rakta*, from *rañj*, "to be dyed") by a feeling which is referred to in the last quotation by the very expressive term of *nīlī-rāga*, "an affection as unchangeable as the colour of indigo."

29 bhavadbhiḥ saha maitryam abhilaṣāmi (*PCi* 82.1). Kumārapāla justifies his affection for the monk by quoting a verse stating that "it does not matter whether one's friend be a king or a hermit" (ekaṃ mitraṃ bhūpatir vā yatir vā); see *PCi* 81.28, translated by Tawney 1991: 124.

30 sahaja-mātsaryād (*PCi* 81.20).

31 virodha (*PCi* 82.4). The name of the chaplain is also spelled Āmiga in some manuscripts and secondary sources (see Tawney 1991: 125; Parikh 1938: ccxxix) but I follow the lesson selected by the editor Jinavijaya Muni (as did Majumdar 1956: 316–317).

32 nirnimittta-vairi-parijanas tat-tejaḥ-puñjam asahiṣṇuḥ [. . .] tad-apavadān avādīt (*PCi* 84.17, 19).

33 Nihil est enim virtute amabilius, nihil quod magis adliciat ad diligendum (*De amicitia* 8.28, p. 73).

34 In Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita* (eighth century), it is also because of Lava's impressive qualities (in the art of fighting) that Candraketu feels affection for him and calls him his friend, without knowing they actually are cousins: atyadbhutād api guṇātiśayāt priyo me | tasmāt sakhā tvam asi yan mama tat tavaiva (*Uttararāmacarita*, fifth act, v. 10).

35 bhūri-vāda-jayonmudra (*PCa* 21.61*); vāda-jayonmudra* (*PCa* 21.42); cf. footnote 5 above.

> When he heard that, Devabodha thought: "This man knows my vulnerable point. But whether he has learned it from a report or thanks to an art that goes beyond report, we don't know. In any way he is a great scholar endowed with strength by the good fortune he has received in share. What jealousy can exist towards someone that pure? On the contrary he inspires the high esteem which gives rise to pure things! In the current period, who is equal to him as regards merit and science? Who is his rival in qualities? Therefore, it is suitable to be sincere." Then that clever man sat on the half of seat offered by Hemacandra, and as he was thinking in his mind that the monk was the goddess Sarasvatī under a male form, he who was shining with his supreme eloquence uttered in a surprising way a speech that made the body hair of the audience bristle with joy like grass when comes a thick rainy cloud. It was as follows: "May he protect you, Hemacandra the herdsman who bears a blanket and a staff, and who makes the cattle of the six Hindu philosophical systems graze in the Jain pasture."[36] When they heard this stanza in *śloka* metre and the right meaning it fully developed, the members of the assembly shook their head with joy and felt an unequalled surprise.[37]

The Vaiṣṇava renouncer whose knowledge is constantly underlined throughout the text by means of various expressions[38] acknowledges that the Jain monk himself is a great scholar as well,[39] and he holds him in the same esteem that Hemacandra expresses about his own eloquence.[40] Even more, Devabodha states that nobody can be compared to Hemacandra in the current time as far as merit and science are concerned—which not only reminds of the monk's well-known title of Kalikāla-sarvajña, or "Omniscient of the Kali Age", but also of the praise Hemacandra gave of Devabodha's exceptional mastery over eloquence.[41] Besides, Devabodha considers Hemacandra as the goddess Sarasvatī herself in male form, which is very relevant given that eloquence (*sārasvata*, literally "the gift of Sarasvatī") is

36 This stanza is also quoted in the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, where it is attributed to a poet from Banaras named Viśveśvara. He uttered the first *pāda* with the intention of mocking Hemacandra, but quickly added the second *pāda* of more eulogistic meaning when he saw the king looking at him angrily (*PCi* 89.4–8).

37 śrutveti devabodho'pi dadhyau me marma vetty asau | kathanāt kathanātīta-kalāto vā na vidmahe || yathātathā mahā-vidvān asau bhāgya-śriyorjitaḥ | atra ko matsaraḥ svacche bahumānaḥ śubhodayaḥ || samaye'dyatane ko'sya samānaḥ puṇya-vidyayoḥ | guṇeṣu kaḥ pratidvandvī tasmāt prāñjalatocitā || athopāviśad etenānumate'rddhāsane kṛtī | manasā manyamānaś ca puṃ-rūpāṃ tāṃ sarasvatīm || savismayaṃ giraṃ prāha sāra-sārasvatojjvalaḥ | pārṣadya-pulakāṅkūra-ghanāghana-ghana-prabhām || tathā hi pātu vo hema-gopālaḥ kambalaṃ daṇḍam udvahan | ṣaḍ-darśana-paśu-grāmaṃ cārayan jaina-gocare || vyādhūta-śirasaḥ ślokam enaṃ sāmajikā hṛdā | śrutvā satyārtha-puṣṭiṃ ca te'tulaṃ vismayaṃ daduḥ || (*PCa* 22.299–305).

38 mahāvidvān (*PCa* 22.182, 185); viduṣām nātho (*PCa* 22.233); dhīmān (*PCa* 21.289); vidvan-koṭīra (*PCa* 22.297).

39 mahāvidvān (*PCa* 22.300).

40 bahumāna (*PCa* 22.287, 300); cf. footnote 26 above.

41 *PCa* 22.288, 301.

precisely the quality he is admired for.[42] But what expresses in the most striking way the perfect friendship that Hemacandra and Devabodha experienced is, in my opinion, the fact that they eventually sat each on one half of the same seat: it looks as if, at that moment, their bodies became the two halves of one single person, in the same way as the souls of true friends, as Montaigne noted, "mix and work themselves into one piece, with so universal a mixture, that there is no more sign of the seam by which they were first conjoined".[43]

5 Conclusion

Admittedly, these anecdotes are intended to highlight the remarkable detachment of the Jain teachers who appear as the only renouncers truly liberated from the passions. It also points at the ecumenical approach of Jainism which subsumes other creeds: that is what Hemacandra himself taught in the parable of the man changed into a bull by his wife,[44] and that is also the meaning of the eulogistic verse Devabodha pronounced at the end of the story.[45] However, they also suggest that friendship was not confined within the boundaries of each community, or determined by long familiarity,[46] but that it could also appear when outstanding

42 *PCa* 22.302–303. When reporting how Devabodha completed four incomplete stanzas (*samasyā*) in a row (the first one given by Śrīpāla, the three others proposed by himself as better examples), Prabhācandra adds: "Indeed, how the poetic talent could be slow for those who are endowed with perfect eloquence" (siddha-sarasvatānāṃ hi vilamba-kavitā kutaḥ, *PCa* 22.217). Śrīpāla himself is styled as "endowed with perfect eloquence" (siddha-sārasvataḥ kaviḥ, *PCa* 22.247), suggesting some deeper affinity with the Hindu poet which somehow accounts for their final reconciliation.
43 Noted in the chapter "Of Friendship" from the first book of his *Essays*. Montaigne also refers to the Aristotelian definition of friendship as "one soul in two bodies" (Montaigne 1902, vol. 1: 220, 223).
44 *PCi* 70.9–26.
45 *PCa* 22.304; cf. footnote 37 above.
46 For instance, Śrīpāla was already Jayasiṃha Siddharāja's friend when a child, according to Yaśaścandra's *Mudritakumudacandra* (siddha-bhūpala-bāla-mitram; cf. Sandesara 1964: 253), and in a similar way, the unnatural friendship that existed between the Caulukya king Ajayapāla (r. 1172–1176), a notorious adversary of the Jain faith, and Hemacandra's own disciple Bālacandra is traced back to their childhood by the fifteenth-century Jain poet Jayasiṃhasūri (ābāla-kāla-suhṛde'jayapālāya, *Kumārapālabhūpālacaritamahākāvya* 10.118). Amicable or hostile feelings could even be explained by events that had happened in previous lives: for instance, Jayasiṃhasūri states that Kumārapāla and Hemacandra had already met in a previous existence. Kumārapāla was then a bandit named Jayatāka who took flight when attacked by a merchant whose caravan he had robbed earlier. He was wandering in misery when he came across a Jain monk named Yaśobhadra—the previous incarnation of Hemacandra's soul—who gave him provisions and later initiated him into the Jain cult. The story also accounts for Jayasiṃha Siddharāja's hatred towards Kumārapāla since

individuals acknowledged the merits and qualities of people who should have been their innate enemies.[47]

These friendships may have looked scandalous in the eyes of posterity, and in a most noteworthy way Prabhācandra himself justified the behaviour of Devasūri and Hemacandrasūri by stating that it was conform to the conduct expected of people who had taken religious vows. As for later authors, they may have decided not to report these stories either because they considered it inappropriate to do so, or even because they just could not believe them. The unknown author of a *mahākāvya* devoted to Devasūri deliberately ignored Devabodha even though his work echoes in many other respects the information provided by Prabhācandra; and the Vaiṣṇava renouncer became the antagonist of Hemacandra in the biographies of Jayasiṃha Siddharāja's successor Kumārapāla: they all portrayed Devabodha as a champion of Hinduism invested with the mission of cancelling the king's conversion to the Jain creed.[48]

In any case, Prabhācandra has preserved a remarkably interesting testimony on the way friendship can grow across the boundaries of religious communities. Besides, it is quite moving to consider that Devabodha benefited from Jain monks' friendship not only during his lifetime but even after his death. Indeed, most of the information we have about his existence comes from the corpus of the Jain Prabandhas. Had he not met with Devasūri and Hemacandra he would probably have sunk into almost total oblivion. Such a friendship that has endured beyond death and over so many centuries does deserve to be ranked among the rare instances of true friendships Cicero talked about in his treatise.

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the former was the owner of the caravan plundered by the latter (*Kumārapālabhūpālacaritamahākāvya* 10.68–70).

47 Such an unexpected affection is remarkably exemplified by the crow Laghupatanaka and the rat Hiraṇyaka in the frame story of the second book of the *Pañcatantra*: the former is very impressed by the latter's intelligence (aho buddhir asya hiraṇyakasya) and eagerly wants to become his friend, but Hiraṇyaka at first declines, as he is a prey (*bhojyabhūta*) and Laghupatanaka a predator (*bhoktṛ*); however, he eventually agrees when he realises, after a long discussion, that the crow looks clever as well (vidagdha-vacano'yaṃ dṛśyate laghupatanakaḥ satya-vākyaś ca). Their intimacy subsequently develops to the point that Laghupatanaka introduces Hiraṇyaka to another friend of his as "his second life" (hiraṇyako nāma mūṣako'yaṃ | mama suhṛd dvitīyam iva jīvitaṃ). See Viṣṇuśarman 2008: 102, 105, 107).

48 Cf. Leclère 2016: 504.

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Significant Otherness: Reinterpreting Some Well-Known Meetings with the Yoginīs in the Light of Vidyāpīṭha Texts

Abstract. This chapter proposes a new interpretation of three well-known stories of meetings with Yoginīs. Some such stories have been translated multiple times from the Sanskrit, beginning in as early as the first half of the nineteenth century. However, with the recent appearance and cataloguing of manuscript materials from Nepal that include the Vidyāpīṭha Tantras (the so-called "Tantras Dealing with the Invocations of the Throne of Female Deities"), a better understanding and thus a new interpretation of these stories is now possible. Behind the strange and cruel actions of the Yoginīs appears a design of exquisite complexity and beauty, affording the reader a better vision of the virtually unknown tantric world.

Keywords. Śaiva tantric traditions, Vidyāpīṭha Tantras, Yoginīs, transgression, reinterpretation of Sanskrit literature

1 Introduction

Meetings with the Yoginīs—a circle of goddesses that particularly feature in ritual practices associated with the Bhairava Tantras of the Mantramārga branch of Śaivism—are described in Sanskrit literature in terms of awe, fear, or ecstasy, regardless of whether the text belonged to the initiated or was written for the amusement of the laypeople. These meetings constitute the best examples of confronting life-changing significant Otherness. Each encounter may be compared to a leap of faith with uncertain but often diametrically opposed results: either death or the ability to fly, either being devoured alive or meeting a beloved, and so on. The interpretation of such meetings, however, is an issue. The problem is not simply that they are written in Sanskrit but that there is an altogether different, "tantric" logic behind them, hence why it is difficult to understand the precise role of the Yoginīs in these meetings.

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To uncover this tantric logic, two kinds of texts will be compared here: (1) the tantras of initiated practitioners, and (2) the stories about meetings with the Yoginīs that belong to texts for the non-initiated. The relevant tantric texts were not widely available until the articles of Alexis Sanderson in the 1990s, even though well-known texts such as the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (*KSS*), or "The Ocean of the Rivers of Stories", and the *Rājataraṅginī* (*RT*), or "The River [of the Lives] of the Kings", had already been edited and translated, as early as in the first half of the nineteenth century. As such, the meanings behind these stories have remained largely inaccessible until now. This chapter aims to fill this void and offer an analysis of the stories of encounters with the Yoginīs in the light of the tantric texts that have become available in recent years thanks to the efforts of the Nepal–German Manuscript Preservation Project, or NGMPP.[1]

Apropos the texts of the initiated, I shall be referring to the *Tantrasadbhāva* (*TST*), or "The Essence of the Tantras" (ca. eighth century), where there are some hints on meetings with the Yoginīs. The main source, however, shall be the *Jayadrathayāmala* (*JY*), or "The Tantra of Yāmala Kind Revealed to Jayadratha" (ca. tenth century),[2] which was the most probable source of the practices described in the literature for the non-initiated, such as the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* (*BKM*), or "A Flower Collection From the Bṛhatkathā", both written (or rather redacted[3]) in eleventh-century Kashmir.

1 The NGMPP was founded in 1970 and ran until March 2002. Its successor project is the Nepalese–German Manuscript Cataloguing Project (NGMCP). See https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/forschung/ngmcp/history/about-ngmpp.html.

2 The *JY* is an encyclopedic tantra, summarising the content and standardising the practices of some 400 earlier texts belonging to various tantric traditions. It is supposed to consist of 24,000 verses, i.e. 4 *ṣaṭkas* each containing 6000 verses (however, in reality, we have slightly around 22,000 as at least 2 chunks from the *ṣaṭka* 2 are lost). The text, which presents itself as a revelation of deepest tantric secrets from Bhairava to the Goddess, and thus having no human author, brings all ancient goddesses under a single roof, calling the supreme Goddess Kālī or Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, "She, Who Devours Time". The practices described in this text are rather extreme; they include numerous antinomian elements such as the partaking of body-products and human and animal sacrifices.

3 Both texts bring to poetic Sanskrit the same material, likely written in a non-Sanskrit language that has not survived. The content of this "proto-*KSS*" can be reconstructed from the passages where both Somadeva 1889 and Kṣemendra 1982 agree. The discovery of this proto-*KSS* belongs to Sanderson, personal communication with the author, 8 June 2005.

2 The *Mahārthamañjarī*: Maheśvarānanda meets a *siddhayoginī*

The *Mahārthamañjarī* (*MM*), or "A Flower Collection of the Krama Tradition",[4] was written by the Krama-initiated Gorakṣa (alias Maheśvarānanda) in the twelfth century in South India, in a region which the author calls Coḷa. It consists of seventy verses on the recognition of the supreme state written in Mahārāṣṭrī Prākrit with an auto-commentary in Sanskrit. In the very last part of the auto-commentary, right before the final colophon of the *MM*, Maheśvarānanda relates the story of its composition, provoked by the fact that the author had met a *yoginī*.

This passage was translated into French by Lilian Silburn as early as 1968.[5] And although the translation is correct, considering that so few tantric texts were available in the 1960s and the fact that Silburn was the first to provide translations of the Krama texts in European languages, some key aspects of the encounter demand new interpretation. I retranslate here Silburn's summary of the story into English:

> After a brief account of the Krama system, its origins, and its transmission through Śivānandanātha and then by a series of masters up to his own guru Mahāprakāśa, he [Maheśvarānanda] confides that he used to constantly worship the deity, meditate, and recite formulas. One day, he had just completed a ritual, [making] offerings of flowers, perfumes, [and] drinks to the Supreme Goddess, and was in the company of his partner (*dūtī*) in the sacrificial circle, absorbed in a blissful state, when appeared before him an extraordinary *siddhayoginī* dressed as an ascetic in patched rags (*kanthā*), carrying a trident in one hand and a skull in the other.
>
> Maheśvarānanda offered her a seat, paid her homage, and instructed the *dūtī* to give her money, but the *siddhayoginī*, enraged, said in Mahārāṣṭrī, "What good is all this!" She gestured with her hand the number seven and added: "This *mudrā* must be transmitted and [its] fruit harvested." With that, she touched Maheśvarānanda's forehead with the skull and disappeared. The next morning, Maheśvarānanda went to his master and told him of the events of the [previous] night; he [the master] saw in it the sign that he [Maheśvarānanda] had to turn away from the multiplicity of objects of worship and set out the true way in seventy verses in the Mahārāṣṭrī language. He interpreted the ragged clothes of various shades as the symbol of the objective world in its diversity; the trident, as the triple energy: will, knowledge, and activity; and the skull, like the human being, as the expression *kanthāśūlakapālamātravibhāva*, denoting that which manifests the entire universe through the subject limited by the three energies. This is why Maheśvarānanda transcribed this revelation in seventy verses and in Prākrit

4 Mahārtha, "The Supreme Aim," here refers to the Krama. All translations of sources in this chapter are mine unless stated otherwise.

5 For the original French, see Silburn 1968: 10.

> Mahārāṣṭrī; he entitled it the *Mahārthamañjarī*, “Flower Wreath of the Supreme Sense”; he then translated it into Sanskrit and glossed it himself in a long commentary called *Parimala*, “Perfume”.

This short description of the encounter leaves us with a lot of open questions: What is the *mudrā* the *siddhayoginī* gestures? Why did she touch Maheśvarānanda’s head with a skull? When and how does Maheśvarānanda realise the identity of the *yoginī*? How is the number seven related to her? To clarify those questions, I shall retranslate the main lines of the story into English from the Trivandrum edition of 1919, commenting on the parts of text that have an important—yet hitherto unexplained—meaning if one reads the passage in the light of the *Jayadrathayāmala* (*JY*).

> He [Maheśvarānanda], the student of the illustrious Guru Mahāprakāśa, was doing regular worship of gods, mantra recitation (*japa*), and visualisations (*dhyāna*). One day, having satisfied the Supreme Goddess with the offerings of perfumes, flowers, juices, and so on, and having entered a special state between wakefulness and sleep, he experienced the intensely joyful state consisting in the supreme light of his own consciousness (*svasaṃrambhaparāmarśa*), at the same time being in a close embrace with his partner (*dūtī*), smiling in a state of bliss and with the eyes bulging in pleasure.
>
> At this moment, he perceived an unknown woman wearing [a] *kanthā* (a sort of cloth made of rugs), and holding a trident and a human skull, decorated with vermilion (*sindūra*). Having seen this accomplished woman [*siddhā*, also a term for the Yoginīs in later Krama], he makes the usual rituals consisting in offering his seat, food, and other ritual procedures as well as a (money) gift (*dakṣiṇa*), which he instructed *dūtī* to give to the *yoginī*.
>
> The *yoginī*, who is free from desires (*niḥspṛhā*), appeared to be angry (*kruddheva*), saying, “For what?” in Mahārāṣṭrī. With her hand she displayed *mudrā* seven (*saptamudrā*).[6]

6 *MM*, p. 197–198: “atha kālakramavaśāc coladeśaśiromaṇiḥ / mahāprakāśo nāmāsīd deśiko dṛkkriyottaraḥ // tasya śiṣyo’bhavad dhīmān gorakṣo nāma vaśyavāk / maheśvarānanda iti prāptapūjyāhvayo mahān // arcayan devatāṃ nityaṃ japan dhyāyaṃś ca niścalam / paryaṭaṃś ca diśāmantān kālaṃ kañcid avāhayat // athaikadā niśīthinyām āsīno yāgamaṇḍape / tarpayitvā parāṃ devīṃ gandhapuṣpākṣatāsavaiḥ // āsvādyānandapātrāṇi trīṇi tīvrāṇi tanmanāḥ / svasaṃrambhaparāmarśabhavyām anubhavan prathām // jāgarāsvapnayor madhyamadhyāsya mahatīṃ daśām / dūtyāḥ stanataṭotsaṅgam aparāṅgena pīḍayan // pradīpaiḥ kuśalair eva pradīptair aparokṣitaḥ / āste sma vismayākrāntaḥ kahlārotphullalocanaḥ // atrāntare striyaṃ kāñcit kanthāśūlakapālinīm / sa dadarśa kilollokāṃ sindūrālaṅkṛtālikām // ālokya ca sa tāṃ siddhāṃ kurvannāsannam āsanam / upāharad udāraśrīḥ pūjopakaraṇaṃ kramāt // dakṣiṇāṃ ca yathā śakti dātuṃ dūtīṃ samādiśat / kruddheva yoginī sā ca kim ebhir iti niḥspṛhā // mahārāṣṭrabhuvaṃ bhāṣāṃ prayuñjānā smitottaram / saptasaṃkhyocitāṃ mudrāṃ badhnatī hastapallave // [extract resumes at footnote 11]”.

Silburn interprets the *siddhayoginī*'s gesture as the true hand-gesture meaning of *sapta* as "seven". However, in light of the *Tantrasadbhāva* and the *Jayadrathayāmala*, another understanding that in fact brings the pieces of the story together becomes possible. Let us follow a few lines of interpretation of this cryptic sign.

First, it might indeed be interpreted as *mudrā* number seven, which supposes that there was a stable sequence of *mudrās*. There is some evidence for this. For example, stable lists of *mudrās* (called *gotramudrā*, i.e. a family of *mudrās*) are linked to the Mātṛkās (a group of usually seven mother goddesses frequently depicted together in Hindu texts) and some kinds of *yoginī* in the *Jayadrathayāmala*:

> As for the Yogeśīs, i.e. the Ladies of Yoga, O Fortunate, there are seven kinds at the level of *gocara*. Brahmā (one related to the god Brahmā), Rudra, Skanda, Viṣṇu, Pretapati (i.e. Yama, god of death) [. . .] Indra, [and] Īśvara are [the seven] illustrious clans of the Mātṛs, of which the [following] *gotramudrās* are explained [by order]: *kamaṇḍalu* [ritual water pot], trident, *cakra*, spear, stick, *vajra*, and skull.[7]

This list is reproduced graphically in Table 1. According to this list, we might suggest that the *siddhayoginī* showing Maheśvarānanda a skull signifies that she is likely related to the Seventh Mātṛkā, Cāmuṇḍā/Yogeśī. The skull is, after all, identified in the *Jayadrathayāmala* precisely as *mudrā* number 7.

Table 1 *Mudrās* by Mātṛkā and related gods

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Hindu god	Brahmā	Rudra	Skanda	Viṣṇu	Yama	Indra	Īśvara
Corresponding Mātṛkā	Brahmī	Raudrī	Kaumārī	Vaiṣṇavī	Vārāhī	Aindrī	Cāmuṇḍā / Yogeśī
Mudrā of the Mātṛkā	*kamaṇḍalu*	trident	spear	*cakra*	stick	*vajra*	skull

One can ask, however, why would this be of any relevance to Maheśvarānanda? He was well aware of the writings of Abhinavagupta,[8] the eleventh-century philosopher and representative of the school of Kashmiri Shaivite monism, to

7 *JY* 3.32.49–51ab (205vv6–7): "yogeśīnāṃ [MSS: yogesānāṃ] mahātāte gocarāḥ sapta kīrtitāḥ / brahmā rudra kumāraś ca viṣṇu pretapatis tathā // indrasya ī[MSS: i]śvaraś caiva sreṣṭā mātrigaṇasya tu / [1] kamaṇḍalu [2] triśūlaṃ ca [3] cakkraṃ [4] śaktis tathaiva ca // [5] daṇḍaṃ [6] vajraṃ [7] kapālaṃ ca gotramudrā prakīrtitā /".

8 *MM* mentions Abhinavagupta in the commentary after v. 66 and after v. 71.

who found in the *Jayadrathayāmala* not only its Krama elements but also its tantric codes and symbols. Indeed, Maheśvarānanda inherits his understanding of symbols from the Abhinavagupta line of transmission. But why would Maheśvarānanda interpret her level as the being the highest kind of Yoginī, the Siddhayoginī, a synonym for Yogeśvarī, or "Supreme Lady of Yoga", having barely seen her? Another text for the initiated, the *Tantrasadbhāva*, especially its chapter 16, is an authoritative manual of how one should communicate with the Yoginīs. The non-verbal communication by means of *mudrās* is considered the best. The *mudrās* are classified into those shown by the Yoginīs and those constituting response *mudrās*, usually demonstrated by tantric practitioners (*sādhakas*). By means of these *mudrās* the Yoginī shows her level of accomplishment, the time and place of the secret meeting, but, most importantly, her clan (*kula* or *gotra*); that is, to which Mātṛkā she is related. If the practitioner is of the same clan (that is defined during the initiation), the Yoginī can make him advance faster. However, if the *sādhaka* makes a mistake in showing *mudrās*, the Yoginīs will laugh at him. Besides, there are different levels and kinds of Yoginī: not all of them are good to meet, some amuse themselves by devouring the disrespectful practitioner, others bring sickness or behave like vampires.[9] The most relevant passage in the *Tantrasadbhāva* for the *Mahārthamañjarī* case runs as follows: "One who has hair standing upwards, and shining like fire, is the Supreme Lady of Yoga (Yogeśī), no doubt. The *mudrā*, which is to be shown in such a case, is a skull and a spear/trident."[10] These two objects are precisely what she holds in her two hands (see my translation above of the Trivandrum 1919 edition of the *MM*). Thus, this is likely to be the sign of recognition that would make it clear to Maheśvarānanda that she is a *siddhayoginī*.

But what about the hand-gesture meaning of "seven" or holding the skull as an object of *mudrā* seven? My theory is that she shows Maheśvarānanda the skull on the following grounds. Since she refuses to take a seat, she is still standing holding the trident and skull. Holding these two objects would require both her hands, not least because iconographically these objects are typically assigned to two different hands. Moreover, in the continuation of the *MM* story she treats the skull precisely as the *mudrā*:

> "All that is useless [lit. "What for?"]," says she who wears rugs as clothes.
> "This *mudrā* is to be given and its fruit received." While saying that, she,

9 More on this can be found in my SOAS lecture, "The Yoga of the Yoginīs: Advanced Level", available via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6chJrE7XBM&t=2757s.

10 *TST* 16.280: "ūrddhvakeśī jvalābhā tu yogeśī sā na saṃśayaḥ / mudrāṃ tasya pradarśeta kapālaṃ śūlam eva vā //". (Ed. A. Sanderson)

> with her hand holding [the] skull, touches his [Maheśvarānanda's] head without hesitation and disappears.[11]

This confirms that the skull is the *mudrā*. However, touching the head with a skull is in fact one of the some twenty variations of tantric initiation (*dīkṣā*), described thusly in the *Jayadrathayāmala*: "Having touched the head [of the initiand] with a skull, [the guru] should assign the *saṃpuṭā* [the combination of mantra elements, usually placed before and after the mantra] to the heart."[12] That is, when she touches him with the skull, she not only empowers but also transmits to him the *vidyā* (the mantra of the Goddess) in some form. This clarifies another cryptic passage in Silburn's translation—"cette *mudrā* doit être transmise et (son) fruit récolté", in French, or in English, "this *mudrā* should be transmitted and its fruit received".[13] On its own, this is hard to understand. But now we may interpret it with the help of the last *JY* passage as: "I give you the initiation, let it be fruitful, i.e. may you get full realisation."

Maheśvarānanda receives it as a great wonder (*mahadāścaryam*) and ponders over it for the rest of the night. In the morning he runs to his guru, and, having worshipped him, relates the story. The guru, touched by the meritorious deed of the ritual of his disciple, interprets the words and the mysterious behaviour of the Yoginī as follows: the "*Alam artha*", "for what?" encompasses the "aim".[14] Thus, by saying *Alam artha*, "no aim to achieve", she meant that she is a *siddhayoginī*; that is, a completely realised being.[15]

The guru continues: "The fact that she showed the sign 'seven', with her flower-bud hand [. . .]." He is playing here with the words: the "bud-like hand" (*karakuḍmala*) should help Maheśvarānanda gain the "fruit". It might also hint at the shape of the *mudrā*, which allows us to bring in a description of the "Bud-*mudrā*" from the *Jayadrathayāmala*:

> Listen, O friend of the leaders of heroes (*vīras*), to the great *mudrā* called "bud". By this the hundred million mantras awaken, O Goddess, and all of them becoming facing, that is, turned towards the practitioner, O One Who is Worshipped. Having made the hand like a bud [i.e. with the fingertips joined together], one should place it near the heart. The elbows always

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11 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: "alam arthair iyaṃ kanthā vasordhārāṃ hi varṣati / pradīyatām iyaṃ mudrā phalaṃ ca pratipādyatām // ittham ābhāṣamāṇaiva sakapālena pāṇinā / spṛśantī mastakaṃ tasya niśśaṅkaṃ sā tirodadhe //".

12 *JY* 3.31.20ab (200v6): "kapālena śiraḥ [MSS: śira] spṛṣṭvā saṃpuṭā hṛdaye nyaset /". This passage has been edited by A. Sanderson.

13 Silburn 1968: 10.

14 Artha, or Mahārtha, the supreme aim, is also one of the names of the Krama tradition.

15 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: "alam artha prapañcena piṇḍito'rthaḥ prakāśyate / alam arthair iti prāha yad iyaṃ siddhayoginī // yacca saptocitāṃ saṃkhyāṃ kurvāṇā karakuḍmale /".

> remain equally placed, forming a slender body.[16] This is what is called "bud"; it gives *siddhis* in the mantra-invocations.[17]

The phrase "*siddhi* in the mantra-invocations" in such a context means precisely "full realisation", that is, complete success in the practice, and hence the "fruit" referred to by the Yoginī.

This mysterious bud of *mudrā* seven and the ambiguity and fluidity of its nature (a real object, a sign/object of recognition of Mātṛkās and Yoginīs, a secret gesture used in tantric rituals for communication) has flourished into a net of references to the preceding tantric traditions, but in fact, it also contains a hint at the identity of the Yoginī. Maheśvarānanda's guru says while commenting on the method of achieving the "fruit":

> It would be favourable, having overstepped the "creation",[18] to concentrate on the worship of that "essence of sound",[19] by means of the sounds having the essence of the mantras, by which the Supreme Goddess is worshipped.[20]

Here, for the first time, the guru links the appearance and actions of the Yoginī with the mantra. The fact that she gestures "seven", in his opinion, points not to some general "Yogeśvarī"[21]; he actually gives a name for the tantric goddess who came to Maheśvarānanda. "It is the Lady of the Seven Million Mantras (Saptakoṭīśvarī) that is to be worshipped by you", says the guru, "otherwise this *mudrā* would not have been given".[22]

This name is important, and, although the number of mantras is said to be seven million (*saptakoṭī*) in the very early Śaiva texts, the name of the goddess as such only occurs in the *Jayadrathayāmala* 4.67. Not only does the name fit, an

16 Tentative translation.

17 *JY* 4.2.130–132 (10v3–5): "mukulākhyā mahāmudrā śṛṇu vīrendravatsale / yayā prabuddhayā devi maṃtrakoṭiśatāny api // sādhakābhimukhāḥ sarvve bhavantīha surārcite / mukulaṃ hastam evādau hṛtpradeśe niyojayet // tiryak same kūrparake kṛtvā sutanu sarvvadā / mukulākhyā bhavaty eṣā mantrāvāhanasiddhidā //".

18 The normal order of things in Krama terminology, *sṛṣṭim ullaṅghya*. *MM*, p. 195: "lokollaṅghanetyādi / tādṛśī hi yoginīnāṃ sthitiḥ sādhakān pratyabhimatamupasthāpayati/". That is, Maheśvarānanda understands the state above or beyond the world as the state of the Yoginīs.

19 The word used here in the original is *śābdī*, which can refer to Sarasvatī herself, goddess of speech and eloquence, but may also be a reference to Śabdakālī in *ṣaṭka* 4 of the *JY*.

20 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: "saphalīkriyatām eṣā bhāvajñenety abhāṣata / tadārthī sṛṣṭim ullaṅghya śābdīṃ sā kāñcid icchati / yena mantrātmakaiḥ śabdaiḥ parameśvary upāsyate //".

21 Cf. Yogeśī in footnote 7.

22 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: "saptakoṭīśvarī devī tayā nūnam upāsyate / anyathā tādṛśīm eva mudrāṃ na pratipādayet //".

extremely rare occurrence (1 in 15,000 probability),[23] but so does its gloss. The *Jayadrathayāmala* describes this goddess as follows: "O Goddess, she is called Saptakoṭeśvarī because the seven million mantras arose from her body, [she is] containing all of them inside."[24] Maheśvarānanda also refers to this very gloss just before the story of the meeting: "This venerable *vidyā* of the Saptakoṭīśvarī [. . .] seven million great mantras arose from the mouth of Mahākālī."[25]

There is, of course, a difference between seven and seven million. But this does not undermine the proposition that it was Saptakoṭīśvarī that came to visit Maheśvarānanda in the *Jayadrathayāmala*. The mathematical discrepancy is solved rather easily: her coded *vidyā* contains precisely seven syllables and when decoded runs as: KAḤ SAḤ CAṆḌINI SAḤ KAḤ //.[26] Let me explain the code in detail while translating the passage:

> The first of the *yonis* [i.e. consonants] [should be raised and] joined with "creation". One should raise the "nectar" in the same way. "First of the 3rd" is to be given alone, followed by "the horse" standing on "the vulnerable point". Having decorated it with "triple *bindu*", one should raise "*niṣedha*" in the same way. Again, "*soma*" joined with "creation" and "the first of the *yonis*" in the same way. The seven-syllabled very powerful [*vidyā*] of Caṇḍakālī has [thus] been explained.

That is, if we go back to Maheśvarānanda's story, by showing him the sign referring to "seven", the Yoginī, at the same time, transmits to him the mantra containing seven syllables, or at least gives a hint thereof, as his way to gaining full realisation. This is the only thing that matters in this mysterious transmission, and it unfolds to englobe the whole tradition of the "Clan of Kālī" (Kālīkula).

In fact, all *vidyās* in the *JY* call forth the forms or aspects of the main goddess of the Kālīkula tradition: Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī. Maheśvarānanda further identifies the

23 I have collected and linked into a searchable RDF (resource description framework) graph more than 15,000 different names of the Goddesses, Mātṛkās, Yoginīs, and other such beings from all major purāṇas and tantric texts available to me. This document shall be available on kramanet.org after final cleaning.

24 *JY* 4.67.179cd–180ab (179v1–2): "saptakoṭyas tu mantrāṇāṃ yasyād dehāt samutthitaḥ // prativarṇṇāntarā devi saptakoṭeśvarī tathā /".

25 *MM*, p. 194: "tat śrīmatsaptakoṭīśvarīvidyā [. . .] "saptakoṭir mahāmantrā mahākālīmukhodgatāḥ" /".

26 *JY* 4.67.163–165ab:

> sṛṣṭiyuktaṃ yonipūrvaṃ tadvac cāmṛtam uddharet / [KAḤ SAḤ]
> tripūrvvaṃ kevalaṃ deyaṃ hayamarmasthitaṃ punaḥ // [CAṆḌ-]
> tribindulāṃcchitaṃ kṛtvā niṣedhaṃ ta[th, conj., MSS: va]am uddharet / [+INI]
> punaḥ somaṃ sṛṣṭiyutaṃ tadvad yonyādyam uddharet // [SAḤ KAḤ]
> saptākṣarā samākhyātā caṇḍakālī mahābalā /.

siddhayoginī with her.[27] His guru orders him to write a text in seventy verses or *sūtras* glorifying Her, Who is Pregnant with Mantras (Mantragarbhiṇī; yet another gloss of Saptakoṭīśvarī) in the Krama tradition. That is precisely what Maheśvarānanda did. The purpose of the text echoes closely *JY* 4.67 again.[28]

Let us summarise: Silburn, unfortunately, had no key to the passage describing Maheśvarānanda's meeting with the Yoginī because the *JY* and the *TST* had not yet entered the academic world at the time when she was writing her translation. The "*mudrā* seven", which she did not clarify, has unfolded into the full initiation for Maheśvarānanda including an empowerment and a mantra transmission. Without access to the tantric texts, specifically the *JY*, many aspects of this story would have remained hidden from the reader.

This was an example of reinterpreting one tantric text (the *Mahārthamañjarī*) in the light of another (the *Jayadrathayāmala*) belonging to the same line of transmission. Let us now consider some examples of encounters with the Yoginīs from the literature written for the non-initiated public.

3 The *Rājataraṅginī*: King Baka meets Bhaṭṭā Yogeśvarī

The *Rājataraṅginī* (*RT*), or "The River [of the Lives] of the Kings", a historical text from Kashmir incorporating some fascinating tantric elements, describes at 1.22.331–334 how a King Baka was sacrificed by a Yoginī:

> There the king passed sixty-three years and thirteen days as ruler of the earth. Then a certain sorceress [*yogeśvarī*], Bhaṭṭā by name, having assumed the appearance of a lovely woman, approached the king one evening. Losing his sense over her various captivating words, he joyfully accepted an invitation to view the wonders of [her] sacrificial feast [*yāgotsavamāhātmyam*]. Then when in the morning the sovereign came to that place followed by his hundred sons and grandsons, she made of him a sacrificial offering to the "circle of the goddesses" [*devīcakropahāratām*]. To this day there is seen on a rock the double impression of her knees, showing [where], on attaining by that act supernatural power, she has risen to the sky. Even to this day the recollection of this story is kept alive in the Maṭhas of Kherī by [the image of] the god Śatakapāleśa, the "circle of the Mothers", and by that rock.[29]

27 *MM*, p. 192 explicitly calls her "Yoginī having a form of Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī" (śrīkālasaṅkarṣiṇīrūpāṃ yoginīṃ).

28 *MM*, p. 199–200: "imām eva ca saṃgrāme bandhuhatyā parāṅmukham / mukundo bodhayāmāsa syandanasthaṃ dhanañjayam // kṣaṇam ālocitā'py eṣā jīvanmuktiṃ prayacchati /". *JY* 4.67 consists of a long list of *prayogas*, including those for war, but the main purpose of the practice remains the goddess Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī in her various forms and mantras.

29 Stein 2009: 49–50, *RT* vol. 1: 29, 1.22.330–335: "tatra triṣaṣṭir varṣāṇāṃ satrayodaśavāsarā / atyavāhyata bhūpena tena pṛthvīṃ praśāsatā // atha yogīśvarī kācid

This passage had been translated into French by Anthony Troyer in 1840,[30] and provides a rather misleading interpretation of the actions of a Yoginī. The reader sees her as a sort of witty shape-shifting psychopath, killing people in public and flying away like some kind of UFO. However, shocking as it might appear, this passage speaks not about the luck of the Yoginī, but about that of the king.

The king is most likely to be a "special victim", a notion described in detail in various Vidyāpīṭha tantras,[31] because he is high-born, accomplished, has a family, and also because upon killing him, the Yoginī achieves immediate *siddhis*. In the tantric texts of the Vidyāpīṭha, such a victim would be called an "N-*janmapaśu*", a victim (*paśu*) reborn *n* number of times to be sacrificed by the Yoginīs.[32] Moreover, the king comes there out of his own free will, fitting the image of the N-*janmapaśu* perfectly. But what internal tantric textual proofs do we have?

The closest tantric passage that would put together Kapālīśa ("Lord of Skulls", or in the *RT*: "Lord of a Hundred Skulls"), Yogeśvarī, and a sacrificial victim is a passage in the *Brahmayāmala*, also known as the *Picumata*,[33] edited and translated by Sanderson, which bestows on those who can perform it the ability to fly:

> With the fluid of the body he should gratify the god [Kapālīśabhairava] who resides beyond the five voids [along the central channel]. This worship is the highest secret of the Yogeśvarīs. [I have taught it] to you so that Mantra adepts that seek to master the state of the Khecara may succeed.[34]

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bhaṭṭākhyā rajanīmukhe / kṛtvā kāntākṛtiṃ kāmyām upatasthe viśāṃ patim // tayā manoharais taistair vanair glapitasmṛtiḥ / sa yāgotsavamāhātmyaṃ draṣṭuṃ hṛṣṭo nyamantryata // putrapautraśatopetaḥ prātas ca tatra tato gataḥ / cakravartī tayā ninye devīcakropahāratām // karmaṇā tena siddhāyā vyomākramaṇasūcakam / jānumudrādayaṃ tasyā dṛṣadyadyāpi dṛśyate // devaḥ śatakapāleśo mātṛcakraṃ śilā ca sā / khīre maṭheṣu tadvarttā smṛtim adyāpi gacchati //".

30 Troyer 1840, vol. 2: 36–37, vv. 332–337: "Le règne de ce souverain de la terre dura soixante-trois ans et treize jours. Pendant ce temps, une magicienne, appelée Bhaṭṭa, ayant pris une forme belle et attrayante, aborda le roi à la chute du jour. Alors le roi, dont la mémoire était ravie par mille discours séduisants, fut invité à venir voir joyeux une grande solennité de dévotion. Quand cet empereur y vint le matin, entouré de cent fils et petit-fils, il fut présenté, par la magicienne, en sacrifice au cercle de la déesse. En conséquence de l'accomplissement de cette action, on voit encore aujourd'hui la double empreinte de ses genoux sur la pierre qui témoigne de son ascension au ciel. Le dieu, maître de cent crânes, le cercle de la déesse, la pierre même, et la mémoire de cet événement se conservent encore aujourd'hui dans les collèges de Khîra."

31 For a brief introduction to the Vidyāpīṭha Tantras, see Sanderson 1990.

32 A full explanation shall be given in Serbaeva, forthcoming. See also Serbaeva 2010.

33 This is a Vidyāpīṭha tantra of the Yāmala subclass, and the earliest survivor of that class of texts can be dated to a period between the sixth and eighth century because it features a very early form of the tantric pantheon. See Sanderson 1990; Serbaeva 2006.

34 Sanderson 2009: 184, n. 444, *Brahmayāmala* 3.198c–207.

The god with the name Kapālīśa even had his own tantra, mentioned in the lists of tantras in the opening chapters of the *Yoginīsaṃcāraprakāraṇam*, a part of the *JY*, where the procedures written for the Yoginīs on how to find and kill the "special victim" are described.[35]

The next most relevant is the *Tantrasadbhāva*, which develops the concept of the "seven-times-born victim" (*saptajanmapaśu*) in its chapter 7, at verses 98 to 126. This passage is translated below almost in full. The coded mantra, which is also given in chapter 7 (though not included in the passage below), bestows upon the tantric practitioner the miraculous results, one of which is *saptajanmapaśu*, of a magic and transformative substance called *caru*:

> O attentive one, once he is purified [by that *japa*, "mantra recitation"], *devīs* [goddesses] bestow him the supreme victim. O Goddess, by burning that which is obtained from the seven-times-born, or, which also constitutes the best of *caru*, he will obtain the equality with that [state of *devīs*]. He will go together with the deities and that very moment he will become the sky-goer.[36]
>
> The Goddess says: "If it is so, what you have said in [the] *Mahāghora* [likely a lost text] differs. By [the] ripening of which *karma* [does] one obtain the state of victim, O Lord? What are the external and the internal signs of recognition of him?"
>
> Bhairava says: "What you have [previously] asked has already been explained by me. Now I shall explain the signs of the victims for those who desire *siddhis*. He is born in the body purified by mantras, devoted to Śiva, and holds his observances firmly, but his mind is averted from the practice aiming at the supernatural effects [*siddhis*].[37] He should be known as the traitor of the guru, a wicked soul, and a sinner.[38] He cannot obtain liberation;

35 *JY* 3.24.39ab (171r1): "kapālīśamataṃ nāma meghanādīśvaraṃ tathā /". This half-*śloka* has first been edited by Alexis Sanderson, 2004. It is worth noting that Kapālīśa or Kapāleśvara is also one of *rudras* in the pre-Vidyāpīṭha texts. For example: "kapālīśo hyajo buddhaḥ vajradehaḥ pramardanaḥ //" (*NTS* 5.7.82.2).

36 *TST* 7.98cd–101 (A69r6–69v6, whole passage; B unnumbered folio (file 39), starting upper part, line 4): "devyā śuddhasya suśroṇi yacchanti paśum uttamam // saptajanmodbhava caiva tajjuṣṭacarukothavā / tena jugvena deveśi tattulyas tu prajāyate // vicared devatais sārddhaṃ kṣaṇād gaganago bhavet / devy uvāca: yady eva syāt mahāghore tvayā prokto vilakṣaṇaḥ // kena karma vipākena paśutvaṃ jāyate vibho / kiṃ tasya lakṣaṇaṃ proktaṃ bāhya[? conj., MSS: vahṛ]madhyātmakañ ca yat //". Other texts, such as the *JY*, propose a list of external, i.e. physical, signs of recognition, as well as internal ones, those that are seen in visualisations (*dhyāna*).

37 *Siddhi*, besides meaning the supernatural effects possessed by a *siddha*, also simply means success. That is, the person, having received initiation, is no longer motivated to achieve the main aim of the practice.

38 *TST* 7.102–109ab: "bhairava uvāca: yat tvayā kathitaṃ pūrvvaṃ tat sarvvaṃ kathitaṃ mayā / sāṃpratam paśum [MSS: paśur] ākhyāmi lakṣaṇaṃ siddhim icchataḥ [MSS: tā] // mantrasaṃskṛtadehas tu śivabhakto dṛḍhavrataḥ / sādhane siddhikāme ca yasya cittaṃ parāṅmukham // gurudrohī sa vijñeyo durātmā pāpakarmaṇaḥ / na tasya bhavate muktir nniruddhas saṃbhavann api // janme janme punar bhakto dīkṣāmantrārthasevanāt [MSS:

> [it is] as if Śiva himself holds him back. He is born again and again as devotee because of his service to initiation, mantras, and so forth. "Joined upwards" [*udyukto*], he drops it [the practice] again. If the mantric purification fruits manifest in their full power then he [corrupted, tentatively] can be made liberated from the treason of the guru by means of sacrifice. He can be once born, twice born, thrice born, or four times, [or] five, six, seven times, such are these victims, no doubt. By offering that [i.e. the victim] into fire one obtains the power of flying, O beautiful, the invisibility, the power to find and enter the doors of [the] Underworld, the ability to change form, and so forth. And he [the *sādhaka*] will also get the state that is common to the *cakra*."[39]

If we skip the long list of recognition signs of such victims as explained in the *JY*, the means of their killing and the extracting of various parts as drafted by the Buddhist text the *Abhidhānottaratantra* (in chapter 66), and the rationale for the above written by Abhinavagupta in his *Tantrāloka*,[40] we should still understand that we have here a historical trace of the description of the extreme tantric practice in which the Yoginī upgraded her level by sacrificing a king, and the king was liberated by the Yoginī as she accomplished a prescribed procedure for the *paśu*, a sacrificial victim, of his kind. The story makes no sense if the reader does not know about the tantric logical elements behind the apparently strange and cruel actions of the Yoginī.

4 The *Kathāsaritsāgara*: The king meets an *asurī* in the Underworld

The next passage we shall examine that includes a meeting with a Yoginī belongs to the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, a text recompiled by both Somadeva and Kṣemendra from probably an earlier non-Sanskrit source text that already contained a number of important tantric elements in eleventh-century Kashmir.[41] Such is the amount of described tantric elements in the *KSS* that one wonders if Somadeva was writing

-nā] / udyukto jāyate so hi punaś caiva parityajet // mantrasaṃskārajaṃ yaddhi phala[+ṃ] syād [bala]cānyadi / nā[conj. o]pahṛtyaya karmeṇa gurudrohādṛte sati // ekajanmā dvijanmā ca trijanmā caturothavā / pañcaṣaṭsaptajanmā ca paśavas tu na saṃśayaḥ // tena j[u]gvena siddhyeta khecaratvaṃ varānane / antarddhānaṃ [A: anarddānaṃ] bilottiṣṭhaṃ rūpādiparivartanaṃ // cakrasāmānyam evaṃ ca tataḥ prabhṛti jāyate /".

39 *Cakra* here is the circle of the goddesses, i.e. the Yoginīs. Thus, the *sādhaka* will achieve the same state as the Yoginīs.

40 Serbaeva, forthcoming; Serbaeva 2010.

41 Kṣemendra's variant is called the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*. The existence of a common text for both the *KSS* and the *BKM* is suggested in a yet unpublished article by Sanderson, personal communication with the author.

for the initiated in court or if he was himself initiated. However, these elements are not something that he takes seriously; they bring *rasas* (feelings) of fear, disgust, and mostly laughter. Although the story is rather well translated, its tantric roots demand additional elucidation to grasp its juicy detail.

The passage is a part of a very long story,[42] full of tantric elements, in which a king, having encountered a special divine girl, in fact an *asurī*, falls in love with her. When she disappears, he tries to find her again by going into Pātāla (the subterranean paradise or Underworld). He does not go there alone but is accompanied by a tantric practitioner, who uses exactly those tricks, mantras, and places, and invokes the same gods as is prescribed for such a journey in the tantric texts of the Vidyāpīṭha.

Let us linger on some of the tantric elements of the journey to Pātāla, based on *KSS* 12.6, vv. 79–146. Verses 79–94 describe how King Bhūnandana in Kashmir[43] meets his beloved in a special state of consciousness; that is, in a dream after completing a ritual for the god Viṣṇu.[44] The meeting affects him so much that he abdicates, leaving his kingdom to his younger brother, and performs *tapas* on Lake Kramasaras (v. 95) for twelve years. Then, suddenly, an ascetic appears before the king and tells him that his beloved is a *daityakanyā,* or a "divine girl", and lives in Pātāla.[45] The ascetic presents himself as a guru of the *yogins*, the knower of the lore of Pātāla, learned in the mantra and tantra of Hāṭakeśa.[46] The *Pātālaśāstra*, or "The Lore of Entry into Underground Paradise", is a very popular motif in tantric texts, some of which contain detailed procedures with *vidyās* that allow one to find entry (*bila* or *śrīmukha*) and keep in check the killing mechanisms (*yantrāṇi*) preserving Pātāla from unwanted visitors. All major *vidyās* of the *Jayadrathayāmala* can open up Pātāla (some 110 occurrences). However, in the *KSS* we have a very precise name: Hāṭakeśa or Hāṭakeśvara. This form of Śiva was linked to entering subterranean paradise already in relatively early texts such as the ca. seventh-century *Svacchandabhairavatantra* (The Text of the Terrible God embodying Free Will),[47] which places Hāṭakeśa as a leading figure of one of the worlds, vertically arranged in the Śaiva universe described in chapter 10:

42 Tawney 1926, vol. 6: 106–113, *KSS* 12.6.79–178.

43 *KSS* 12.6.79cd: "kaśmīrā iti maṇḍalam".

44 *KSS* 12.6.88cd: "svapne kāmāpy upāyātām apaśyad daityakanyakām //".

45 *KSS* 12.6.102ab: "rājan sā daityakanyā te priyā pātālavāsinī /".

46 *KSS* 12.6.104: "so'haṃ saṃkramitajñānaḥ pitrā pātālaśāstrataḥ / śikṣitvā haṭakeśānamantratantravidhikramam //". Haṭakeśa is written here with a short "a", whereas the spelling in the tantric texts is Hāṭakeśa.

47 *SVT* 9.43ab (vol. 4: 49) and *SVT* 9.109cd (vol. 4: 78): "kālāgnir narakāś caiva pātālā hāṭakeśvaraḥ"; *SVT* 11.20cd–21ab (vol. 6: 21) and *TST* 11.20cd–21ab: "vyāpakaś ca punar devi hāṭakaḥ parameśvaraḥ // vidyāmantragaṇair yuktaḥ saptapātālanāyakaḥ /"; *SVT* 11.238 (vol. 6: 129): "rudralokādhipatayaḥ pātālapatayaś ca ye / kūṣmāṇḍahāṭakādyās tu te tisṭhanty atinirmalāḥ //".

> Higher than that is said to be a Golden Pātāla; there lives the supreme lord, [the] god Hāṭaka. He is completely surrounded by thousands of millions of beings: *siddhas*, *rudra*-, and divine *gaṇas*, *bhaginīs*, *mātṛikās*, Yoginīs, and yoga-girls (*yogakanyābhir*), *rudras*, and *rudra*-girls, magical substances (*siddhadravyas*), mantras, precious stones, and elixirs. The Temple of Hāṭakeśa one can only enter by perfecting the *vidyā* of *siddhas*, [namely], one enters that world by force (*haṭhat*), when the mind becomes stable in a proper state of contemplation (*bhāva*). That is why this God of Gods, Maheśvara, is called Hāṭaka.[48]

However, only the *Jayadrathayāmala* refers to the tantra of Hāṭakeśa, linking him to Atimārga; that is, the most ancient, pre-tantric Śaiva tradition;[49] he is worshipped upon entering Pātāla and conversing with divine women;[50] he is superseded later by Kālī, but he is still worshipped upon entry in Pātāla in the Pātālakālī chapter.[51] There are at least four chapters (and many more incomplete references) that fully map the ritual to enter Pātāla.[52]

Let us present this material on the entry to Pātāla shared by the *KSS* and the tantric understanding in four main steps, which can be found in both the *KSS* and the *JY*.

5 Step 1: Preliminaries, and finding entry to Pātāla

In *KSS* (vv. 109–146) the ritual to be performed to find entry (*bila*, *vivara*) to Pātāla includes purification, a ritual of "binding the directions" and scattering mustard seeds.[53] In *JY* 2.17, mustard is also used, and one can employ the *vidyā* of the Goddess of Gods, Kṛśodarī, to enter Pātāla:

> Having recited it for 300,000 times on the top of the mountain, the master of mantras should make one tenth of that number in fire offerings, consisting

48 *SVT*, vol. 5: 53–55, *SVT* 10.116–120ab: "yadūrdhve caiva sauvarṇaṃ pātālaṃ parikīrtitam / tatra vasatyasau devo hāṭakaḥ parameśvaraḥ // purakoṭisahasrais tu samantāt parivāritaḥ / siddhairudragaṇair divyair bhaginīmātṛbhir vṛtaḥ // yoginīyogakanyābhī rudraiś caiva sakanyakaiḥ / siddhadravyasamair mantraiś cintāmaṇirasāyanaiḥ // siddhavidyāsamṛddhaṃ vai hāṭakeśasya mandiram / haṭhat praveśayel lokāṃ stadbhāvagatamānasān // tenāsau hāṭakaḥ prokto devadevo maheśvaraḥ /." Cf. *TST* 10.137–140.

49 *JY* 1.45.143cd (191r9–191v1): "atimārgam anantattvaṃ hāṭakesaṃ vyavasthitam //." See also *JY* 3.24.39cd (171r1): "haṃsayāmalanāmānaṃ caṇḍograṃ hāṭakeśvaram //".

50 *JY* 2.9.29cd (24r7): "praviṣṭaḥ pūjayet tatra hāṭakeśaṃ maheśvaram //".

51 *JY* 4.40.36ab (141r4): "hāṭakasya" [marked lacuna, 1 syllable] subhage pātālākarāmantravit /".

52 See *JY* 2.17.832–843, *JY* 2.25.663–681, *JY* 3.10.49–58, *JY* 3.22.7–23.

53 *KSS* 12.6.116cd–117: "saṃpūjya śārikām devīṃ digbandhādipuraḥsaram // vidhivat sarṣapakṣapād-dharānurahaśālinā / mahātapasvinā tena vivare prakaṭīkṛte //".

> of fish and sheep flesh and alcohol. After that, he should go to *bila* and perform a ritual there. Having worshipped the Great Goddess and burned the mustard seeds of *rāja*-kind, having done a special ritual at night, whereupon he reaches 1,000 [repetitions], then there the earth trembles, [and the entry manifests].[54]

In *JY* 2.25, the door is opened with a human flesh offering, mastery of mantras, and mantra-empowered ashes:

> O Goddess, he should go to a choice mountain, wearing red and black, he should make 300,000 recitations by following a proper procedure. He should offer into fire human flesh and such 30,000 times, O Parameśvari, i.e. one tenth [of the number of repetitions]. Then he should go to a Pātāla entry (*vivara*), famous in the world, and, standing in front of it, the master of mantras should burn *āsurī* poison (some plant), and having entered the enraged state by [the] proper raising up [of] the mantras [within his subtle body], by the flow of the *śaktimantras*, resounding like a thunder cloud of the end of the world, O Goddess of Gods, he will fully experience the ocean of pleasures in Pātāla. With the terrible mantras destroying *yantras* he should generously smear the entry with ashes.[55]

JY 3.10 suggests that the practitioner should have the *siddhis* in the Goddess's mantra prior to entry:

> Having gone near the mountain where a famous Pātāla entry (*vivara*) is located, he should perform a ritual there on the fourteenth night of the dark half of the month. He should make a fire pit and burn there some *guggulu* (plant resin) mixed with ghee, 1,008 times. Then immediately the earth will tremble with its high and low places.[56]

54 *JY* 2.17.832–835ab (87r2–7, whole passage): "pātālasādhane yojyā devadevī kṛśodarī / japtvā lakṣatrayaṃ mantrī parvatāgre daśāṃśataḥ // juhuyān mīnacchāgonthaṃ [tya] ktaṃ tatsuradāruṇam / paścād gacched biladvāraṃ tatra sādhanam ārabhet // saṃpūjya parameśānī juhuyād rājasarṣapāḥ / [. . .] // sahasraṃ yāvad evātra tadā kaṃpati medinī /".

55 *JY* 2.25.663–667 (123v3–124r1, whole passage): "gatvā girivaraṃ devi raktakṛṣṇāmbarānvitaḥ / trayoyutāṃ japed devi vidhidṛṣṭena karmaṇā / juhuyān naramāṃsādyaṃ triḥ[ghra]taṃ parameśvari / daśāṃśena tatogacched vivaraṃ lokaviśrutam // tatra sthitvāgrago mantrī juhuyād viṣam āsurīm / uccaiḥ krodhānvito mantrī dhyāyen mantraṃ pradīptavat // śaktimantrapravāhena pralayāṃbudanisvanam / pūrayed devadeveśi pātālaṃ bhogasāgaram // yantrāśanirnāma mantraś caṇḍograsurapūjitaḥ / eṣa pātālamukhyānāṃ bhasmasāṃ kurute bhṛśam //".

56 *JY* 3.10.49–51ab (74r4–74v3, whole passage): "atha gatvā giripṛṣṭhe vivaraṃ yatraviśrutam / tatra kṛṣṇacaturdaśyām mahārātrauposịtaḥ // jvālayed vahnikuṃḍaṃ tu juhuyāt tatra sādhakaḥ / guggulуṃ ghṛtasaṃmiśraṃ yāvad aṣṭasahasrakam // tadāśu kampate bhūmiṃ saśailavanakānanām /".

A similar entry is described in *JY* 3.22:

> Having made 1,000 repetitions and having made one tenth of offerings into fire of that number, the *sādhaka* holding firmly his *vratas* (practices), should go to the door of Pātāla (*biladvāra*). There at night he performs *homa* (fire ritual) with flesh, and when he reaches one hundred, the earth trembles, O Goddess.[57]

Thus, in both the *Jayadrathayāmala* and the *Kathāsaritsāgara* the door to the Underworld is opened by a master of mantras[58] by burning and scattering or smearing various substances. Mustard seeds seem to be used rather for protection. If in the *KSS* we have a brief description of the ritual as seen by a non-initiated king, who does not understand what is going on, in the *JY* we are presented with an internal view of this procedure, which is, in fact, a part of the *sādhana* or practice of the mantra of the Goddess. The necessary power to open the door is the power that the Goddess bestows upon a practitioner once she is pleased with his offerings of mantras and (human) flesh. Nothing is said about this in the *KSS*, which is unsurprising: such practices were to be kept secret. The yogic guru in the *KSS* outlines his abilities but does not explain which rituals he did to obtain them.

6 Step 2: From entry to the Temple of *Hāṭakeśvara*

Having opened the door to the Underworld, visitors are to deactivate or, better, destroy the protective mechanisms, often presented as some kind of attacking mechanical robot. In the *KSS* the passage describing this part of the process is short: the ascetic is ordered to worship Hāṭakeśvara after five days and nights of going through Pātāla.[59] In *JY* 2.17 "one dries up [i.e. destroys], the door mechanisms, and, when he [the practitioner] laughs terribly, the Pātāla is set in flames. Then, on a special day, he together with friends can enter there, like into his own house, without fear. There he should worship powerful Mahādeva Hāṭakeśvara".[60] *JY* 2.25 is

57 *JY* 3.22.7–9ab (158r4–158v5, whole passage): "japtvā ekasahasrāṇi sādhakeṃdrā dṛḍhavrataḥ / hutvā daśāṃśato mantrī biladvāraṃ vrajet tataḥ // tatra rātrau vadā homaṃ karttavyaṃ sādhakena hi / mahākaṭuka saṃmiśrāṃ rājikāṃ māṃsam āśritāt // śataṃ yāvaj juhed devi tāvat kaṃpati medinīm /".

58 See the description of the "guru of the *yogins*" in *KSS* above.

59 *KSS* 12.6.124: "ayaṃ sa devaḥ pātākanilayo hāṭakeśvaraḥ / gīyate triṣu lokeṣu tadasau pūjyatām iti //".

60 *JY* 2.17.835cd–837: "śuṣyate dvārajovāri yantrābhasmī bhavanti hi // hāhārāvaṃ pravarttena pātāle jvalate khilam / tataḥ sahāyaiḥ sahitāḥ pātālaṃ dīpaparvaṇi // praveṣṭhavyaṃ narendrena svaṃ geham iva nirbhayaḥ [MSS: nirbhavaḥ] / tatra pūjya mahādevaṃ hāṭakeśaṃ mahābalam //".

more elaborate: special women appear first, they are afraid of the *sādhaka*, and they invite him to enter Pātāla with them and enjoy pleasures. Having heard a particular formula, "O Hero. . ." (Ehi Vīra. . .), he enters and performs a mantra with them.[61] By the power of that mantra, the *yantras* (i.e. the protective mechanisms) are destroyed, and the *sādhaka* can freely worship Hāṭakeśvara.[62] Two other passages of the *JY* place more emphasis on interactions with divine women and shall be discussed in step 3 below. The appearance of the divine women marks in this case a "true" entry into the Underworld, and this "true" entry can only happen with their help.

In between steps 2 and 3, the *KSS* elaborates on poisonous fruits that are forbidden to eat in Pātāla[63] and describes in detail the golden splendour of that magical place. The mechanical *yantras* here also appear after Hāṭakeśvara.[64] That is, all elements of a tantric Pātāla-ritual are present in the *KSS*; however, their order and the importance given to them differ slightly from the *JY*.

7 Step 3: "True entry" and the hierarchy of women of the Underworld

The majority of chosen sources agree here that it is women that lead the hero to the "main" city, where the main woman/goddess usually resides.[65] The *KSS* does not elaborate much on this point, but there is a prescription given by the yogic guru to King Bhūnandana that: "Having entered, it is forbidden not to follow the order of his beloved Lady."[66]

61 *JY* 2.25.668–673: "yavat tatra prayojyeta tāvad āyānti yoṣitaḥ / vepamānā bhayatrastā madanānalapīḍitāḥ // trāhi trāhīti jalpantya sādhakendraṃ mahābalam / patanti pādayor bhītām [na]ṇamanti muhur muhuḥ // vadanti bhītabhītās te sādhakaṃ mantrajāyakaḥ / ehi vīra sadāsmākaṃ praviśasva purottamam // svargācchataguṇaṃ samyaṅ nirmitaṃ padmayoginā / sānugaḥ saparīvāro mantrahaṃsarasādhakaḥ // dahyāmo vīra vīrendra mādhināśaya sāṃpratam / evam ākarṇya vacanaṃ sānugaḥ praviśet tataḥ / tāta sārddhaṃ gṛhṇan mantraṃ kālāgnyayutavarcasam /".

62 JY 2.25.673cd–675: "vivikṣu sādhako yāvat tavad yojanasaptake // niryantrāvivarāḥ sarve bhavantāha na saṃśayaḥ / vinaśyaṃti mahāyantrā mayā [marked lacuna; two syllables] prakalitāḥ // tena yantrād [unreadable; one syllable] nirnāma mantroyaṃ surapūjitaḥ / praviśya tatra saṃpūjya hāṭakeśaṃ viśet tataḥ //".

63 *KSS* 12.6.126–129.

64 *KSS* 12.6.131–132; see also the door-keepers in vv. 134–136.

65 Divine women appear, and lead the *sādhaka* to the main city: *JY* 2.17.841ab: "svāntaḥ puraṃ nayaty etāḥ svaputitve narottamam /". *JY* 2.25.676ab calls it the "matrix" city: "svayaṃ garbhapure mantrī parivāraṃ yathecchataḥ /".

66 *KSS* 12.6.139ab: "antaḥpraviṣṭair yuṣmābhir nollaṅghyaṃ svapriyāvacaḥ /".

JY 3.10 provides a version in which beautiful, young shape-shifting women appear. They are afraid of the *sādhaka* and address him using a stable formula, inviting him to enter Pātāla and enjoy pleasures with them until the destruction of the world.[67] *JY* 3.22 provides us with a clear hierarchy of divine women, in which those who appear at the onset are not divine enough: they should not be spoken to, nothing should be taken from them (9cd–12), the *sādhaka* should continue his ritual until the supreme women come, and even these are rejected again, until the very most divine appears (vv. 13–17). Each group of women is more beautiful than the last.

The *KSS* inserts after step 3 a poetic description of the meeting of the *asurī* and her human lover (vv. 140–146). Having put together the passages from the *JY* and the *KSS* we can conclude that Somadeva, or the compiler that preceded him, closely follows the logic of the tantric ritual; that is, the *KSS* follows the very same steps and stages as the *JY* would. These include finding and opening the door to Pātāla, destroying the *yantras*, worshipping Hāṭakeśvara, conversing with divine women, and entering the main city. Any deviation from that formula appears to be due to the need to describe the shiny palace or temple or include details of the love story into which the tantric material is framed. Thus the main line of the *KSS* story describes the tantric understanding of entry into Pātāla, and for the understanding of the tantric elements mentioned in the *KSS*, the *JY* appears to be particularly relevant.

8 Step 4: The magical drink that allows one to stay in Pātāla forever

Most selected passages mention some sort of magical drink that serves as a "confirmation" that one can stay in the paradise-like Underworld forever. The motif of drink does not seem to occur in *JY* 2.17, and *JY* 2.25 provides only: "Having entered and drank the excellent drink, by that, the man will live very long."[68] *JY* 3.10 also presents the magical drink as the only way to obtain the promised pleasures of paradise: "You will obtain all that by partaking the supreme drink" (sāttvikam

67 *JY* 3.10.51cd–55ab: "nirgacchaṃti tataḥ kāṃtāś caruhāsāmanoharāḥ // nānārūpadharāḥ sarvās sarvābharaṇabhūṣitāḥ / mantakuṃjaragāminyaḥ ṣoḍaśābdasamāḥ sadā // vipuladrośisāṃdohāḥ pīnonnatapayodharāḥ / praṇatāvepamānāsrā sādhakasyāgragāḥ priye // vijñāpayaṃti taṃ bhītāḥ sādhakaṃ devavaṃditam / ehy ehi vīranātheśa pātālaṃ bhogasāgaram // sahāsmākaṃ ramaś cātra yāvadābhūmisaṃplavam /".

68 *JY* 2.25.677: "praviśyaivaṃ svayaṃ tatra pītvā sātvikasatvikam / pānaṃ nārāyaṇākāro jīved [dhast]āyuṣaṃ naraḥ //". The drink is called *nārāyaṇa*, i.e. wine.

pānam uttamam).[69] It only becomes clear why the drink is so called in *JY* 3.22. In fact, the supreme divine women, appearing at the very end, are called *sāttvikas*[70] and offer the supreme *sāttvic* drink to the *sādhaka*, having bowed to him. Thus with them and joined with his entourage, the hero should enter *śrīmukha*, and destroy all *yantras*. There, having worshipped the lord of Gods, Hāṭakeśa, he will acquire divine vision and partake of the supreme drink, which should also be given to the guru and to the *sādhaka*'s own women as well.[71]

None of the tantric passages makes clear what this drink consists of, but the *KSS* does, somewhat surprisingly, provide the composition, and Somadeva clearly enjoys the *rasa* that it provokes in the reader. Let us reproduce Charles Henry Tawney's translation of the passage describing the receipt of the magical drink offered to the hero in the *KSS*:

> And after he had rested a little while he bathed, and the Asura maiden had him adorned with robes and jewels, and let him out to the garden to drink. Then she sat down with him on the brink of a tank filled with wine, and with the blood and fat of corpses, that hung from trees on its banks, and she offered that king a goblet, full of that fat and wine, to drink, but he would not accept the loathsome compound. And she kept earnestly saying to the king: "You will not prosper if you reject my beverage." But he answered: "I certainly will not drink that undrinkable compound, whatever may happen." Then she emptied the goblet on his head and departed.[72]

69 *JY* 3.10.55cd–56ab: "sva[rga]ddeśaguṇe[śva]tre sāttvikaṃ pānam uttamam // pivasva tatra vīreṃdra prayacchānyeṣu vā vibho /".

70 From *sattva*, variously translated as "truth", "purity", "the only true thing", etc. Likely the appellation of women comes from this.

71 *JY* 3.22.18–22ab: "sāttvikas tāḥ samākhyātāḥ sāttvikaṃ pānam uttamam / sādhakāya prayacchanti praṇamya ca muhur muhuḥ // evaṃ tābhis saha tadā parivāreṇa saṃyutaḥ / praviśec chrīmukhaṃ vīraḥ sarvayaṃtrāṇi mardayat //tatraṃ sa pūjya deveśam hāṭakeśaṃ mahāprabham / divyacakṣupradaṃ cādau tataḥ pānaṃ samāharet // gurur deyam svayaṃ peyaṃ sāttvikaṃ pānam uttamam / sakhīnāṃ rājasaṃ deyaṃ rājasyaś ca varāṃganāḥ // hīneṣutām asaṃ deyaṃ tām asyo varayoṣitaḥ /".

72 Tawney 1926, vol. 6: 112–113, *KSS* 12.6.152–156: "kṣaṇamātraṃ ca viśrāntaṃ snātaṃ vastrādyalaṃkṛtam / sā nināya tamusyānamāpānāyāsurāṅganā // tatra tīratarullambi-śavaraktavasāsavaiḥ / pūrṇayā sā taṭe vāpyāstena sākamupāviśat // tadva sā savapūrṇaṃ ca pātraṃ tasmai nṛpāya sā / dadau pānaya sa ca tanna jagrāha jugupsitam // na te kṣemaṃ bhaved etad asmat pānaṃ niṣedhatah / iti nirbandhatastām ca bruvāṇāṃ so'bravīn nṛpaḥ // apeyaṃ niścitaṃ naiva pāsyāmy etad yadas tv iti / tataḥ sā tasya tanmūrghni pātraṃ kṣiptvānyato yayau //". A shorter version can be found in *BKM* 268, vv. 683–685: "tatrāpaśyat tarulatālambimartyakalevaraiḥ / vāpīṃ rudhirasaṃpūrṇāṃ vasāvipulakardamām // ratnapātreṇa tatpānaṃ sā gṛhītvā punaḥ punaḥ / nṛpaṃ piba pibety āha na papau sa va kūṇitaḥ // tyajatodbhuvam aśreyo bhavatīti tayārthitaḥ / nādade sā ca tatpātraṃ tasya mūrghni nyapātayat //".

What the king was supposed to drink is actually called *caru* in the tantric texts—a test drink that, while a magic transformative substance, consists of ingredients that are undrinkable in a normal state of consciousness.[73] In the context of tantric initiation (*dīkṣā*) the mixture is said to consist of various products of the body, often belonging to the guru. Human fat, blood, and flesh are included in the mixture if those who give *caru* are the Yoginīs—and these substances are considered the most potent. In both variants, however, the practitioner should show no aversion to such a mixture and swallow it without hesitation. If he fails to do so, it is considered an important transgression. The tantric texts repeatedly use the expression *na nindet*, meaning "he should not despise" those substances.

The king's refusal to partake equals to his non-understanding of the nature of his beloved; moreover, he breaches the instruction given to him earlier by his guru that he should obey her once he enters Pātāla. The threat of the *asurī* or rather yogin that "you will not prosper . . ." refers here to the state of the being who has betrayed the tantric tradition. If we recall that in the *Rājataraṅginī* King Baka was sacrificed by a Yoginī to be liberated, such a violent solution would also be required for King Bhūnandana to return to the state that he has just failed to understand, according to the Vidyāpīṭha logic. His pondering about what has just happened, after he finds himself suddenly back at Lake Kramasaras, includes understanding that he has broken his promise to his guru and that the drink was the test. Interestingly, he uses the same tantric term mentioned above: "that despised drink" (*tanninditaṃ pānaṃ*):

> But what other explanation can there be than this, that undoubtedly this has befallen me because, though I heard the warning of the ascetics, I disobeyed the injunction of that fair one. After all the beverage was not loathsome; she was only making trial of me; for the liquor, which fell upon my head, has bestowed on it heavenly fragrance. So it is indubitable that, in the case of the unfortunate, even great hardships endured bring no reward, for Destiny is opposed to them.[74]

His body odour now attracts bees which sting him, but even that has a tantric meaning:[75] chapter 66 of the Buddhist *Abhidhānottaratantra* lists this as a sign of

73 On the hierarchy of *caru*, see Sanderson 2009: 212, n. 488.

74 Tawney 1926, vol. 6: 112–113, *KSS* 12.6.161–163: "kim anyad vā dhruvaṃ tasyā yan mayollaṅghitaṃ vacaḥ / tapasvivākyaṃ śrutvāpi tasyedaṃ me vijṛmbhitam // na ca tanninditaṃ pānaṃ sā mamaiva parīkṣiṇī / mūrdhni cyutena yattena divyam ayāti saurabham // tatsarvathā hy abhavyānāṃ kṛtaḥ śleśo mahān api / na phalāya vidhis teṣu tathā vāmo hi vartate //".

75 *KSS* 12.6.164–166: "ity evaṃ cintayannetya bhṛṅgair bhūnandano'tra saḥ / aveṣṭyatāsurasutā-pānasiktāṅgagandhataḥ // kaṣṭamiṣṭaphalo mā bhūjjāto'niṣṭaphalastu me / parikleśo'lpasattvasya vetālotthāpanaṃ yathā // iti tairdaśyamānaśca bhṛṅgaiḥ sa bimṛśaṃstadā / jātodvego matiṃ cakre dehatyāgaya bhūpatiḥ //." See also *BKM* 268, v. 689:

recognition of a person who is a *saptajanmapaśu*, a "seven-times-born victim": "The sweat of his body is eaten by the bees, the limbs are fragrant, with divine smell or that of camphor, the excrement and urine smell musky";[76] that is, he became a person who made some mistakes in practice and can only recover from those by being sacrificed by the Yoginīs. This is probably what the *yoginī/asurī* hinted at in saying to the king that "you will not prosper. . .".

Fortunately for Bhūnandana, he resorted again to his practice and after many years won back his beloved, and thus we can bring in here the last step: eternal pleasure ending in liberation, understood in the *JY* as unity with the goddess. In *JY* 2.17 the *sādhaka* remains with the divine women in this ocean of pleasure for the duration of the great *kalpa* (cosmic period), and obtains *nirvāṇa* (understood as liberation) after that.[77] In *JY* 2.25, at the end, the man, in the body of a *devatā* (divine being), will reach the state of union.[78] *JY* 3.10 is wonderfully poetic and summarises steps 2 to 4 in just two verses:

> Having heard that [the formula "O hero. . ."], the master of tantras should enter with them [the divine women] there. [He becomes] endowed with great supernatural powers and drives golden flying chariots (*vimānas*), having worshipped the leader of Gods, Maheśvara Hāṭakeśa, there and having partaken of the supreme drink (*sātvikaṃ pāna[ṃ]*) which is the essence [lit. "bone marrow"] of the moon and stars. He will live for a *kalpa*, o Fortunate, and [after that] will enter the body of the Goddess.[79]

Finally, *JY* 3.22 promises that "there he will thrive, and he will live for a *kalpa*. The violent (*haṭha*) entry into Pātāla has been explained, O Divine Beauty".[80]

The story of King Bhūnandana brings together multiple tantric practices that are transformed into colourful ornamentations to the main love story in the *KSS*: the entry into the Underworld (Pātāla), the motif of tantric initiation by means of *caru*, and even the hints on how to recognise the person who falls out of favour with the Yoginīs. All these motifs would be impossible to bring together with-

"kāmāgnimalināṅgārair iva vyāpta sa ṣaṭpadaiḥ / dhūtāgrapāṇirno lebhe śarma marmāhato yathā //".

76 *AUT* ch. 66, vv. 4–5a; f. 303, ll. 6–7: "prasvedan tasya kāyeṣu bhramarair bhakṣate tathā / divyagandhasugandhāṅgo athavā pūragandhikā // viṅmutragandhakasturyyā".

77 *JY* 2.17.841cd–842ab: "tatra tābhiḥ samaṃ tiṣthe mahābhogabharālasaḥ // mahākalpaṃ sādhakendra pāścān nirvāṇam arhati /".

78 *JY* 2.25.678ab: "paryante devatā dehe yānti sāyojyatāṃ naraḥ /".

79 *JY* 3.10.56cd–58: "evaṃ śrutvā tatas tasāṃ sarddhaṃ tatra viśen naraḥ // mahāvibhūtisaṃyukto vimānaiḥ kāṃcanesthitaḥ / tatrārcayitvā deveṃdraṃ hāṭakeśaṃ maheśvaram // pītvā tu sātvikaṃ pāna ramed ācaṃdratārakam / kalpāvasāne subhage viśet tām aiśvarītanum //".

80 *JY* 3.22.22cd–23ab: "evaṃ vibhajya suciraṃ mahākalpaṃ sa jīvati // haṭhapraveśam ākhyātaṃ pātāle surasuṃdari /".

out the important Other—the passages written for the initiated in the *Jayadratha-yāmala*—and thus the full set of associations that Somadeva put in his text would have remained undiscovered.

9 Conclusion

The magical tantric world populated with ambivalent Yoginīs would have been familiar to readers in eleventh- and twelfth-century India. Passages containing meetings with these divines goddesses are well known in scholarship thanks to the work of nineteenth- and twentieth-century translators of Sanskrit literature. However, these translators lacked many of the original sources and thus the full meaning of the tantric imagery and allusion contained in these stories has remained largely hidden until recent years when many of these manuscripts have been made available by the NGMPP. To the author's knowledge, the current chapter represents the first attempt to analyse these passages in light of the emergence of the Vidyāpīṭha texts.

Reading these texts together not only allows us to reinterpret the stories written for non-practitioners but also to revise the degree of importance that was attributed to tantric practices in the context of medieval India. The tantric world was not hidden behind an impenetrable wall with almost no influence on everyday life, but, on the contrary, the main concepts of the secret tantric traditions were definitely understandable to the public.

Despite the fact the Vidyāpīṭha manuscripts are now accessible, these tantric texts remain, to play with the words of this volume's title, the "Significant Others" in our understanding of the stories about Yoginī meetings in classical Indology. Let us hope that these preliminary bridges between traditions will attract further research that might throw light on the fascinating interconnections of tantric practices and reflections in medieval Sanskrit literature for the non-initiated.

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A: NGMPP A44/1, NAK 1/363; B: NGMPP A44/2, NAK 5/445. Ed. by Mark S. G. Dyczkowski. E-text of 2005 from http://www.muktabodha.org was used for consultation.

PART II

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

Philippe Bornet

Visual Encounters with a Significant Other: The Travels of Maria Bambina from Italy to India (and Beyond)

Abstract. The chapter analyses the transnational life of an image of the child Mary as it travelled from Italy to India around the end of the nineteenth century. The first section sketches out some methodological and theoretical considerations. The second part recounts the image's origins, as it was modelled in wax by a Franciscan nun around 1735, and its development in Italy with the Sisters of Charity, and then across Europe through ecclesiastical networks. In the third section, the contribution deals with the image's appropriation in South India, and especially in the region of Mangalore (Karnataka, India). Retaining some of the characteristics of the "original" image (in particular, its relation to health), the Indian context gave it additional dimensions: a relation to harvests, a celebration with many elements borrowed from a South Indian Hindu framework, and a specific relation to the Konkani-speaking Roman Catholic community of Mangalore. Comparing European and Indian evidence, the chapter concludes by asking to what extent the image's usage in both contexts reflects (or not) different visual cultures.

Keywords. Mary, South India, Catholicism, Hinduism, Sisters of Charity

1 Reconstructing the connected histories of religious images and objects

The case explored in this chapter came to my attention by chance when doing research in Karnataka back in 2014.[1] I was struck by an important procession featuring an image that looked both familiar and foreign, an image of the Infant Mary, or Maria Bambina, borrowed from North Italy but set in a context of performance that was entirely local. The present contribution examines the history of

1 My warms thanks to Prof. Vivek Rai for first introducing me to that tradition, to Dr Kranti Farias for her precious help in assembling the pieces of this puzzle and to Dr Paola von Wyss-Giacosa for her valuable comments on an earlier draft. All inconsistencies and mistakes remain fully mine.

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this encounter and its implications, starting with a few preliminary methodological considerations.

In his pioneering study of the role of images in the conquest of Mexico, Serge Gruzinski highlights the fact that Christian missionaries did all they could not only to replace local images by Christian iconography—such as the Virgin Mary—but also to make sure that Christian images were considered as mere signifiers of something else, and no more.[2] While succeeding with the importation of Christian iconography, the missionaries failed to limit the images' performance to a purely mnemonic dimension, as is witnessed by the great popularity of the Virgin of Guadalupe in South America up to present times, which retains many aspects of pre-Christian traditions. This example shows the eminently versatile character of images, implying that tracing the history of a specific image requires one to deal not only with the intentions of its creator(s) but also with the history of its mediatisation and reception in diverse social, political, and religious contexts. It is also reminiscent of the approach of "connected histories" that Gruzinski and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have formalised; that is, to "reconnect" documents and archives that represent different sides of the same phenomenon in the manner of an electrician reconnecting electrical wires.[3] The goal is to go against Eurocentric or nationalist biases in the writing of history and to connect the micro and macro levels, using a lens that looks at global issues arising in detailed histories of individuals or objects.

While individual lives, especially those of actors who have moved across borders and cultures, have received increased attention of late,[4] the study of images and objects has not attracted as much scholarly consideration. However, images and objects are privileged candidates for such an approach because they travel easily across cultural contexts and are quick to take up new meanings and functions. The three dimensions outlined by Hans Belting in his proposal for a visual anthropology can provide a helpful guideline in this pluri-contextual exploration of an image's biography in (1) the way images (and the message they carry) are adapted to a new situation; (2) the role of the medium carrying the images, im-

2 Gruzinski 2001a: 66: "An image of the Virgin was not God, no more than it could be confused with the virgin herself. It was only an instrument of remembrance and memory. The Christian West had long known of this pedagogical and mnemonic function assigned to the image."

3 Gruzinski 2001b: 87: "Faced with realities to be necessarily grasped on multiple scales, the historian should transform himself into a sort of electrician, capable of re-establishing the continental and intercontinental connections that national historiographies have long been ingenious at disconnecting or retracting by waterproofing their borders" (my translation). See also Subrahmanyam 2005.

4 E.g. Deacon et al. 2010; Gamsa 2017; Bornet 2021.

pacting their reception and circulation; and (3) the perception of images by human actors interacting with them.[5]

We will pay particular attention to these dimensions in our analysis of different stages of Maria Bambina's travels. In the first section we will first look at the Italian context of the image's production, and will consider then its dissemination in Europe, among both clerical institutions and individuals. In the second we will analyse aspects of its reception in India, focusing particularly on the region of Mangalore, Karnataka.

2 Maria Bambina's early career

2.1 Phase 1: Italian convents

While representations of the Infant Mary have been popular since late antiquity, the image that interests us here is more recent. The statue (*simulacro*) was modelled in wax in 1735 by Isabella Chiara Fornari (1697–1744), the Franciscan Superior Nun of the Todi convent in the region of Perugia. The tradition of modelling effigies in wax was not particularly new at the time. The practice is well attested in Italy and in northern Europe at least since the thirteenth century and particularly appreciated for the great corporeal realism of the depicted effigy.[6] The making of the statue should also be recontextualised within a tradition of piety devoted to the Infant Jesus, especially popular within congregations of nuns since the late Middles Ages.[7] Noteworthy in that first stage of the iconography is the way the Infant is swaddled very tightly with bands: a practice with a long history and well documented in the Italian context,[8] but soon to be questioned, for example by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Émile* (1762).

Fornari's wax effigy was offered to the bishop of Como, Alberico Simonetta (1694–1739), in 1738. In turn, he had a replica made in terracotta and gave it to

5 Belting 2011: 9–36.

6 See Freedberg 1999: 227 and his emphasis on wax as not only a cheap material to sculpt with but as achieving "verisimilitude": "By using wax (or related substances like papier-mache and boiled leather), one could achieve the closest possible approximation of real flesh." See also Jagla 2019: 62: "Consequently, wax was considered a substance with miraculous, extraordinary, magical, and health-giving properties and even having an apotropaic power; hence, making a wax votive item meant the creation of an object of extraordinary power."

7 On this practice and the history of its interpretations, see Rublack 1994: 43.

8 See the following example in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, dated 1600–1625, https://www.vandaimages.com/2006AL3755-Swaddling-band-Italy-17th-century.html (28/01/2022).

Figure 1 Image from the leaflet *Esercizio spirituale da farsi nel giorno otto d'ogni mese, ossia, Coroncina in onore della santissima infanzia di Maria* (1757), reproduced in *Il Simulacro e il Santuario di Maria Bambina* 1959, p. 14. Caption reads: "True portrait of the famous S. Madoninna which was once in the care of the Servant of God, Sr. Maria Clara Fornari, now venerated in the interior church of the Cappucine convent of S. Maria degli Angeli in Milan". Reproduced with permission of the Istituto delle Suore di Carità.

the Capuchin convent of Santa Maria di Angeli in Milan.[9] Simonetta gifted the copy saying that it was for the "education of the youth and the teaching of the Christian doctrine, especially the first rule of Saint Clare"[10]—obedience, poverty, and chastity. However, the actual use of the statue shows that it was also, and perhaps especially, considered in its function of intercessor and support for spiritual experiences. A few healings are already reported at this point and a leaflet entitled "Spiritual Exercise to be Done in the Honour of Mary's Nativity and Infancy Every Eighth Day of a Month" was published in 1757, with an engraving showing the Infant Mary effigy (Fig. 1).

At this stage, venerated and prayed at in a standing position, the image represented a way for its guardians to develop a privileged relation to the saint rather than directly to the deity. It did not only have an impact on the inner spiritual life of a community of female practitioners but also provided them with a device for intercession that attracted prominent people outside their community.[11]

2.2 Phase 2: Settling with the "Sisters of Charity" in medical institutions

In 1782 the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Joseph II (1741–1790), suppressed the Capuchin convent—an effect of his "Edict on Idle Institutions"—and the nuns sought refuge in another institution, the Augustinian convent of San Filippo Neri in Milan. The wax effigy remained there for a few years, until the transformation of the convent into a military hospital and its subsequent suppression in 1810 under the Napoleonian regime. It is not exactly clear what happened for the next thirty years. The statue re-emerged in 1842 in the hands of Teresa Bosio, the Mother General of the Sisters of Charity at the time—a congregation or "institute" founded in 1832 in Lovere by Bartolomea Capitanio (1807–1833) and Vincenza Gerosa (1784–1847) which was devoted to providing education to young girls and relief to the sick. Sisters of that congregation had been called to Milan to assist a hospital.[12] The effigy of Maria Bambina was exposed in the hospital's chapel and was celebrated every year by the Sisters and the sick. It thus

9 Upon the request of the Capuchin nuns, the original figure was returned to the same convent after Simonetta's death in 1739.

10 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 20. The first rule states: "To observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity."

11 For example, the marquis Alessandro Erba Odescalchi (1677–1757) reported that he had been healed by the nuns' prayers to the Mary effigy and became a benefactor of the convent. *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 20.

12 See Carraro/Mascotti 1987–1991 for a comprehensive history of this institution.

Figure 2 Maria Bambina, Istituto delle Suore di Carità, Milan. *Source:* https://www.suoredimariabambina.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/maria-bambina.jpg. Reproduced with permission of the Istituto delle Suore di Carità.

gained a more functional role: not only as a support for prayer or teaching but also as actively helping the healing process, as a complement to the kind of medicine practised in the hospital. It is at this point that the statue was displayed as lying in a cradle and not standing.

In 1876 the Bambina was moved to the new location of the Sisters' headquarters, on Via Santa Sofia in Milan, where it remains today (after a few further tribulations).[13] In 1884 the Mother Superior of the institute, Teodolinda Nazari (1836–1888), decided to restore the effigy and decorate it with precious stones. The clothes of the Infant are no longer a tight swaddle, as in the first, rather austere staging of the statue, but clothes made of a lush fabric, embellished by golden bands. The bed itself has become a lavishly decorated frame for the statue. Most importantly, the Infant's body is entirely concealed, except for her face, inevitably inviting direct visual contact with her eyes (Fig. 2). And indeed, when taking care of a task related to this restoration project, a novice working on it was so fascinated by the Bambina's eyes that she had to blindfold her in order to finish her task.[14]

13 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 25; Angelillo 2019: 206.
14 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 26.

At this point, the effigy started to be associated with supernatural events. On 8 September, the day of Mary's birth, one sister who had been paralysed for months requested to have the effigy on her bed for the night. The next day, she was suddenly healed. Another sick sister was healed by merely looking at the Bambina on the same day, and still others were healed in a similar fashion. In 1885 the statue is said to have miraculously changed its colour, becoming more colourful, more vivid, more alive.[15]

2.3 Phase 3: Spreading across Europe—institutions and individuals

With such stories circulating quickly, crowds began to flock to Milan to see the effigy. The local liberal press, such as the newspaper *Il secolo: Gazzetta di Milano* mocked the practice, saying that "the cult of the idol and the much advertised miracles are resolved in the hunt for offerings and alms; rumours of miracles are spread in order to better spill money to the gulls".[16] Notwithstanding the criticism, the effigy was brought to a chapel inside the Mother Superior's house and presented to the public for devotion and pilgrimage in 1888. In 1904, as a sign of the Bambina's growing popularity, the Mother Superior Ángela Ghezzi (1854–1918) obtained authorisation to organise a coronation from Pope Pius X (1835–1914) and offered him a facsimile reproduction. A solemn and well-attended ceremony was performed, and the statue received a crown. The iconography produced after this date shows, indeed, a richly ornated diadem or crown atop the Infant's head.

The same period saw what might be called the "commodification" of the Bambina. Images were printed, and copies of the statue made, along with postcards, oil for lamps, strips of cotton blessed and touched to the Bambina's face, and medals meant to be sewn on pillows or mattresses.[17] In addition, an institute founded in

15 For the narration of these events, see *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 27.

16 "Un capitolo della storia delle superstizioni", *Il secolo: Gazzetta di Milano*, 26–27 June 1885, p. 3. The full text reads: "There are those who hang the shirts of the sick from the gilded cradle containing the wax idol, trusting that by gilding them they will be cured. There are others who carry the sick children to her: there are candles and vows hung on the walls where the doll is venerated: and no one has the courage to protest the supercilious interests of those who started the new holy store. The cult of the idol and the much-advertised miracles are resolved in the hunt for offerings and alms; rumours of miracles are spread to better spill money to the gulls" (my translation).

17 As referred to in an article in *Il Popolo Cattolico*, 12 September 1885. On these "simpler" reproductions, see Freedberg 1999: 121: "When we survey the prayer cards, badges, and terracotta tokens—indeed, the whole class of simpler reproduction—we are likely to be struck by just how telling are these adaptations of high and fancy art. Pretty soon we notice how the image is adorned or simplified, embellished or rendered more schematic, made

1893 in Brescia began to print a periodical entitled *Sorrisi e vagiti di Maria Santissima Bambina* ("Smiles and Wails of the Santissima Maria Bambina") with the support of the Pope Leon XIII (1810–1903), and distributed it across the whole country.[18]

All this contributed not only to the further spread of the effigy's fame but also opened the door to new interpretations and individual uses of it: fellow sisters and priests from various countries asked for reproductions. Statues reached the networks of Carmelite, Benedictine, and Franciscan convents, starting with that of the Carmelite Sisters of Laval in France (which organised the distribution of thousands of medals), and then to convents in Vienna, Lourdes, Avranches, Namur (Belgium), and so on. A priest from the Swiss canton Ticino hired a painter to paint a scene of the Santa Bambina in his church; a Benedictine sister from Nimes (France) asked for a real-size copy of the image; and the Sisters of Charity in Waterford (Ireland) asked for a photograph.[19]

Along with its diffusion among ecclesiastical institutions, the statue was also used by some remarkable individuals who began to develop an idiosyncratic relation with her. One case was of a certain Marie Mesmin (1867–1935) of Bordeaux who had visited the sanctuary in Lourdes in 1904 and brought back a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes which wept frequently. Her statue was confiscated by the Church in 1911, but the Italian sisters gifted her a statue of the Maria Bambina to compensate for her loss. It was made in plaster and, as it happens, the miraculous weeping resumed. Mesmin herself had visions of the Virgin, communicated them to people who came to see her, and attracted a small circle of followers.[20]

With all this, the Bambina went public: she had found her way out of the small world of a congregation of sisters, discovered new audiences, and taken on new meanings. She was "validated" at the highest ecclesiastical level, other clerics in Europe became eager to associate themselves with her, derivative objects for individual use were created, and some individuals saw in her a source of legitimation for their idiosyncratic visions and supernatural experiences.

more wooden or more sugary. This in itself provides insight into the aesthetic expectations and preoccupations of the people who buy such images (even though they may well declare that all they want is a reproduction of the image at the shrine)."

18 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 42–43.

19 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 50–51.

20 On this curious case, see Christian 2013: 80–85. It illustrates the ambiguity surrounding the ecclesiastical response to the Maria Bambina and the extraordinary events and visions reported about her, between endorsement (when supernatural events would happen within a controlled context) and hostility (when it gave authority to individuals with idiosyncratic views that could not easily be reintegrated into the Church's fold).

3 Maria Bambina in South India

3.1 Mary's popularity in South India

Let us now move to the Bambina's career in South Asia and especially in South India. Before dealing specifically with her, however, it is necessary to note first the impressive popularity of Mary in this region, even before the arrival of the Portuguese among Syriac Christian communities. Soon after they arrived in India in 1498, the Portuguese—who were also responsible for the evangelisation of foreign countries under the Padroado regime—did all they could to attract the natives to Christianity.[21] Mary was an essential device in this process, not only in her capacity of protector of maritime travel as *Stella Maris*, but also as a precious link between the Roman Catholic missionaries and the Indian Syriac Christian communities.[22] As Susan Bayly has argued in a classic work, and despite the caution missionaries exerted in orienting the interpretation of Christian symbols, the native eyes quickly appropriated and re-semantised Mary. As a motherly figure that heals, protects, and controls fertility, she became naturally associated to local goddesses acting as sources of supernatural power, supports for popular devotion, and carers of a community or a village (*grāmadevāta*) such as Mariamman, Sateri, Bhumika, Kelbai, and others. The veneration of Mary was certainly not reserved to Christians, a point particularly clear in the case of Our Lady of Health celebrated in Vailankanni, Tamil Nadu—a shrine initiated by Indians and renowned for having saved Portuguese sailors from a sure death: in this case, Mary was no longer a device to evangelise the Indians but had become an Indian figure that saved the Portuguese themselves.[23]

21 See Bayly 1989: 278: "When the Padroado missionaries introduced images of the Virgin Mary into Kerala in the sixteenth century, these too became a focus for cult veneration among the Syrians. At Mavelikkara, a celebrated image of the Virgin was paraded with music and banners during the church's annual festival: the priests and 'chief men of the church' carried the image in procession and halted at pandals (canopied ceremonial enclosures) before each house where cash offerings were made."

22 Bayly 1989: 278.

23 See Bayly 1989: 368: "At the celebrated shrine of Our Lady of Health at Velankanni worshippers from all castes and religious communities share in the cult of the shrine's miraculous local Virgin. This shrine is famous for its powers of healing and exorcism, and is thought to have been a popular pilgrimage place since the early seventeenth century. According to local tradition the shrine was not founded by missionaries, but by a group of devotees who had formed up around an image of the Virgin possessing miraculous medicinal powers." See also the movie *Annai Velankanni* (1971), which features the shrine and shows its almost complete "Indianisation", depicting, for example, Mary as an astrologist giving her blessing about a forthcoming wedding.

3.2 Phase 4: Helping the Sisters of Charity in India

We saw that derivative objects and images of Maria Bambina had started to circulate within Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. The Bambina's global career, however, started with the missionary activities of the Italian Sisters of Charity in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, Poland, and the United States. Invited by Jesuit fathers in Bengal to contribute to the education of girls, four Italian sisters of the Sisters of Charity community were sent from Milan to Bengal in 1860.[24] In Krishnagar (Bengal), they had to follow the new British policies about missionaries adopted after the 1857 Revolt—policies that mostly restricted missionary activities to charitable work—but this was actually the work they were doing back in Italy already.[25] They started an orphanage and provided medical assistance and education by organising schools for young brides.

In a letter of 1887, Sister Cecilia Uetz (1831–1889) reported that the Ganges had flooded many villages around Krishnagar. She indicated that Protestant missionaries, probably of the Church Missionary Society, tried to take advantage of the event to prove the superiority of their doctrine over that of the Catholics. The sisters prayed to the Bambina and made an embroidery with her image to be displayed in a little chapel. As a result, we are told, the Ganges retreated, specifically spared the fields of the converts, and everything was brought under control—including the ambitions of rival missionary societies. To thank the Bambina, the sisters organised a procession, dressed her for the occasion and decorated her with flowers and rice.[26] Another Italian sister, Giuseppina Brambilla (?–1890), came to Bengal in 1888 and contributed to spreading more widely the devotion to the Bambina: medals that she had distributed were reported to have performed several miracles, and she had translated the Novena[27] into English (not Bengali) and printed and distributed it to various households.[28] In another (unspecified) location, the Bambina changed the minds of local villagers so that women could also convert to Christianity if they so wanted.[29]

24 Angelillo 2019: 207.

25 For a general survey of cultural relations between India and Italy, see Leucci et al. 2018.

26 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 51–52.

27 A Novena is a series of prayers dedicated to a specific saint to be recited on every day of the nine-day period preceding the saint's festival.

28 Prevedello 1945: 182 (my translation): "The Provincial, Sr Giuseppina Brambilla, has the merit of having established in India the veneration of the Holy Child Mary, bringing to it the enthusiasm and devotion that the miracles that are still recent had aroused in hearts. [. . .] Soon this devout homage was rewarded by the Queen herself [Mary!] with an extraordinary healing in favour of a convert belonging to the English Ladies of Our Lady of Loreto in Darjeeling, where the Provincial was a guest for treatment." The choice of English (and not Bengali) for the translation of the Novena might be related to the fact that one of the sisters' activities consisted in educating higher caste women (Carraro/Mascotti 1987–1991, vol. 1: 229).

29 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 82–83.

Such anecdotes show that the image had become a powerful instrument in the hands of an otherwise marginalised group of Italian sisters living in remote Bengal and lacking proper preparation for working in such a location. As an image functionally similar to other local deities and available in various material forms, it was easily recognised as having significant symbolical power and could be used in different kinds of performances, individual and collective. In a rather hostile environment, it gave the sisters a modest—but real—competitive advantage over other religious societies.

3.3 Phase 5: The arrival of the Bambina in Mangalore

Let us focus now on the specific region of Mangalore in current Karnataka. The local Roman Catholic community traces its origins back to Goa and says it emigrated to the south to escape various threats such as the Inquisition during the sixteenth century. It also describes itself as originally a group of Konkani-speaking Gaud Saraswati Brahmins who had converted to Christianity under Franciscan, then Jesuit influence. Therefore, many sociocultural traits of that caste, such as wedding rituals, were preserved in the community's ritual practices.[30] The first Catholic Church of the region was built by the Portuguese when they arrived in Mangalore, as early as 1568: the Rosario Cathedral in Bolar.[31] An important chapter of the community's history is the captivity of its members in Seringapatam during the reign of Tipu Sultan which ended with his defeat and death at the hands of the British in 1799. Since then, the region has seen various Catholic institutions coming to its shores from Europe: for instance, the Carmelites since 1838 and the Jesuits since 1879, the latter of which founded a renowned school, the St Aloysius

30 On which see Silva/Fuchs 1965.

31 On the foundation of the Bolar church and the figure of Our Lady of the Rosary, see the following hymn reported by Silva/Fuchs 1965: 7–8, which features a notion of Mary very much reminiscent of a Hindu Devī Mātā:

> 1. Our mother came from Goa. It was the mother of the Rosary. She was with loose hair on her head. Thus attired, she went down in the sea. The mother was drowned in the sea.
> 2. She came to Mangalore. She came to Mangalore. And went to Bolar. She has made her home in the Bolar region, And with the grace of God Has given us shelter.
> 3. Let us all here meet together And build a shrine In honour of our mother, Lady of the Rosary.
> 4. A shrine is built, and in it what sound With the ringing of bells! All is splendour there. On the spot where the shrine is built How much light is there, With the burning of candles!
> 5. All are jubilant. What noise in the shrine! The prayers are recited, With much singing and music, All are at her feet.

College. The community managed to avail for itself important positions in the colonial administration and represented the bulk of Indian Christians in Karnataka: according to official censuses, in 1901 Mangalorean Catholics accounted for 76,000 out of a total of about 84,000 Christians in South Canara, making the Protestant community related to the activities of the Basel Mission—which had its Indian headquarters in Mangalore—a small minority.[32]

In 1883, the German Jesuit Father Augustus Müller (1841–1910), an influential promoter of homeopathy in India, founded a small hospital in Kankanady, Mangalore. Needing help for his hospital, he asked the Swiss Italian bishop of Mangalore, Abbondio Cavadini (1846–1910), to provide him with staff members. Bishop Cavadini managed to get four Italian Sisters of Charity sent from Milan in 1898 to take care of leprosy patients at Father Müller's hospital. Since they lacked any knowledge of English and Konkani, Father Müller turned them away, and the Sisters ended up opening an orphanage in the small neighbouring village of Jeppu, where they would later start a novitiate for Indian women. In 1912, after Father Müller's death, the Sisters were called back to the Kankanady hospital.[33]

As mentioned above, the figure of Mary was already very popular even before the arrival of the Sisters of Charity. More specifically, the Roman Catholic community were greatly devoted to Our Lady of the Rosary (to which the Bolar cathedral is consecrated) as well as to Our Lady of Miracles (to which another important Catholic church in Mangalore, the Milagres church is consecrated), not to mention Mary of Lourdes, the Immaculate Conception, which came with the arrival of the Jesuits in 1879.[34] Quite naturally, the Sisters brought with them a replica of the Maria Bambina statue—"companion and teacher of the Sisters, mediator of grace for all"[35]—and the first stone of a chapel dedicated to her in Jeppu was laid in 1906 (for an inauguration in 1910).[36] In addition, further derivative images and objects featuring the Maria Bambina were produced locally (Fig. 3). All this added

32 Burn et al. 1908: 360. See Farias 1999: 120–151 for the impact of various Christian groups on different aspects of the society in Canara.

33 For details about this community, which has recently celebrated its 125th anniversary, see http://mlore.sccg.in (15/10/2021).

34 As to the devotion towards Mary in the region, see for example the article "Lourdes in Mangalore", *The Mangalore Magazine* 1/2, Easter 1898, p. 56, which mentions a statue of the Lourdes Immaculate Conception venerated in a dedicated grotto, but not of Maria Bambina.

35 *Il Simulacro e il Santuario* 1959: 51: "Una copia del Santo Simulacro le [*sic.* the Sisters] accompagnava in ogni nuova fondazione; ormai non si apriva più una Casa senza che vi trovasse il suo posto di onore: vi entrava sempre, compagna e maestre delle Suore, mediatrice di grazia per tutto."

36 See Prevedello 1945: 405–406 on the S. Maria Bambina Chapel in Mangalore started in 1906 and officially inaugurated in 1910. The replica still remains in the Infant Mary Convent Chapel, next to Jeppu Seminary.

Figure 3 Figurine of Maria Bambina in clay owned by Dr Kranti Farias, gifted to her by Denis Brito in the 1980s. Reproduced with permission of Dr Kranti Farias.

yet another aspect to the already well-developed devotion to Mary within the local Roman Catholic community.

Early in the twentieth century, the Bambina escaped the walls of the missionary institution. It was included in one of the community's most significant yearly celebrations, probably more important than Christmas itself: the festival of Monti Fest celebrated on the day of Mary's nativity beginning with the nine preceding days. It is probably not a coincidence that these dates are extremely close to major festivals in the region. There is first the Gaṇeśa Caturthī, which celebrates the birth of Ganesh and is particularly popular in Goa: a joyful festival celebrated with parades, flowers, and pandals, and including the blessing of the first rice and a communal vegetarian meal. During the same period, Janmāṣṭami (or Gokul Aṣṭami), which celebrates Lord Krishna's birthday, is fervently celebrated in South India and associated with various celebrations of the harvests.

Monti Fest directly echoes these popular festivals and includes allusions to important episodes of the community's past. It was probably created as a Christian version of one or the other Hindu festival we have just mentioned, in the context of Jesuit activity in Goa.[37] While officially consecrated to Mary's birth, it is first a celebration of harvests and involves the blessing of the new paddy, the decoration of the Infant Mary with flowers during the nine days preceding the festival, and a vegetarian meal of nine dishes. The festival is also the occasion to remember the community's past and the escape from captivity under the rule of Tipu Sultan, since it reportedly was the first ritual celebrated after the captivity ended: a symbol of resilience after a traumatic experience. The addition of the Bambina in

37 See Henn 2014 for the context of Hindu–Catholic relations in Goa (esp. pp. 40–64 on the role of images in that context, and pp. 87–88 on the Gaud Saraswat community). No mention is made, however, of the Monti festival. About the history of Monti Fest, see the sketch proposed by Naik 2021 and in particular the mention of the Maria Bambina statue in relation with the Sisters of Charity.

Figures 4 and **5** Maria Bambina at the Monti Feast 2014, Mangalore. *Source:* The author's personal photograph.

Figure 6 Maria Bambina in the Monti Feast, London 2020. Reproduced with the permission of the South Kanara Association (SKA London).

the beginning of the twentieth century reinforced these different aspects: fertility, health, and resilience.

In terms of iconography in the South Indian context, it is striking that the Infant Mary's lavishly ornate crib (recall Fig. 2) is generally lacking. The main attribute is rather that of flowers and vegetation in general, reflecting the theme of fertility (Fig. 4 and 5). A European richly decorated cradle is not seen as a necessary attribute for the image to perform its function. With this development, Maria Bambina has become an important identity marker for the Konkani-speaking Roman Catholic community. The thaumaturgic functions are no longer so central in that specific context, and the connection to Italy seems to be somewhat secondary: she is before everything else a symbol that all group members can recognise.

3.4 Phase 6: On the road again

Since the Konkani-speaking Catholic community has moved around a fair amount, first to Mumbai and then to various parts of the world,[38] the Bambina followed its members to the diaspora. The Monti Fest is indeed celebrated among international expatriate communities of people coming from the Kanara region across the world, in the Gulf countries, Israel, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Africa, and beyond.[39] Naturally enough, the festival in each place displays prominently the Bambina's image, in its unmistakeably South Indian cultural form (Fig. 6).

38 See Menezes 2021 on the successful career of a member of that community in England; see Pinto 2005–2006 on the diaspora in Mumbai.
39 See e.g. Pereira 2016; "Salalah" 2018; Naik 2020.

4 Conclusion: Images and objects as Ariadne's threads in a global history of religious processes

Let us now conclude with a few observations about the successive visual encounters that have marked the long life of the Maria Bambina effigy. First, the present case underlines the power of images, and particularly of that specific image, for the uplifting of marginalised groups: groups of women, initially belonging to a contemplative order, having to face various setbacks and working in predominantly male environments; Italian Sisters in remote Bengal and Karnataka (and elsewhere); and the Konkani-speaking Roman Catholic community itself, which has been singled out for its heterodox practices by the Roman Catholic Church. The image has thus proved surprisingly resilient, in both European and South Asian contexts: it has given symbolical power to its guardians, escaped institutional control multiple times, and adapted to unstable and changing social, political, and religious contexts.[40]

Second, the adaptation of the image to fit new contexts of performance is remarkable. The most obvious aspect is of course the "translation" of the image into a South Indian religious idiom, by which it became an identity marker for a specific group. But there were adaptation processes earlier as well, as in the move from convents to hospitals, or from being subject to a collective or individual practice.[41] In addition, the image moved across different media and physical forms, from wax to terracotta and plaster, and copies and derivative products were produced in large quantities. In these different cases, the copy seems (almost) as efficient as the original, and in South India, the very idea of an "original" in Italy does not have much importance.[42] Despite these various adaptations, the visual relation to the image is strikingly similar between the European practices that we have surveyed and the image's use in India. As Belting notes, the cross-cultural perspective is crucially important in the study of images: "[I]mages unfold their full potential only when seen in cross-cultural perspective, for then contradictions come to light between

40 Cf. Freedberg 1999: 120 for a similar observation: "In short, it is not just the Virgin, or Saint Francis or the dead or risen Christ, but rather the Virgin or the Saint Francis or the dead or risen Christ in a specific image to which men and women flock, in which they invest their hopes, and to which they give thanks. And the reason for this has not only to do with local pride or economic good sense: it has, in profound ways, to do with how the images look."

41 On individual and collective functions of votive images, see Pezzoli-Olgiati 2011: 35–36.

42 See Freedberg 1999: 124: "In all such cases, we have again to ask ourselves whether the ways in which the archetype is transformed in reproduction has any significant bearing on its felt effectiveness, or whether it is not again largely a matter of consecration or of power derived from contact."

any generic definition and definitions specific to different cultural traditions."[43] The example of Maria Bambina however presses us to go one step further and look not only at specific images in different cultures comparatively but also at how images can be key vectors in processes of cultural hybridisation. This all invites us to exert some caution when generalising about presumed radical differences between European and Indian visual religious cultures. Indeed, the present example certainly suggests that we relativise the cultural specificity of *darśan*—the visual relation to the divine, supposed to be specific to Indian religious cultures—and shift the perspective towards connected or transnational histories of visual cultures.[44] This involves not only looking at the travels of a specific image but also at how foreign or imported attitudes towards images hybridised with local visual cultures—a point that radically undermines any frozen or reified conception of how images are performed in specific cultures or religions.

Third, and finally, the example demonstrates the necessity to study such cases not only across "religions" but also and especially across communities and their respective archives. The "connected" framework that was sketched at the beginning seems particularly relevant here: a single object or image can play the role of a kind of Ariadne's thread to help researchers reconnect distant historiographical traditions.[45] A curious case like this one enables us to think about broader processes in terms that are not centred on the European context and that avoid exoticising non-Western cultures: for example, in terms of the insertion of images within gender-patterned institutional frameworks, of devotional practices as a way to undermine institutional authority, or of the highly ambiguous processes at work in the translation of religious images and practices across different visual cultures.

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43 Belting 2011: 32.
44 For a classical exposition of *darśan* in Hindu traditions, see Eck 1998. See Cort 2012 for a nuanced corrective to Eck's rather monolithic conception of *darśan* in the light of Jain evidence.
45 In that sense, an image plays a role similar to that of proper names, which Ginzburg and Poni describe as guides for recovering singular trajectories through scattered archives (Ginzburg/Poni 1981).

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Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz

News from the *Phe reng ki*: The Pilgrim-Merchant Pūraṇ Giri as Cultural Mediator between Tibet, India, and the British

Abstract. The Indian pilgrim-merchant Pūraṇ Giri (1745–1795) accompanied George Bogle on his first British diplomatic mission to Tibet in 1774 to the court of the Third Paṇchen Lama. A confidant of the Third Paṇchen, Pūraṇ Giri was one of the so-called *gosains* who maintained busy trade and pilgrimage between India and the Himalayan regions and Tibet in the eighteenth century. He played a key role in the transmission and circulation of knowledge between the culturally heterogeneous worlds of Tibet, India, and the British East India Company. Nevertheless, he fell into obscurity relatively quickly after 1800, and in the narrative of the early history of Anglo-Tibetan relations, he occupies at best a minor role alongside the two main actors George Bogle and Samuel Turner. This chapter examines Pūraṇ Giri's role in the transmission of knowledge about India and the British in eighteenth-century Tibetan scholarly culture by looking, among other sources, at the writings of the Third Paṇchen Lama.

Keywords. Pūraṇ Giri, George Bogle, Third Paṇchen Lama, cultural mediation, transmission of knowledge

Introduction

> In this region of Vā ra ṇa se in the deer-grove at Sarnāth is the dwelling place of the thousand buddhas, [. . .] in its vicinity are also some great places of the non-Buddhists and there are gateways so that they can perform their ablutions in the river Ganggā.[1]

1 Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes 1775: fol. 9r–v: "Wā ra na se'i yul der drang srong lhun ba ri dvags kyi nags na [. . .] sangs rgyas stong gi bzhugs khri dang/ de'i nye 'dab na phyi rol pa'i gnas che ba 'ga' zhig kyang mchis shing chu bo ganggā la khrus byed pa'i sgo dang/." In this chapter, Tibetan is transliterated according to Wylie 1959, while Sanskrit is transliterated according to the internationally accepted rules. Unless otherwise stated, translations are mine.

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So says the Third Paṇchen Lama Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes (1738–1780) informing his countrymen of the religious customs of the neighbouring country of India. In his "Narrative of the Holy Land" (*'Phags yul gyi rtogs brjod*),[2] written in 1775, the Paṇchen Lama presents an adventurous mix of fact-based information and wild speculation about India. The country received renewed attention in Tibet in the eighteenth century, as evidenced by the increased number of published travelogues and descriptions, including the travel report of 1752 by bSod nams rab rgyas[3] or the 1789 "Treatise on India in the South, Called 'Mirror of the Eight Objects of Inquiry'" by 'Jigs med gling pa.[4]

Why was India so popular in eighteenth-century Tibet? One might suspect a connection with the resurgence of intellectual interest in Sanskrit in the seventeenth century, when the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) invited Indian Sanskrit scholars to Lhasa.[5] However, if we look more closely at the transregional linkages of Tibet in the eighteenth century by examining the flow of visitors, we notice a group of people originating from India who "commuted" between Tibet and India in particularly large numbers in the eighteenth century. These are the *gosains*, so called in eighteenth-century British sources. The term *gosain*, derived from the Sanskrit *gosvāmin*, refers to the religious character of these travellers. The *gosains* were pilgrims and merchants simultaneously, and in the eighteenth century they played a central role in trade on the Transhimalayan routes to Tibet.[6]

Of the many unnamed and unknown pilgrim-traders to Tibet that provided a steady stream of information about India and its political systems, heterogeneous society, various religions, and culture, the best known is Pūraṇ Giri (1745–1795), or Purangir[7] Gosain as he is known in British sources of the time. And yet his role in the establishment of Anglo-Tibetan relations was already half forgotten towards the end of the eighteenth century. A century later he was brought out of obscurity, but while recent scholarship concentrates mainly on Pūraṇ Giri's diplomatic importance to Anglo-Indian relations,[8] his role in the transmission of knowledge has received far less attention, with the notable exception of Toni Huber's seminal *The Holy Land Reborn* in which he examines "how the influence of these traveling Indian ascetics and their traditions reshaped Tibetan understandings and actions in relation to India".[9] I, in turn, would like to draw attention to the

2 The little noticed first part of his famous *Shambha la'i lam yig*.
3 bSod nams rab rgyas 1752, quoted in Huber 2008. Huber 2008: 183–188 provides a detailed summary of the contents of this report.
4 'Jigs med gling pa 1991: 70–93. Aris 1995 provides an annotated English translation.
5 Schaeffer 2005: 70.
6 Clarke 1998. The *gosains* travelled as far as Mongolia and China; see Mosca 2020.
7 The spelling varies, from Purungir (George Bogle) to Poorungheer (Samuel Turner).
8 Teltscher 2006; Stewart 2009; Mosca 2013.
9 Huber 2008: 208.

general knowledge about India's political realities that was transmitted through the *gosains*, including knowledge about the British and their attitude to religious traditions. To this aim, I choose a biographical approach and follow the traces of Pūraṇ Giri, that great cultural mediator whose actions and interventions created a new communicative space shared equally by Indians, Tibetans, and the British. My approach is situated in the theoretical concept of a global microhistory in the sense of a "comprehensive history of relations".[10] Global microhistory thus defined conceives of its subject of study being generated "exclusively through its respective relations".[11] Contrary to a methodological focus on nation-states, in this approach new spatial structures are viewed as produced through interactions and relations. Consequently, global microhistory starts its investigation at the level of the historical actor. Fortunately for us, Pūraṇ Giri left his mark not only in the travel accounts of the envoys of the East India Company, George Bogle (1746–1781) and Samuel Turner (1759–1802). Glimpses of his life are also found in Tibetan contemporary sources like the writings of the Third Paṇchen Lama, his biography, and some legal documents.[12] Finally, we have his own report of the Paṇchen's journey to Peking. These sources belong to different sociocultural environments and have different trajectories. Unfortunately, the scope of this chapter does not allow for a detailed exploration of their respective sociocultural contexts. It must suffice to point out that Bogle's and Turner's reports belong to the genre of travel report.[13] They are situated in an imperial context and functioned as an important link between "home" and the distant regions they visited.[14] As Mary Louise Pratt has shown, European imperial expansion was made meaningful by travel reports which created the imperial order for those who stayed at home.[15] In contrast to the British sources, the Tibetan sources explored here belong to a wider range of genres: specifically, itineraries, biographies, and legal travel documents. They are mostly located within a Buddhist interpretive framework and follow different purposes. Tibetan itineraries like the *Shambha la'i lam yig* ("Guide to Shambhala") of the Third Paṇchen Lama describe travel routes to Buddhist pilgrimage sites (both actual routes and routes for tantric adepts with the appropriate spiritual qualities to travel them). The genre of biography (in Tibetan coined *rnam par thar pa*, "complete liberation") includes many different literary forms and narrative contents,

10 Epple 2012: 45.

11 Epple 2012: 45.

12 Petech 1950 examines the available Tibetan sources regarding the diplomatic missions of Bogle and Turner. However, he discusses Pūraṇ Giri only in relation to his Tibet mission in 1785.

13 For a short description of travel writing as a source of authoritative knowledge, see Kollmar-Paulenz 2017: 11, 13–14.

14 For a typology of the European traveller in Inner Asia, see Kollmar-Paulenz 2017.

15 Pratt 2008: 3–4.

ranging from the religious to the political. Generally, a biography tells the life of a religious personality, with the main focus on his (rarely her) spiritual path, but simultaneously conveys historical, political, and sociocultural information.[16] This also applies to the biography of the Third Paṇchen Lama in which Pūraṇ Giri is repeatedly mentioned. Finally, the Tibetan road documents (*lam yig*), usually issued by the Tibetan government, in Tibet before 1950 permitted travel within its political borders, authorising the requisition of transport and supplies.[17] In summary, it can be said that the Tibetan sources have a considerably greater literary breadth than the British sources and consequently also pursue more diverse goals. Yet all these disparate sources provide us with a concrete starting point from which to begin our investigation into the circulation of knowledge in the Himalayas conveyed through significant encounters by local interlocutors.

1 An Indian *gosain* as a diplomatic envoy for two masters

The year 1773 brought an opportunity for the Third Paṇchen Lama to fill a role central to Tibetan Buddhist clergy, that of political mediator. In 1765 Bhutan had begun to interfere in the succession to the throne of neighbouring Kuch Bihar, a small principality between Bengal and Bhutan. In 1772 Dharendra Narayan (?–1775), the ruler of Kuch Bihar, requested military assistance from the East India Company against Bhutanese troops posted in Kuch Bihar.[18] In return for military aid, he signed a treaty with the East India Company in which he agreed to the annexation of his principality to the province of Bengal. In the ensuing First Anglo-Bhutanese War, Bhutanese troops were driven out of Kuch Bihar. The rising power of the British upset not only the Bhutanese but also the Gurkha ruler of Nepal. Both appealed to the Paṇchen Lama, who during the minority of the Eighth Dalai Lama ’Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1758–1804) held the most powerful political position in Tibet next to the Tibetan regent. The Paṇchen Lama in turn pleaded with Warren Hastings (1732–1818), the Governor General of Bengal, on behalf of Bhutan, which he declared to be a vassal state of Tibet. In the Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1774, Bhutan was obliged to return the annexed land to Kuch Bihar, pay an annual tribute, and restore free trade.

Contact between the Lama and the Governor General had been established in the form of a letter accompanied by gifts from the Paṇchen Lama, which Pūraṇ Giri and a representative of the Lama named Padma delivered to Warren Hastings

16 Quintman 2014: 5–10 provides an overview of the structures and functions of *rnam thar*.

17 Wylie 1968: 152.

18 Aris 2005: 42.

in Calcutta in March 1774. That was the first time that the young Pūraṇ Giri, barely thirty years old, caught the eye of the British. He reported to Hastings about Tibet and its trade relations with Kashmir, India, and China, and thus contributed not insignificantly to Hastings proposing friendship and a trade agreement between Bengal and Tibet in his reply to the Paṇchen Lama. The rest of the story is well known and need not be retold here. Suffice it to recall that the successful mission of the British envoy George Bogle to Tashilhunpo, the seat of the Paṇchen Lama, was due primarily to the negotiating skills of Pūraṇ Giri, who knew how to clear the political obstacles that arose en route to agreement.[19]

Apart from Pūraṇ Giri's dual diplomatic service to the Paṇchen Lama and the East India Company, little is known about him personally. The only somewhat detailed account of him was provided by the Bengali scholar Gaur Das Bysack[20] in 1890. In it, Bysack creates an idealised image of the *gosain* based on the oral narratives of Umrao Gir, the then *mahant* (abbot) of Bhoṭ Bagan, the Tibetan temple that had been established on the banks of the Hooghly opposite Calcutta in 1776 with the significant participation of Pūraṇ Giri (see below). Umrao Gir says of Pūraṇ Giri that although he was a Brahmin by birth, he lived as a wandering ascetic:

> He was a young man when he went to Tibet as a pilgrim, he had fair features, and was tall, strong and sinewy. His usual dress consisted of the Sannyásí's *kaupína*, with a short red ochre-dyed piece of cloth wrapped round his loins, and a tiger skin thrown over his shoulders, but on certain public occasions he wore a kind of toga, and covered his head with a turban. [. . .] His habits were simple and his heart pure, he took a single spare meal, and cooked his own food consisting of rice and vegetables only.[21]

Umrao Gir did not personally know Pūraṇ Giri, who had died in 1795, so his account is either a romantic fiction or based on hearsay. However, his description of the *gosain*'s clothing corresponds to contemporary representations as depicted in Indian paintings (Fig. 1).[22]

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19 Teltscher (2006: 48–73) describes with vivid imagination both these obstacles and Pūraṇ Giri's negotiating skill.

20 I could not ascertain the exact dates of his life. Gaur Das Bysack was a close friend of the famous Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dhutta (1842–1873) and the Bengali scholar of Tibetan language and culture Sarat Chandra Das (1849–1917). In 1872 he was the deputy magistrate of Howrah (Banerjee 2007: 454). Perhaps that fact and his friendship with Sarat Chandra Das led to his research into the Indo-Tibetan relations of the later eighteenth century of which the Tibetan monastery established in the Howrah District was a material expression.

21 Bysack 1890: 87.

22 Clarke 1998 includes some illustrations of *gosains*.

Figure 1 Four male ascetics: A Bhairagi, a Gosain, a non-Brahmin Karnataka priest and a fakir. Tanjore, ca. 1830. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O20160/four-male-ascetics-painting-unknown. © Victoria and Albert Museum

That Pūraṇ Giri was an athletic man is corroborated by Bogle, who tells us about their horse races together.[23] The "Gir" in the name of Pūraṇ Giri indicates that he belonged to the Giri sect of the Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsīs, a Śaiva religious order that traces its origins to Śaṅkarācārya.[24] Committed to asceticism and celibacy,[25] they engaged in banking and money lending, and as such were an economically powerful community in North Indian cities of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. As pilgrim-traders they played a key role in the transregional trade between Bengal and Nepal to Tibet in the eighteenth century. During their annual pilgrimages to the sacred sites in the Tibetan Himalayas, they combined pilgrimage with profit, and were particularly known for supplying Tibetans with pearls, corals, and diamonds, which were mainly needed for decorative arts. On their way back, they carried musk and gold dust into India. Contrary to the impression we get from British travel reports in which they are often described as a bunch of needy beggars fed by the Paṇchen Lama out of compassion,[26] they were highly organised and had established a network of monasteries that served at the same time as trading posts. Many of them knew several languages and were cosmopoli-

23 Markham 1876: 79.
24 Bysack 1890: 55, n. 4; Clark 2017.
25 This was not always the case (Clarke 1998: 58); however, pilgrim-traders in Tibet are described as celibate.
26 Turner 1800: 330–331; Markham 1876: 87.

tan and confident negotiators. Bogle describes their standing and position with the Paṇchen Lama:

> The Gosains, the trading pilgrims of India, resort hither in great numbers. Their humble deportment and holy character, heightened by the merit of distant pilgrimages, their accounts of unknown countries and remote regions, and above all, their professions of great veneration for the Lama, procure them not only a ready admittance, but great favor.[27]

The Paṇchen Lama, with his insatiable curiosity, was an ardent recipient of the *gosains*' knowledge. He was one of the most important political and intellectual figures of his time; he not only aligned himself with China by maintaining a close contact with the Second lCang skya Qutuγtu Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786), the confidant of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735–1796), but also established diplomatic relations with India in the 1770s. For the first time since the period of the Fifth Dalai Lama, India as the place of origin of Buddhism and thus of religious knowledge was not only cultivated as a "memory space" in the cultural memory of Tibetans but was established as a "real" place. Of the *gosains* present at Tashilhunpo, Pūraṇ Giri enjoyed the Paṇchen's highest favour and trust. It is said that he was fluent in several languages, including Tibetan and Mongolian, and was well acquainted with the customs and traditions of the Inner Asian peoples. There is no evidence, however, that he spoke English: the language common to Pūraṇ Giri and the British was Hindustani.

2 Pūraṇ Giri's relationship with the Third Paṇchen Lama

The Third Paṇchen Lama had established contact with India when he sent his first pilgrimage mission to Bodh Gaya in 1771 and at the same time initiated relations with the ruler of Benares, Chait Singh (r. 1770–1781),[28] whose envoys to the Paṇchen's seat in Tashilhunpo had subsequently painted a very negative picture of the British in India. However, Pūraṇ Giri, who had been a double ambassador for both the East India Company and the Paṇchen Lama since the Anglo-Bhutanese conflict, managed to convince the Paṇchen Lama to receive George Bogle and his companion Alexander Hamilton in Tashilhunpo. This cleared the way to Tibet for the East India Company emissaries. The trust Pūraṇ Giri enjoyed with the Paṇchen Lama is most evident in the role he played in the establishment of a Tibetan temple site, the famous Bhoṭ Bagan, "Tibetan Garden", near Calcutta. The Paṇchen Lama

27 Markham 1876: 124–125. However, elsewhere in his report he is quite negative about them; see Markham 1876: 87–88.
28 Teltscher 2006: 85–86; Mosca 2013: 129.

had probably been planning on establishing a temple site (including a residence, garden, and adjoining accommodation for pilgrims) in Bengal for some time for those Tibetans who went on pilgrimage to India. Behind this decision was, on the one hand, his unshakeable conviction that, despite all evidence to the contrary, Buddhism had not died out in India[29] and, on the other hand, his wish that the establishment of such a temple could contribute to the revival of Buddhism in Bengal. In one of his first conversations with George Bogle he expressed his desire to build such a temple and his hope for support from Warren Hastings.[30] He repeatedly returned to this idea and announced that if he was granted a site for the construction of the temple, he would install Pūraṇ Giri there to lead the house.[31] At the farewell to Bogle, the Paṇchen Lama came to speak for the last time about the Tibetan temple to be built:

> "In regard to the house which I wish to have on the banks of the Ganges", continued the Lama, "I propose that Purungir, who was down in Calcutta, should settle it. I do not wish it to be a large house, and let it be built in the fashion of Bengal." I begged him to give Purungir instructions about it, which he said he would do. "Purungir," says he, "has served me very well, and I have not found him guilty of so many lies as most other fakirs, and I hope the Governor will show him favour."[32]

At the completion of the Tibetan temple compound in 1776 Pūraṇ Giri was appointed the *Bhoṭ mahant*, "Tibetan abbot".[33] The temple served as a hub for pilgrims and traders from Tibet. In addition, it represented the nodal point for diplomatic relations between the British in Calcutta and Tibet. The importance of the temple to the British, with Pūraṇ Giri as abbot, can also be seen in the fact that during his pilgrimage in 1778 to the holy lake of Manasarowar in Tibet, George Bogle ordered and paid the gardeners who tended the temple grounds during Pūraṇ Giri's absence.

The reasons for Pūraṇ Giri's high esteem with the Paṇchen Lama probably lay not only in his immense knowledge of India and valuable services as a cultural mediator to Indian and British officials, but also in his personal character traits. The Tibetan *lam yig* issued to him on the occasion of his last mission to Tibet in 1785,[34] testifies: "This A tsar ya[35] Pu reng gi ri, sent during the Indo-Bhutanese

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29 For the Paṇchen Lama's views on India, see Huber 2008: 193–220.
30 Markham 1876: 138.
31 Markham 1876: 164.
32 Markham 1876: 165.
33 Huber 2008: 222.
34 In the service of Warren Hastings to oversee a duty-free trading venture for Bengali merchants; see Teltscher 2006: 241.
35 *A tsar ya* is the Tibetan rendering for the Sanskrit *ācārya*.

war to increase fortune, accomplished great merit; he protected many living beings from untimely death."[36] In the eyes of the Tibetans, Pūraṇ Giri displayed highly valued Buddhist virtues like compassion and commitment towards his fellow human beings. These character traits as well as his trustworthiness in matters political, made him a confidant of the Paṇchen Lama who personally granted him generous travel provisions, as several *lam yig* of the years 1774 and 1778 attest.[37]

In 1780 Pūraṇ Giri followed the Paṇchen Lama to Peking where the latter died unexpectedly from smallpox. His privileged position of personal confidant becomes vividly tangible in a scene of the dying Paṇchen Lama told in the Tibetan biography written by the Second 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (1728–1791): "Thereupon, at his command, a man was sent to fetch the two A tsa ra. One was not there, but Purna ghi ri was fetched, and with a cheerful disposition he [the Paṇchen Lama] spoke to him a few words in the Indian vernacular."[38] While the asymmetries of power between colonial rulers and native collaborators are inscribed in contemporary British accounts through silence, the Tibetan language of politeness provides linguistic tools to carve out social space through clear hierarchical demarcations. In the intimate deathbed scene, however, in which the Paṇchen Lama summons his trusted confidant and whispers to him something in Hindustani, the social hierarchy is ruptured. The scene highlights the Paṇchen Lama's closeness to a cultural stranger and conveys the deep intimacy between the lama and the *gosain* developed over years of sharing ideas, goals, and their practical implementations.

After the death of the Paṇchen Lama, Pūraṇ Giri returned to India, where he was the head of the Bhoṭ Bagan until his violent death in 1795.[39] He submitted a detailed report of his journey to Peking to the East India Company, which was published in English in Alexander Dalrymple's *Oriental Repertory*.[40] The most important message of the report for its target audience at the time lies in the de-

36 Das 1915: Appendix 3, p. 4: "a tsar ya pu reng gi ri 'di pa/ rgya 'brug g'yul 'gyed kyi dus su legs spel du gtong ba gnang bar/ don chen po 'grub ste skye bo mang po dus min 'chi ba las bskyabs par brten/." This *lam yig* was issued on the first day of the ninth month of the year of the Wood Snake (1785), by which time the Paṇchen Lama, who is directly mentioned in the document, had been dead for five years. Therefore, it refers to Pūraṇ Giri's last mission to Tibet and not, as Huber 2008: 414, n. 112 asserts, to Samuel Turner's embassy that Pūraṇ Giri accompanied in 1783.

37 Das 1915: Appendix 3, p. 4; Bysack 1890: 99.

38 dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (no date): fol. 264v: "De nas a tsa ra gnyis bos shig gsung pa bzhin 'bod mi btang bar/ cig shos ma bsdad pa dang thug kyang purṇa ghi ri 'byor byung ba la thugs dbyes pa'i nyams kyis rgya gar 'phral skad du bka' 'ga' zhig bstsal/."

39 He was fatally wounded by armed robbers during an attack on the Bhoṭ Bagan.

40 First published in London, in periodical form, in 1796, and in 1808 in book form (Dalrymple 1808). The original language of the report is not mentioned, and it is also not clear whether this report was delivered verbally or in written form.

scription of the Paṇchen Lama's conversations with the Qianlong ruler, in which he suggests that Qianlong establish trade relations with the East India Company. According to his report, Pūraṇ Giri was called in by the Paṇchen Lama to the conversation between him and Qianlong, "to answer the inquiries of the Emperor, respecting the governor of Hindustan, as he, the writer, had been often in his country".[41] Chinese and Tibetan sources are silent about this exchange between ruler and lama, and thus it is still disputed among scholars whether the Paṇchen Lama really presented Hastings' request to Qianlong.[42]

3 Mediator of knowledge about India and the British

In the newly circulating knowledge about the worlds beyond Tibet, in whose transmission and spread Pūraṇ Giri played a decisive part, the political realities of India and information about the British stand out. Of course, we cannot measure exactly the share that Pūraṇ Giri had in the circulation of this new knowledge. However, it is rather naive to assume that the Paṇchen Lama obtained his knowledge about India and the British from George Bogle alone.[43]

First, compared to Bogle's short visit, Pūraṇ Giri stayed in Tibet for many years and during that time was in constant communication with the Paṇchen Lama. Second, the free conversation between the lama and the British envoy had its linguistic limits. Bogle emphasised in his report that the Paṇchen Lama spoke Hindustani reasonably well,[44] so he could converse with him without a translator. However, the repeated emphasis on the lama's only mediocre language skills ("He spoke to me in Hindustani, of which language he has a moderate knowledge"),[45] exacerbated by a lack of practice on his part and the somewhat strange pronunciation of Bogle,[46] raises the question whether more complicated matters could really be conveyed one to one, or whether Bogle was not dependent on a translator—and this was Pūraṇ Giri—in many situations. How often the translator was present during the conversations between Bogle and the Paṇchen Lama cannot be judged

41 Turner 1800: 464.

42 See Cammann 1949: 10–13 who strongly doubts the credibility of Pūraṇ Giri's account. New arguments in favour of Pūraṇ Giri have been recently brought forward by Mosca 2013: 131–132.

43 See, for example, the representation by van Schaik 2011: 147–149.

44 Markham 1876: 87.

45 Markham 1876: 135.

46 At one point, Bogle notes: "He made no answer to what I said. Indeed, I doubt whether he understood it well, for I spoke in a language which he had not been used to, and the guttural R, which I inherit from my mother, probably increased the difficulty" (Markham 1876: 137).

because the Indian and Tibetan collaborators of the British envoys too often remained invisible. The interactions of the Third Paṇchen Lama, Pūraṇ Giri, and the British would have been defined by asymmetrical power constellations that differed for the individual actors involved. They probably did not come to the fore so much in the actual situations but in the later reports. The Tibetan sources only passingly mention Bogle and his attendants who are listed either as gift-bearers to the Paṇchen Lama or as one among many envoys during an official audience.[47] In the British reports Pūraṇ Giri's presence is often mentioned only in passing or not at all. However, one must give Bogle a great deal of credit for often singling out Pūraṇ Giri and his services to the diplomatic rapprochement with Bhutanese and Tibetan government officials. This is particularly striking when one contrasts his account with that of Samuel Turner, who mentions Pūraṇ Giri only rarely, even though, unlike Bogle, he did not speak Tibetan at all and was therefore completely dependent on Pūraṇ Giri's translation services.

In the following, I will give two examples of the knowledge about India and the British communicated by the Paṇchen Lama in his writings. My first example concerns the political situation at that time in northern India. The Paṇchen Lama showed himself to be well informed about the slow decline and disintegration of the once powerful Mughal Empire. For example, he writes that

> "although the expansion of power internally appears necessary, various internal strifes have eroded internal power, and while in name he [the Mughal emperor] is ruler over all provinces, his own power has been undermined by the king of the Marathas in the south and the king of Bengal in the east; today the name of the king who merely retains his throne is A li mal in Gha wo.[48]

"A li mal of Gha wo" is the son of Alamgir II (1699–1759), the Mughal emperor who was murdered by his own vizier Imad al-Mulk. In 1757 Ahmad Shah Durrani (c. 1722–1772) had captured Delhi but then retreated to Afghanistan. The influential vizier Imad al-Mulk subsequently formed an alliance with the Marathas, a powerful Hindu confederation from the Bombay region. The Marathas recaptured Delhi and expelled Ahmad Shah's son Timur from Lahore, prompting his father to invade India again in 1759. In the same year, Imad al-Mulk killed Alamgir II, and when he established a puppet ruler on the Mughal throne, Alamgir's son Ali Gawhar (1728–1806), who at that time was already in exile, declared himself ruler

47 Petech 1950: 341, 342.

48 Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes 1775: fol. 19v: "khong ba'i mthu stobs rgyas dgos rgyur 'dug kyang da lta ni nang 'khrug sna tshogs pas mthu stobs bri nas ming rgyal khams spyi'i bdag po yin pa la/ rang gi stobs gshed lho phyogs ma ra ṭa'i rgyal po dang shar phyogs bhang ga la'i rgyal po gnyis la re bzhig ste/da lta khri skyong bar mdzad pa'i sa skyong gi mtshan ni gha wo la a li mal zhes bya ba yin no/."

as Shah Alam II. But even when he was able to return to Delhi in 1772, his actual power did not extend beyond the city. The Paṇchen Lama's analysis was indeed very astute.

My second example refers to the British attitude towards religious diversity in India. Toni Huber has convincingly shown, using the example of the Tibetan adoption of Hindu ritual practices in the worship of the Ganges River, how strongly the *gosains* have influenced the Tibetan understanding of India.[49] In addition, the *gosains* also influenced the Tibetan perceptions of the British, the *Phe reng ki*,[50] whose worldviews and actions the Tibetans learned about filtered through Indian lenses. The appropriation of the "other" was achieved through the integration of the strangers into the familiar Hindu mythology. In the words of the Paṇchen Lama: "[T]heir original king, who lives on a small island in the sea, is descended from the lineage of the Paṇḍavas[51] and is therefore himself from Āryadeśa."[52] The Paṇchen Lama repeatedly addresses the religious diversity of India, and particularly emphasises the British attitude towards the different religious communities there, which he considers remarkable: "They respect whatever religious system (*chos lugs*), be it Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim, and appear to treat them fairly according to a law of secular character."[53] In his talks with the Paṇchen Lama, Bogle had emphasised the religious tolerance of the British and called Pūraṇ Giri as a key witness to the credibility of his statement.[54] While we still tend to underestimate the effective influence of local interlocutors in the complex network between primary actors and their local intermediaries in a precolonial or colonial context, Pūraṇ Giri's statement clearly carried weight. He not only influenced the Paṇchen Lama's perception of the fluid connections between Tibetan Buddhism and the Indian Śaiva and Vaiṣnava traditions, but also shaped the Lama's perception of the newly encountered British notions of religion. Such new knowledge about foreign religions and peoples was eagerly received and discussed among the cosmopolitan Tibetan-speaking religious and secular intellectual circles of the Qing Empire.[55]

49 Huber 2008: 208–212.
50 Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes 1775: fol. 26v. Derived from the Persian-Indian *ferengī*; see Petech 1950: 334, n. 5.
51 The main characters of the Mahābhārata epic.
52 Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes 1775: fol. 27r: "'di dag gi rtsa ba'i rgyal po rgya mtsho'i gling phran na gnas pa de skya seng gi bu'i brgyud yin pas 'phags yul ba nyid yin te/."
53 Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes 1775: fol. 27r: "'di rnams nang pa dang mu stegs byed dang/ kla klo sogs kyi chos lugs gang la'ang mos pa byed cing 'jig rten lugs kyi khrims drang por spyod pa zhig yin par snang/."
54 Markham 1876: 138–139.
55 Wang-Toutain 2005; Fitzherbert 2015; Kollmar-Paulenz, forthcoming.

Conclusion

I have begun my search for traces of the Tibetan knowledge production about India and the British in the eighteenth century with a concrete actor in a concrete place, producing "a whole by means of its relationally conceptualized parts".[56] The knowledge Tibetans received from India in the eighteenth century was fed from various sources, but the most important represented the strong presence of Indian *gosains* at the court of the Third Paṇchen Lama, the most religiously and politically influential figure of his time in central Tibet. Among these pilgrim-traders, most of whom remained anonymous, Pūraṇ Giri has left his footprints in British and Tibetan documents alike. Reading these sources has allowed us a glimpse into the communicative network he established and through which a social space of encounter was created between the British, Tibetans, and Indians in the second half of the eighteenth century. His religious and commercial interests gave rise to a space of interaction beyond political and ethnic boundaries. For both the Tibetans and the British, the focus of their perception was not Pūraṇ Giri's status as a religious or ethnic stranger but the direct experience of his moral integrity, as is demonstrated by the Tibetan road document quoted earlier[57] as well as by Bogle's personal judgements of him. It was this shared perception that enabled Pūraṇ Giri's dual role at the Qing court in Peking as an unofficial envoy of the British and a member of the Paṇchen Lama's personal entourage. His report, which insinuated a genuine interest on the part of the Qianlong emperor in opening trade relations between the British and Qing China, left a lasting impression on the British, who in subsequent years attributed their failed attempts to establish trade relations with China primarily to the sudden death in Peking of their supposed advocate, the Paṇchen Lama. Just as Pūraṇ Giri's account significantly shaped British perceptions of the Qing toward the end of the eighteenth century, Tibetan perceptions of British India through the lens of Pūraṇ Giri and other *gosains* influenced Qing views of the British in India.[58] These diverse and often contradictory voices prepared the ground for the asymmetrical power relations that would define the political relationship between China and the British Empire in the following century.

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56 Epple 2012: 44.
57 See quote in section 2 (footnote 36).
58 Mosca 2013: 142–144.

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Florence Pasche Guignard

Without Violence: Frédérick Leboyer's Significant Encounters in and with India

Abstract. This chapter examines a selection of works by Frédérick Leboyer (1918–2017) that engage with Indian cultures and spiritual traditions. Leboyer was a French gynaecologist-obstetrician most famous for promoting "childbirth without violence" (*Pour une naissance sans violence*, 1974) in Francophone and international contexts, as well as a poet, photographer, and filmmaker. This contribution situates Leboyer's life and work as a micro-history example of an encounter between Europe and India. Leboyer visited India several times in the 1960s onwards and became a disciple of Neo-Vedanta teacher Svāmi Prajñānpad (1891–1974), whom he writes about in *Portrait d'un homme remarquable* (1991). The Frenchman acknowledges a sacred and spiritual dimension of childbirth in many of his works. At a time when few dared question medical protocols enforced on birthing women, Leboyer insisted on the importance of breathing and called attention to the baby as a significant person in the process. He also contributed to the dissemination of techniques such as baby massage and prenatal yoga. The recontextualisation of Leboyer's individual trajectory presented here focuses on his encounter with his spiritual master and with two mothers in India. It argues for the significance of such encounters in the broader circulation of practices between India and Europe at the intersection of well-being, spirituality, religion, medicine, and maternal health.[*]

Keywords. religion, mother, childbirth, obstetrics, India

Frédérick Leboyer (1918–2017) was a gynaecologist-obstetrician most famous for his revolutionary works on childbirth. Historians of medicine and scholars focusing on the cultural aspects of birth know him as the promoter of "childbirth without violence" and as a key figure in movements of resistance against the hyper-medicalisation of childbirth in Western countries from the 1950s onwards.[1] Leboyer was also an author, poet, photographer, and filmmaker. His work often mentions the sacred and spiritual dimensions of pregnancy, birth, and the mother-child relationship[2] that his Western

* This chapter presents research findings that are part of a broader study supported by the Fonds Cardinal-Maurice-Roy at the Université Laval.

1 Mentions of Leboyer in general works on the history of childbirth can be found, for instance, in Cesbron/Knibielher 2004: 153–154; Charrier/Clavandier 2013: 193; Rivard 2014: 245–246.

2 Leboyer 1976a (*Shantala: Un art traditionnel; Le massage des enfants*) and 1978 (*Cette lumière d'où vient l'enfant*), two of his earlier works, as well as his portrait of his spiritual

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biomedical training and professional environment overlooked or regarded as irrelevant to the prevailing, biomedical models of healthcare at the time.

Many references to spiritual, religious, or philosophical traditions in Leboyer's work on childbirth are linked to religious expressions and practices emerging from South Asia, particularly pertaining to Hinduism and Buddhism. Though allusions to non-Indian religious or philosophical systems such as Christianity, Judaism, and Daoism are also present (for instance, in *Le sacre de la naissance*, 1982), this chapter focuses on the influence of Indian cultures and spiritual traditions on his life and work. The few historians of childbirth that have analysed Leboyer's contributions have rarely considered religion and the impact of his travels to and stays in India on the development of his philosophy of birth.[3] Neither have scholars focusing on the micro-histories of encounters between India and the West paid much attention to him as a key figure.

Through analysing the published work of Leboyer and information about his life,[4] this contribution makes the case for considering him as an important actor in the transmission of knowledge and practices from India. The recontextualisation of his individual trajectory and of specific encounters he had in India will contribute to an assessment of their significance for the broader circulation of practices between India, Europe, and the world, at the intersections of well-being, spirituality, mental health, women's health, medicine, and religion. As such, Leboyer stands in contrast with other key figures of India-Europe encounters in the field of medicine, who often remained in alignment with missionary work or colonial imperatives, attempting to bring Western biomedicine to India rather than learn from traditional systems of healing (e.g. Ayurvedic medicine) or practices (e.g. of traditional birth attendants such as *dāī*).

The structure of this chapter follows Leboyer's encounters with three significant persons in India. This focus on his meeting with his spiritual teacher and with two Indian women, in addition to his general observation of mothers in India, allows us to uncover four transmissions to the Western world through his publications and films. The first transmission, pervasive throughout his work since the first publication, in 1974, of *Pour une naissance sans violence*, is the requirement of non-violence in childbirth, inspired by the notion of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence). The other transmissions are three practices that can be articulated with key moments of maternal life that Leboyer focused on throughout his career: yoga during pregnancy, breathing during childbirth, and massage of the baby.

master (*Portrait d'un homme remarquable*, 1991) will be discussed in more detail in this chapter. However, many of his later works (e.g. Leboyer 1979, 1982a, 1983, 1988, 1996, 1997, 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2012) contain religious references.

3 Rapoport 2013; This 2013; Morel 2016. Also those cited above in footnote 1.

4 During the last years of Leboyer's life, his wife Mieko Leboyer convinced him to write his autobiography which, according to information I received from her, is going to be published soon. See footnote 5 for a list of obituaries.

After situating Leboyer's life trajectory in section 1, I focus on his Neo-Vedanta teacher Svāmi Prajñānpad, whose ashram he frequently visited, and on their encounter. As a close disciple who had witnessed his everyday life at the ashram, Leboyer writes about him in *Portrait d'un homme remarquable* (1991). I then discuss in section 2 significant encounters Leboyer had with two women of India, one unplanned and the other carefully scheduled for artistic and pedagogic purposes: first, his encounter with Shantala, a mother massaging her baby in the slums of Kolkata; second, his photographic work with Vanita, the second daughter of the famous yoga teacher B. K. S. Iyengar. Finally, the chapter ends with further considerations on the role played by Leboyer in such transmissions of practices and ideas regarding pregnancy and maternal health, with spiritual aspects that are now starting to be integrated even in post-secular, Western biomedical contexts that have become more inclusive of spiritual dimensions in healthcare.

1 Biography of Leboyer

Alfred Lazare Lévy was born on November 1st, 1918, in Paris, to Jewish parents: Judith (née Weiler), an artist, and Henri Lévy, a businessman. Little is known about his life besides through obituaries,[5] interviews,[6] and what can be gleaned from reading his books (in which he rarely writes about himself).[7] In a 1977 interview, when a Quebecois journalist "asks precise questions about his childhood, his teenage years, he refuses to answer under the pretext that the story of his life is not interesting".[8] From various sources, however, some coherent details do emerge.

As a boy he had spent a summer in Brighton in the UK where he developed a love of the English language. During World War II, the Jewish family fled to Mégève (in the free zone of France). To avoid persecution, he changed his name. He then trained in medicine at the University of Paris and became an obstetrician. He delivered thousands of babies through commonly used medical methods of the time, including twilight sleep.[9]

In the context of the 1960s, in France and other Western countries, notions of authority and power were prone to be challenged: not only the authority of the state but also the power that the medical establishment exercised on women. As

5 Greusard 2017; Lalonde 2017; Lucas 2017; Moorhead 2017; Smith 2017; Tessler 2017.
6 De Gramont 1977; Bideaut 2017.
7 What is known about his own, traumatic birth will be considered below. Morel 2016 provides a more detailed biographical sketch.
8 De Gramont 1977: 39. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.
9 Twilight sleep is a state of partial narcosis or stupor, but without total loss of consciousness. In this particular state induced by injections of morphine and scopolamine, birthing women would still respond to pain, but not remember it.

part of Leboyer's cultural context of practising medicine and travelling to India were social, sexual, and political elements such as access to contraception and abortion amid an era of sexual revolution and so-called "sexual liberation" along with the rise of "free love", and, in France, "Mai 68". In the North American context more specifically, this same period saw the rise of hippy culture, the civil rights movements, and, later, mass protests against the Vietnam War, as well as the rise of countercultures often drawing inspiration from a cluster of elements deriving from an exotically constructed, spiritual "East" (Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Zen, etc.).[10] On both sides of the Atlantic, some strands within the so-called "natural" childbirth movement integrated spirituality in their discourses and practices. The best-known American example is *Spiritual Midwifery*, a book published in 1975, one year after Leboyer's *Pour une naissance sans violence*, by "The Farm" community's famous midwife, Ina May Gaskin (born in 1940).

During his first or one of his earliest trips to India, Leboyer met with Svāmi Prajñānpad (1891–1974).[11] Further research would be needed to uncover precise evidence about the frequency and duration of his stays in India, but it appears that his visits to India were regular throughout the 1960s. Leboyer was part of a group of French disciples,[12] several of whom mention him in their texts or interviews. By the early 1970s, his perspectives on life, spirituality, healthcare, and childbirth had changed significantly: not only his practice of medicine in France but also his regular visits to India certainly had played a role in this, as the rest of this chapter will argue. He was ready to share his views with the world in a context where this created a lot of antagonism.

Possibly because of the strong criticism he received after publishing his first book, *Pour une naissance sans violence*,[13] he stopped practising medicine and resigned from the national (French) board of physicians (*Ordre des médecins*).

10 See, for instance, Oldmeadow 2004; Lardinois 2007. Many have explored this encounter with a focus on the twentieth century.

11 In an interview (Verain 2018), Colette Roumanoff, wife of Daniel Roumanoff, confirms that Leboyer was present at the ashram. Roumanoff first met Svāmi Prajñānpad in 1959. Morel 2016 situates Leboyer's meeting with Svāmi Prajñānpad in 1962, and a website run by the Indian master's disciples confirms 1962 as the date of Leboyer's first encounter (Disciples de Svami Prajnanpad n. d.). Daniel Roumanoff's book, *Svâmi Prajñânpad. Biographie*, also confirms January 1962 as the date Leboyer encountered "Svâmiji" (Roumanoff 1993: 267). Research interviews conducted in the summer of 2022 suggest, though, that the first encounter could in fact have taken place earlier. The life of this spiritual master is discussed in the following section.

12 See below, section 3.

13 Criticism came from his colleagues in gynaecology in general, from physicians who were also open to less medicalised childbirth (like Cheynier, see below, and also see Cheynier 1978), and from feminists who perceived his approach as forgetting the mother. For a detailed analysis of the reception and criticism of his work, see Rapoport 2013; Morel 2016.

He went on to devote his life to writing, photography, and poetry. In addition to his literary work, Leboyer also produced a movie, *Naissance*, coinciding with his 1974 book, in which he developed his theory of virtual non-intervention in the birth process. It won first prize from the Centre National du cinéma. His later film *Shantala* corresponds to the 1976 book of the same title, on baby massage. In 1982 he would then also film *Le sacre de la naissance*.[14] His books (see the list of references at the end of this chapter) were translated in many languages.

Between 1982 and 2000 he lived in London. There, in 1998, he met Mieko Yoshimura, the woman who would later become his wife. They married in 2005, when he was eighty-six years old and she fifty. Though this was a first marriage for both of them, they were too old to procreate, and Leboyer would later say that he could not know personally "one of the greatest privileges life holds".[15] He also stated in an interview, a few months before his death: "an unfortunate truth is that I did not have a child".[16] After retiring to the village of Vens in Switzerland he published one last book in 2009, titled *The Art of Giving Birth with Chanting, Breathing and Movement*. He died on 25 May 2017.

At a time when few dared question hyper-medicalised protocols enforced on birthing women, Leboyer insisted on the importance of breathing and called attention to the baby as a significant person in the process. During the twentieth century, in several countries, a small number of physicians started advocating for change in the medicalised and interventionist practices of childbirth. For instance, Grantly Dick-Read (1890–1959), a British pioneer of the so-called "natural childbirth" movement, published a book titled *Natural Childbirth* in 1933.[17] Dick-Read advocated education for pregnant women so that they would know what to expect, feel less apprehensive, and thus experience a childbirth "without fear". The 1953 French translation of his work, by Jean-Marc Vaillant, transforms "without fear" into "sans douleurs",[18] which further contributed to amalgamating Dick-Read's approach with that of others in the movement for the humanisation of childbirth. Another example is that of Fernand Lamaze (1891–1957), who is associated with the idea of "painless childbirth", also along the lines of preparing women and their partners.[19] Yet another key actor in this movement was Michel Odent (born

14 The 2008 DVD titled *Naître autrement* features all three movies (Leboyer 2008; also see Leboyer 1976b, Leboyer 1977, 1982b).

15 Moorhead 2017.

16 Bideaut 2017. The original sentence in French is : "[U]ne regrettable vérité, c'est que je n'ai pas eu d'enfant".

17 This work was retitled *Revelation of Childbirth: The Principles and Practice of Natural Childbirth* in 1942, and then finally *Childbirth Without Fear* (with the same subtitle) in 1944. Moscucci 2003: 170.

18 Dick-Read 1953.

19 Michaels 2014.

in 1930), who, like Leboyer, had to leave France where such ideas were not well received. Later, Jean-Marie Cheynier, medical director at the famous Maternité des Bluets and a staunch critic of Leboyer's method,[20] suggests through the title and content of his book that birth can be a "celebration" (*Que sa naissance soit une fête*, 1978). These approaches all try to shift the focus away from fear and pain in childbirth, anchored in Western culture through particular readings of Genesis 3:16 where God states to Eve that he "will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour you will give birth to children". Alternatives to such apprehensions are rooted in trusting "Nature", the female body, the process of birth itself, or in a psychoprophylactic doctrine emphasising "consciousness".[21] In the already secularised French context of the mid-twentieth century, Leboyer draws heavily on spiritual elements from non-European, Eastern spiritual sources. Through doing so, his focus is not to reintroduce a notion that women should invoke some divine or suprahuman help to go through childbirth but rather, he insists that childbirth must be apprehended in a different way. He insists not on prayers but practices: postures, breathing, and chanting, and on the benefits that these practices may bring to the newborns and their mothers. Leboyer's rigour in condemning the birth methods of his time and his determination to make radical changes led to some of the gentler birthing practices of today, though he was certainly neither the first nor the only one to have demonstrated an interested in "alternative" birthing techniques and positions. From the 1970s and 1980s onwards, depending on their national contexts,[22] physicians began to listen to and integrate some of the changes suggested by Leboyer and others: warmth, soft sounds, and low lighting replaced the cold, noisy, and brightly lit delivery room of the hospital. Fewer persons were to attend the birthing mother and those that were there intervened less actively.

2 Meeting with Svāmi Prajñānpad (1891–1974)

Leboyer writes about Svāmi Prajñānpad in *Portrait d'un homme remarquable* (1991) and collected his sayings in *Svâmi Prajnânpad pris au mot: les aphorismes* (2006). Other volumes offer translations (English to French) of the dialogues between the two men.[23] This spiritual master is certainly one of the reasons for Leboyer's travels to India. Svāmi Prajñānpad is not as famous as contemporaries

20 Cheynier 1976.

21 Vuille 2015 provides a detailed history of the "invention of painless childbirth" in France between 1950 and 1980.

22 See, for instance, Rivard 2014, for a history of childbirth in Québec, where Leboyer's ideas were also received. Also see Vuille 2015 for the general context and Morel 2016 for a broader discussion of the impact of Leboyer's legacy of forty years.

23 Svāmi Prajñānpad 2011, 2019.

such as Ma Ananda Moyi (1896–1982), Ramana Maharishi (1879–1950), or others who had attracted a significant number of foreigners as disciples. Retracing Svāmi Prajñānpad's biography and teachings is beyond the scope of this chapter, but some key biographical information will allow us to better situate him.

Most information about Svāmi Prajñānpad comes from his French and Indian disciples,[24] especially Arnaud Desjardins and Daniel Roumanoff,[25] as well as from an entry on him in a volume on contemporary spiritual masters.[26] Roumanoff "discovers" Svāmi Prajñānpad during his travels in which he meets with other spiritual masters.[27] As early as 1959, a core group of French disciples starts forming around Svāmi Prajñānpad. This group will grow to include Roumanoff's wife Colette, Arnaud Desjardins (whom he meets and becomes friends with while in India), his wife Denise Desjardins, Frédérick Leboyer, and a few others. How the group met and knew each other remains largely undocumented.

Yogeshvar Chattoppadhyay was born on 8 February 1891 in Chisurah, a small village of Bengal situated near the ancient French trading post of Chandernagor. Prajñānpad, meaning "seat of knowledge", is the name he will take later in his life, as a spiritual master. His orthodox Brahmin family imparted him with a traditional, religious education. Later, he would question authority and tradition and reject them if he did not find them justified, going as far as burning his Brahminical sacred thread. After finishing his secondary studies in 1912, he attended the University of Calcutta where he completed a degree in physics. He joined Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement but also wanted to participate in popular education. Over the years, he taught at educational institutions in several locations, in "universities" known as *vidyāpīṭa* where students could receive both a Western and a traditional Hindu education. Living a rather austere life, Yogeshvar Chattoppadhyay took a vow of poverty: he possessed only a few garments, lived on very little, and did not eat much. He imposed this ascetic-leaning lifestyle upon the wife whom his older brother had arranged his marriage with.

In 1921, he met Nirālamba Svāmī (1877–1930), who later became his guru, in Channa, north of Calcutta. Nirālamba Svāmī (Jatindra Nath Banerjee) was an Indian nationalist and revolutionary who fought for the independence of India and closely associated with Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo Ghose, 1872–1950). Jatindra Nath Banerjee turned to spirituality after revolutionary activities were suppressed and later became a yogi and spiritual master, including for (the future) Svāmi Prajñānpad.

24 Roumanoff 1993: 237–288 dedicates an entire chapter of Svāmi Prajñānpad's biography to the disciples, Indian and French.
25 Roumanoff 1993.
26 Solt 2002: 241–245.
27 He writes about his spiritual explorations in India in Roumanoff 1990.

While Yogeshvar Chattoppadhyay was teaching English literature, Indian philosophy, and physics at the Kashi Vidyāpīṭa, he read the work of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). This was a revelation to him as he was then searching for links between the Upaniṣads and his daily life experience. He saw in psychoanalysis a missing link and a way to bridge the narrow individual consciousness, trapped by the ego, and the expanded consciousness mentioned in the Upaniṣads.

In 1925, leaving his wife and young daughter behind, he moved to the Himalayas as a *saṃnyāsī*.[28] Due to poor health, damaged by excessive fasting, and confronted by his elder brother who had come to bring him back, he returned home and resumed teaching. In 1928, now with a few students turned disciples, he created a practice to work on the emotions, in part inspired by Freud's psychoanalysis. His French disciples later used the English word "lying" to name this practice,[29] which is performed while lying down in the dark, in contrast with the "sitting" practice, which consists mostly in a dialogue in a seated position.

After his guru Nirālamba Svāmī died in 1930, Yogeshvar Chattoppadhyay took on the role as spiritual master. Svāmi Prajñānpad settled in at the ashram in Channa, where he died in 1974. He was described as teaching *adhyātma yoga*, a yoga "turned towards the self". His disciples explain that Svāmi Prajñānpad was, in fact, not lecturing or giving sermons; indeed, not "teaching" at all. Leboyer writes that "Swamiji did not teach anything, neither Yoga, nor music, nor dance".[30] Rather, this *svāmi* was inviting interlocutors to answer personalised questions. Disciples also stress that his life advice was offered on a one-to-one basis rather than addressed to a group through sweeping generalisations. Svāmi Prajñānpad encouraged his disciples to say "yes" and accept whatever comes in life, since everything changes constantly. Through his traditional Brahmanical education and scientific training, in addition to having read the works of Freud, Svāmi Prajñānpad operated a form of synthesis between Indian and Western thought. Drawing from Advaita Vedānta and psychoanalysis in his work on emotions and feelings, he guided disciples in overcoming personal obstacles in their spiritual path.

Leboyer had conversations with Svāmi Prajñānpad, practised sessions of "lying", and exchanged letters with him. Leboyer relived his own, very traumatic birth, "during [his] psychoanalysis".[31] He was born post-term and his mother was held down during labour, an instrumental birth with forceps. In a 1977 interview, he states:

28 There is mention of this episode in Leboyer 1991: 67.
29 Edelmann et al. 2000; Desjardins 2001.
30 Leboyer 1991: 99. Leboyer's text in this book is poetry and often foregoes punctuation marks.
31 De Gramont 1977: 39.

> During my psychoanalysis, I relived my own birth. I have had an atrocious birth [. . .]. While reliving it, I discovered that it was not out of kindness that I would put to sleep my birthing [patients]. In preventing them from suffering, from shouting, from screaming, it was the suffering of my mother, it was her screams and my own screams too, that I was trying to erase. It was very hard to discover this . . . very . . .[32]

Further research is needed to determine if Leboyer also—or perhaps *first*—relived his own birth in psychoanalysis sessions conducted in France or in his "lying" sessions at Channa. This question of his mother and of birth is present in his exchanges with Svāmi Prajñānpad: maternal figures are evoked in the letters, at least one of which questions the position of the spiritual master as a "maternal substitute".[33] Leboyer himself describes him with maternal attributes and attitudes.[34] As we will see below (in section 3.2) with the figure of Vanita, for Leboyer the maternal encompasses many aspects, beyond the purely physiological act of giving birth and also beyond that of the nurturing mother: the aspect of the mother as the one who teaches the child can also be highlighted in Leboyer's descriptions of both his spiritual master and of the Indian women from whom he learns techniques (baby massage, chanting, and yoga). In his biography of Svāmi Prajñānpad, Leboyer compares his spiritual master to Confucius,[35] a very classical, though not Hindu, figure of the master-as-teacher. He also uses the metaphor of milk-ties between the mother and the child she nurses, equating the strength of the ties between him and his disciples to those created by breastfeeding: "Through this silence, there was something that [. . .] seemed to bind us to him as firmly as milk can bind a mother to her child".[36]

Svāmi Prajñānpad died in 1974. Prompted by Daniel Roumanoff, his disciples later met in Kolkata. The letters that they were willing to share were photocopied and Roumanoff transcribed and translated them, along with recorded conversations. He then wrote his doctoral dissertation in religious studies on Svāmi Prajñānpad at the Sorbonne and, later, published several volumes.[37] Also in 1974, now in his mid-fifties, Leboyer published *Pour une naissance sans violence*. Soon after this, he stopped practising medicine. Yet his impact on the field of gynaecology

32 My translation. Original: "Au cours de ma psychanalyse, j'ai revécu ma propre naissance. J'ai eu une naissance atroce [. . .]. En la revivant, j'ai découvert que ce n'était pas par bonté que j'endormais mes accouchées. En les empêchant de souffrir, de crier, de hurler, c'est la souffrance de ma mère, ce sont ses cris, et mes cris à moi aussi que j'essayais d'effacer. Ce fut très dur de découvrir ça . . . très . . ." (De Gramont 1977: 39).

33 Svâmi Prajnânpad 2008: 108.

34 Leboyer 1991: 11, 69.

35 Leboyer 1991: 108.

36 Leboyer 1991: 11.

37 Patrick 2020; Roumanoff 2002a, 2002b.

and obstetrics continued since, now free of the ideological and administrative constraints of the *Ordre des médecins*, he was able to make his many transmissions of knowledge through the flow of conference presentations, books, poetry, and photographs accessible to the general public and impact the movements advocating for a less medicalised childbirth in the West. Leboyer brought elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religious and spiritual traditions to the West not through academic courses or medical textbooks, but through literature and art.

3 Leboyer's encounters with two mothers in India

India, Hinduism, religions, spiritualities, philosophies, encounters, mothers, childbirth: writing this chapter on Frédérick Leboyer's little-known meeting with and inspirations from India was a great way for me to connect two strands of my research interests: the first one on Indian religions and cultures, which I first developed under Maya Burger's guidance, and the second one on the religious and spiritual aspects of motherhood and maternal experiences, which I explored more recently, after leaving the Université de Lausanne. This chapter is also a way to acknowledge the impact of Maya Burger, as a professor, on my scholarship and research interests. Indeed, without her influence, this chapter could have ended with the above considerations about the encounter between a relatively unknown spiritual master of India and a French physician more open to spirituality than most of his medical colleagues and countryfolk. However, studying[38] and then working under Professor Burger's guidance has sparked my interest in women's history, that I now root in feminist approaches. From her, I learned to pay attention to details and to the margins, expanding my lines of questioning to areas beyond that of strict specialisation, with an open mind. While frowned upon in some more conservative disciplines, broader intellectual endeavours were and still are welcome in religious studies, where I now situate myself. As Professor Burger often reminded her students, of course, there is no such thing as a monolithic "Hinduism" or perhaps even "India": from both sides, apprehensions of "the other" are always mediated in some way, through objects, texts, persons, or experiences with the senses. She certainly examined all of these aspects of encounters in her classes and publications, sometimes provocatively,[39] going beyond the most evident, most

38 When I started studying religions at the Université de Lausanne in the early 2000s, Maya Burger was the *only* woman professor who taught me. She was also the only one to feature feminine figures and women in her courses on Hinduism and in religious studies.
39 For instance, Professor Burger asked if William James, a key contributor to the psychology of religion, would have allowed his wife to mount his funeral pyre ("William James aurait-il permis à son épouse de monter sur son bûcher funéraire?"); see Burger 2007.

famous names—often those of men only—searching the margins and dislocating the narrow frameworks of Orientalism, Indology, and religious studies.

Following the invitation of the editors of this volume, I thus ask *who else* could be a "significant other" in this rarely studied part of Leboyer's life and work. Mothers in India, generically, could fit this description, but the last part of this chapter will focus on two particular women who were significant for Leboyer's thought and role in transmitting knowledge and practices beyond South Asia while acknowledging their origin as well as their spiritual aspects. The first woman is a mother of two, massaging her baby in a slum of Kolkata, and the second is the then-pregnant daughter of one of the most famous yoga teachers at the time, who also taught Leboyer.

3.1 Shantala/Post-partum: A mother massaging her child

Shantala: Un art traditionnel; Le massage des enfants (1976, translated in English in the same year as *Loving Hands*, fig. 1) provides key information on an encounter with a woman whose practice, image, and name will become significant in the life of Leboyer. This woman is a mother massaging her baby in a slum of Kolkata. Her name, Shantala, will designate the method of baby massage that Leboyer writes about and illustrates with his photographs in his often republished and translated book. This section outlines the structure of this book and highlights a few key points of this encounter with a significant other.

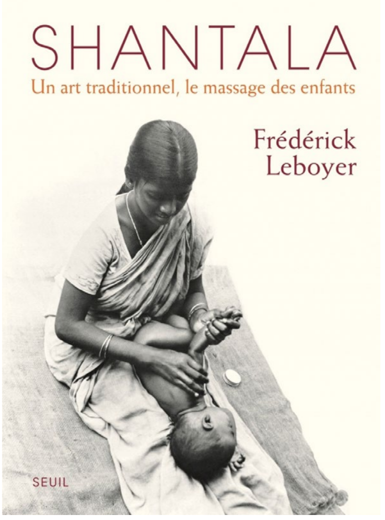

Figure 1 Cover of *Shantala*, Frédérick Leboyer © Éditions du Seuil, 1976. This cover is that of the 2018 edition.

First, the dedication of the book is telling, once more, of the reverence shown by Leboyer to mothers and of his understanding of the country "India" as a mother, with again an emphasis not only on the birthing or nurturing mother but on the "teaching" mother or "mother-teacher" from whom Leboyer "learned so much":

> I dedicate this book
> to my mother.
> To all mothers.
> To Shantala.

> And, through her,
> to India,
> my second mother
> from whom I have learned so much. [40]

The book starts with an introductory section (pp. 11–23), of mostly poetry. The central and major section of the book (pp. 25–97) follows, with the subtitle "Technique", accompanied by explanatory texts and many of his photographs of Shantala with a baby. Then comes a section on bathing ("Le bain", pp. 99–104), and then more "Details" (pp. 105–121), a farewell ("En guise d'adieu", pp. 123–138), and finally, a surprising last section, titled "And who is Shantala?" (pp. 141–153) that provides most information (on pages 145–146 and 151) about her. Shantala is the woman who inspired Leboyer to transmit and promote these specific techniques of baby massage to Western parents for whom this was a novel—and probably still frowned upon—practice. While it is not possible to pinpoint exactly where such baby massage techniques come from, as they were and probably remain widespread throughout India, it is likely that these were particularly developed in areas where other types of therapeutic or well-being massage, such as Ayurveda, were practised. Unlike in its contemporary Western reception, where parents (mostly mothers) learn from books, videos, or classes, in its Indian context of origin, this type of baby-massage technique was likely handed down informally, in familiar settings, from the older women (mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts, etc.) to the new young mothers, who learned by watching and practising.

At the very end of the book, Leboyer describes his encounter, in the slum of the Pilkhana neighbourhood, with the woman he names "Shantala". No other indication confirms if this was her real, given name, or if Leboyer created a pseudonym to designate her, maybe with the intention of protecting her real identity. He will use her name to designate this traditional massage practice. He first insists on the context of Kolkata and the poverty of the city, "the most deprived of all the cities of this India which is said to be so unhappy. Calcutta, a place of misery, not to say horror".[41] In contrast with this evocative description, the pictures never show the mother and her child in their context. The focus remains on their bodies and on Shantala's massaging gestures. Shantala, he writes, was a woman, paralyzed from the waist down, hosted by the charitable association Seva Sangha Samiti, with her two children. From this information, we can infer that she belonged to

40 My translation. Original: "Je dédie ce livre / à ma mère. / A toutes les mères. / A Shantala. / Et, à travers elle, / à l'Inde, / ma seconde mère / de qui j'ai tant appris" (Leboyer 1976a: 9).

41 Leboyer 1976a: 145. The original text in French reads: "la plus déshéritée de toutes les villes de cette Inde qu'on dit si malheureuse. Calcutta, lieu de misère pour ne pas dire d'horreur."

the most underprivileged class of Indian society. In a brief acknowledgements section,[42] Leboyer shares some information about Seva Sangha Samiti, about which he writes that it was close ("très voisine") to Frères des Hommes, a French non-confessional and non-political organisation founded in 1965 but concerned more specifically with India. Leboyer thanks Léo and Françoise Jalais and mentions their work in Pilkhana (in Howrah), and their proximity to a key religious figure at the time, Mother Theresa, "living, like her for the poor, with the poor, and sharing their poverty."[43]

Leboyer describes seeing Shantala in terms that are reminiscent of a religious vision or epiphany:

> The glory of light and the miracles of love, who will tell them!
> Suddenly, in the midst of sordidness, I was given to contemplate a spectacle of the purest beauty![44] [. . .] It was like a ritual, so serious was the thing and attired with an extraordinary dignity. [. . .] I was as if blinded by so much beauty and love.[45]

Leboyer then invokes the biblical text of Job (probably Job 38:2, in a rather uncommon translation) and proceeds to quote a Buddhist-inspired song on the theme of the lotus plant rooted in the mud but blooming its flowers out to the light.

Not all European photographers at the time would have secured the informed consent of the person in their photographs, but Leboyer writes that he did indeed ask for Shantala's permission to take pictures, which she granted. He then returned the next day, and then again on many more days,[46] just to observe, or perhaps even contemplate, and learn from her massages of the tiny body of her baby boy. One day, Leboyer proceeded to actually take photographs, but with the full awareness that this was an impossible task: "As a painter would try to catch in flight, to surprise, to halt, to grasp the ungraspable, the moving, the elusive secret of beauty".[47] Leboyer also edited a movie with the same name, distributed by Gaumont. The Shantala massage is now broadly practised in Western countries, taught in parents and babies groups and post-natal classes as well as through video sharing websites

42 Leboyer 1976a: 155.
43 Leboyer 1976a: 155.
44 Leboyer 1976a: 146.
45 My translation. Original: "La gloire de la lumière et les miracles de l'amour, qui les dira ! Voilà que, soudain, en plein sordide, il m'était donné de contempler un spectacle de la plus pure beauté ! [. . .] C'était comme un rituel, tant la chose était grave et revêtue d'une extraordinaire dignité. [. . .] J'étais comme aveuglé par tant de beauté et d'amour." (Leboyer 1976a: 147).
46 Leboyer 1976a: 151.
47 Leboyer 1976a: 151. The original text in French reads : "Comme un peintre essaierait de prendre au vol, de surprendre, d'arrêter, de capturer l'insaisissable, le mouvant, le fuyant secret de la beauté."

and social media platforms. A google search with the keyword "Shantala" yields dozens of different results, in several languages. Furthermore, recent scientific reviews[48] of paediatric therapeutic massages in the "Shantala" style have recorded its positive effects.

3.2 Vanita/Pregnancy: Prenatal yoga postures

Frédérick Leboyer's frequent visits and extended stays in India might have contributed significantly to the change in his views on childbirth. As pointed out by Johanna Moorhead, Leboyer

> noticed that while the wealthy women in India gave birth in busy, brightly lit hospitals that resembled maternity units in Europe, poorer women who could not afford hospital deliveries often had much easier births; and he also noticed that the way women moved in their daily lives facilitated these deliveries.[49]

The moves and postures of some Indian women sweeping the floor or squatting as part of their daily tasks inspired him to write another book in which a woman is central. Thanks to her and the many anonymous women he observed, through Leboyer's work, many Western pregnant women and parents were presented with a key component of Indian culture: yoga.

Just like with Shantala in Kolkata, we know her name: Vanita. Whereas Shantala was a woman of lower socio-economic background in the Pilkhana slum, from the key information provided by Leboyer assumptions about Vanita's background can more easily be verified. She is the second daughter of the famous yoga teacher Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar (1918–2014), a family that Leboyer describes as "strictly vegetarian Brahmins".[50]

The book, first published in 1978 as *Cette lumière d'où vient l'enfant*, rapidly translated as *Inner Beauty, Inner Light*, has become a classic text on prenatal yoga. Leboyer demonstrates how pregnant women can practise specific yoga postures or breathing techniques throughout pregnancy and in preparation for birth, with long-lasting benefits. The book is illustrated with his own photographs, taken in Poona,[51] of Vanita, showing her daily practice a few days before giving birth and then, after birth, with her son (Fig. 2).

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48 Machado 2021 cites and references several such studies conducted in Brazil from 2014 to 2018.
49 Moorhead 2017.
50 Leboyer 1978: 283.
51 Leboyer 1978: 185.

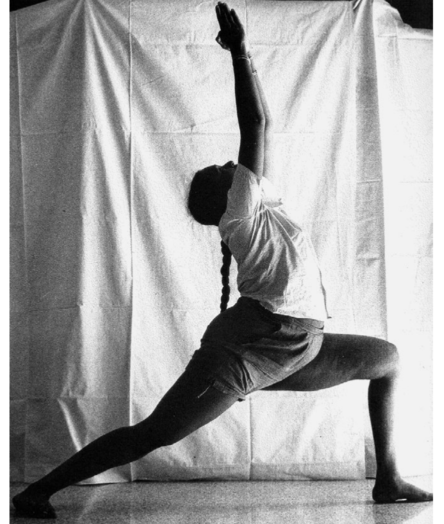

Figure 2 Photographs from *Cette lumière d'où vient l'enfant*, Frédérick Leboyer © Éditions du Seuil, 1978, p. 124, 154 and 290.

Leboyer dedicates the book

> To all women
> To all mothers
> As a token of friendship
> of veneration.[52]

and to B. K. S. Iyengar, who wrote the preface.[53] After an unacknowledged quotation from the philosopher Shankaracharya as an epigraph, Leboyer starts by clearing up a common misconception and stating that Iyengar is not his "Master". Then, of Vanita, he writes:

> And who is Vanita?
> Vanita? She is the woman.
> One and innumerable.
> Impenetrable.

52 My translation. Original: "À toutes les femmes / à toutes les mères / en gage d'amitié / de vénération" (Leboyer 1978: 9).

53 Iyengar's preface appears on pages 11 to 14. Iyengar himself appears in the photographs on pages 280 and 283.

> [. . .]
> She is beauty,
> its fascination,
> its mystery.
> [. . .]
> Vanita?
> She is Kali.
> She is Durga.
> She is India.[54]

Leboyer compares or equates Vanita to two famous and often complementary Hindu goddesses with maternal characteristics, Kali and Durga, to which he adds a third, India, the English name[55] for the then free and independent country where he took the pictures of this pregnant woman. In just a few pages, Vanita goes from "the woman" (*la femme*) to goddesses frequently referred to as mothers ("Kali Ma" and "Durga Ma"). At the end of this section of the book, titled "Who is Vanita?", Vanita stands for the whole country. Leboyer does not consider Vanita as his "master", but he certainly learns from her. The following section (pp. 280–285) is about *le maître* (the master), and it is only then than Leboyer reveals to his readers that Vanita is the second daughter of B. K. S. Iyengar.

Many other philosophical, spiritual, and religious references can be spotted throughout the book, written in a poetic style and richly illustrated, from Vanita's postures to portraits of the Buddha at the end of the book.[56] *Āsanas* are carefully described and Leboyer frequently insists on breathing,[57] a theme which he will then further develop in *L'art du souffle* (1983). There is, of course, much more to this particular reception of yoga through a maternal body, and to Leboyer's poetic and photographic transmission of this practice which, he writes, is "not gymnastics", "sport", or "therapy",[58] than the limited scope of this chapter allows me to explore further.

54 My translation. Original: "Et qui est Vanita? / Vanita? C'est la femme. / Une et innombrable. / Impénétrable. // C'est la beauté, sa fascination, / son mystère. // Vanita? / C'est Kali. / C'est Durga. / C'est India" (Leboyer 1978). The three collections of lines appear on pages 275, 277, and 279, respectively. The book is richly illustrated with Leboyer's photographs of Vanita and the text itself is scarce, with few words on each page—a reminder to readers of the author's poetic style.
55 Leboyer's text is in French, but he uses the name of the country in English, "India", and not the French "Inde" nor in Hindi or any other Indic language, which would be "Bharat" (as in the expression "Bharat Mata" for "Mother India").
56 Leboyer 1978: 288–300.
57 Leboyer 1978: 183, 189, etc. Later, Leboyer will consider breathing and chanting together. His interest in prenatal and birth singing is associated with another Indian woman, Savitry Nayr (or Nair), who collaborated with him in developing a booklet of exercises, with an audio recording; see Nair/Leboyer 1987.
58 Leboyer 1978: 19.

4 Concluding remarks

In the terms suggested by the editors of this volume, not only does a spiritual master but also two[59] Indian women, whom we would not have known about without Leboyer's photographs and texts, qualify as "significant others" in these singular encounters. This chapter has explored them with a focus on this European man, rather than on these women. Leboyer makes them pose, and sometimes speak, through his texts and photographs. He carries their gestures and practices with him to the West. Striking is Leboyer's openness to meet with and talk to people of various backgrounds during his stays in India: his dear Svāmi Prajñānpad was a Brahmin, and Vanita, though not necessarily from a wealthy elite, also belonged to a Brahmin family whose name was famous in the yoga world, in India and abroad. Shantala, however, and probably other mothers whom he witnessed going about their daily lives, lived in a slum. Yet she too is featured prominently in one of his books, as a model for Western mothers to emulate through the practice of baby massage.

This initial and non-exhaustive exploration into Frédérick Leboyer's work has highlighted key elements that, through his poetic and photographic work, were selectively brought back from Indian cultures and transmitted to the West under his authority as a (former) physician. These include specific teachings of a broader philosophy inspired by Advaita Vedānta (as recorded from his and other disciples' dialogues and letters with their *svāmi*), key notions (primarily that of non-violence, *ahiṃsā*), and practices (baby massage, breath work, chanting, and yoga). The significance of Leboyer's work on how childbirth is apprehended today in most Western countries certainly deserves a more detailed assessment through a history of advocacy for "birth without violence" and towards less medicalised birthing processes. Leboyer's Indian inspirations, the legacy of his relationship with Svāmi Prajñānpad, and their direct influence on thought and practice could be further studied on the basis of the rest of his published work that the investigation for this chapter could not include, but also through conducting interviews with those who knew him well.

The origins and trajectory of the notions and practices that Leboyer's work and its reception brought to France, Europe, and other places might be lost to most who promote and practice them today, such as midwives, childbirth educators, doulas, and expectant parents. But the pervasive influence of several of these elements inspired by Indian cultures and religions can still be witnessed in many contemporary discourses and practices of pregnancy, childbirth, and the post-partum period.

59 Further research into his biography might reveal other ones as well.

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Zhang Minyu

Yoga's Reintroduction to Modern China via the West

Abstract. As the Buddhist community in China carried forth the Buddhist yogic traditions into the modern era, a new form of yoga was imported to China via the West as the intermediary in a global network of knowledge transmission with metropolitan port cities like Shanghai as its enclaves. By examining newspapers, archives, and books published in the first half of the twentieth century, this chapter recollects the largely forgotten early history of yoga in modern China. Buddhist scholar Liu Renhang, with his translation of Japanese scholar Kaiten Nukariya's study of yoga in North America, was the first to introduce yoga as a remedy for the nation, then suffering from endless warfare. The theosophist Hari Prasad Shastri lectured on yoga and established a yoga study group called "Holy Yoga". The first teacher to offer yoga classes regularly in China was Eugenia Peterson, later known as Indra Devi, and her assistant Michael Volin. They successfully enlisted hundreds of pupils, many of whom were Westerners living in Shanghai. However, with the demise of the Shanghai concessions, the spread of yoga in modern China halted abruptly before it was incorporated into the everyday life of ordinary Chinese people.

Keywords. Yoga, Global Shanghai, Liu Renhang, Theosophical Society, Indra Devi

Introduction

On 23 April 1980, *Gongren ribao* (Workers' Daily), a newspaper run by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, reported a miracle performed by an Indian yogi.[1] This was the first article on yoga to appear in Chinese media since China's reform and opening up initiated in 1979. In the following years, the popularity of yoga snowballed. By 2012 there were around 20,000 yoga clubs, 60,000 yoga teachers, 500 yoga teacher training institutes, and about 20 million yoga prac-

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1 "'Huomai' batian" 1980.

Published in: Philippe Bornet, Nadia Cattoni (eds.): *Significant Others, Significant Encounters. Essays on South Asian History and Literature.* Heidelberg: HASP, 2023. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/hasp.1155.c16213

titioners in mainland China.[2] By 2016 the number of yoga clubs had more than doubled to around 50,000.[3] Despite this, the spread of yoga in China is still a largely unstudied topic in English-language academic scholarship.[4] The editors of the recently published *Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditations Studies* (2021) also regret the absence of a chapter on the growth of yoga in China.[5] Although the situation is different in Chinese-language scholarship, where there is an increasing number of studies on yoga, most of these are empirical investigations into the physiological effects of yoga practice and the sociological and economic impact of the growing yoga fever.[6] The early history of yoga in modern China remains largely neglected.

Due to the spread of Buddhism and the translation of Buddhist scriptures, the concept of yoga (*yujia*), yoga philosophy, and tantric yogic practices and rituals were known to Chinese Buddhists long before its reintroduction to the modern Chinese public. The Buddhist Yogacara philosophical text *Yogācārabhūmi-Śāstra* (Treatise on the Foundation of Yogācāra) has been well received by the Chinese Buddhists. A section of the text was first translated into Chinese as *Pusadichi jing* (Treatise on Bodhisattva Stages) by the Indian monk Tanwu Chen (Dharmakṣema, 385–433/439). Xuanzang (600–664), who studied in Nalanda, a Buddhist monastic university in India, translated the whole treatise into Chinese as *Yujiashidi lun* and further established the Faxiang zong (Dharma Characteristics' school) based on the Yogachara school. A tantric ritual performed to feed flaming-mouthed, hungry ghosts called *yujia yankou* (flaming-mouthed, hungry ghost yoga) was also introduced to China via the translation and works of Indian monks Shicha Nantuo (Śikṣānanda, 652–710), Bukong Jingang (Amoghavajra 705–744), and others. It remained a popular Buddhist ritual to release ghosts from suffering.[7] More transgressive practices termed as yoga were later introduced by tantric works like *Foshuo miaojixiang yujia dajiao jingang peiluofulun guanxiang chengjiu yiguijing* (The Scripture Containing the Buddha's Discourse on the Rites for Contemplation and Siddhi about the Wheel of the Auspicious Yoga Tantra of Vajrabhairava) translated in 995. Moreover, elements from Yogachara philosophy, Buddhist tantric yoga, Confucianism, Taoism, and folk religion were appropriated by a local cult called *yujia jiao* (yoga religion) in Fujian, a south-eastern coastal province, no later than the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127).[8] Later, Tibetan la-

2 Yang 2012.
3 Cao 2016.
4 There are, however, a few examples. See, for instance, Singleton/Byrne 2008; Singleton 2010.
5 Newcombe/O'Brien-Kop 2021: 8.
6 For example, Chen/Wu 2005; Liu 2017; Yan/Tian 2013.
7 Yang 2010.
8 Ye 1999.

mas introduced *yantra yoga* (yoga of movement), which shares certain similarities with hatha yoga, to the royal elites of the Yuan (1271–1368), Ming (1368–1664), and Qing (1636–1912) dynasties.[9]

While the Buddhist community in China carried forth these traditions into the modern era, a new form of yoga was imported to China in the context of China-West contacts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1896, almost a century before the *Gongren ribao* report, the *North China Daily News*, an English-language newspaper based in Shanghai—one of the five "treaty ports" opened to Western trade after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking that ended the First Opium War (1839–1842)—had already reported the story of an Indian yogi in London.[10] In the ensuing decades, yoga would find its way to China again, over a thousand years after its elements were first introduced to the Chinese as part of Buddhism. Who were the first people to transmit yoga to modern China? What motivated them to spread yoga? How was yoga received by the Chinese? What implications can we draw from this phenomenon? By examining newspapers, archives, and books published in the first half of the twentieth century, this chapter seeks to piece together fragments of the forgotten early history of yoga in modern China. I argue that yoga, though originating in India, was introduced to China via the West in a global network of knowledge transmission. "Global Shanghai",[11] the metropolitan port city with foreign settlements and a diverse population, was instrumental in providing a space for the spread of yoga and its interaction with Chinese Buddhism and other beliefs and practices. The following three sections of this chapter will focus on three prominent figures/groups who played an active role in the transmission of yoga: (1) the Chinese Buddhist scholar Liu Renhang (1881–1938) and his translation of the Japanese scholar Kaiten Nukariya (1867–1934), (2) the Theosophical Society in China, and (3) the famous yoga teacher Indra Devi (1899–1968) and her assistant Michael Volin (1914–1997).

1 Liu Renhang and Kaiten Nukariya

In 1918 one of the most influential Chinese publishing houses, the Commercial Press, Shanghai, published a new book titled *Yangqi lianxin: beimei yujia xueshuo* (The Cultivation of Qi and Practice of Mind: The Doctrines of North American Yoga). This was the first book on yoga to appear in modern China, as far as we know. From the book's back cover, one can find the name of the original Japanese author: Kaiten Nukariya. Nukariya was a Buddhist scholar and authored many

9 Shen/An 2017.

10 "Who Wouldn't Be a Yogi?" 1896.

11 Wasserstrom 2008.

books on Buddhism, particularly Zen. The original Japanese version of the book was published in 1913.[12] The book systematically introduces the philosophy and practice of yoga, with a particular emphasis on the latest development of yoga fever in America. Nukariya compared yoga to Buddhism and found many similarities between yoga and Zen Buddhism; for instance, both Zen Buddhists and yoga practitioners use the cross-legged sitting posture, breathing techniques, and follow vegetarianism.[13] Nukariya thus termed yoga a heretic form of Zen.[14]

Liu Renhang, a Chinese Buddhist scholar, prepared the Chinese version. Having received both traditional Confucian and modern education, Liu started his career as the principal of the Jiangsu Seventh Normal School. He left for Japan to study and escape the political persecution of local warlord Zhang Xun (1854–1923). Liu's mother passed away during his stay in Japan, the shock of which led him to convert to Buddhism.[15] It was probably around this time that he came across Nukariya's book and decided to introduce it to the Chinese public. However, instead of preparing a literal translation of Nukariya's book, Liu left many personal imprints on the Chinese version. Alongside a foreword, he added a new first chapter titled "Alas, Where is My Real Freedom?". He also divided the original ninth chapter, "Distinction between North American Yoga and Indian Yoga", into two, titled: "The Origin of North American Yoga" and "Distinction between North American Yoga and Indian Yoga". More importantly, Liu added many comments to the translated texts.

Since Liu returned to China in 1917 and the first edition was published in March 1918, we may speculate that the book's publication was a priority for him. What makes this book unique? After all, why did he decide to translate this book and introduce yoga to the Chinese public? What drove him? His Buddhist belief or something else? And what was the impact of this book?

Liu defines yoga as "a new liberal eudaemonism" that teaches American people, who are "oppressed by materialism", "what 'self' is".[16] This remedy, according to him, can also heal China, which is suffering from endless warfare. Liu lived in an era of turbulence. After the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, warring parties and warlords tore the country apart. As mentioned earlier, Liu had himself been persecuted by Zhang Xun, a royalist warlord. This experience may have encouraged Liu to seek a remedy for the nation. Contrary to the statist approach shared by many revolutionaries and reformists, Liu saw people's hearts as the root of the problem. In the foreword, he clearly states that:

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12 Nukariya 1913.

13 Liu 1919 [1918]: 193–194.

14 Liu 1919 [1918]: 19.

15 For accounts on Liu's life, see Guo 1999; Cheng 2018.

16 Liu 1919 [1918]: 1. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

> It is not the country, but the people who are sick. The disease of the people is in their hearts. The symptom is that they, without knowing what "self" is, stick to the false self recklessly. Therefore, what grows in hearts subsequently harms politics. Wang Yangming once said: "If you want to kill a person, cut the throat!" The humble author, therefore, suggests that to cure the country, we should apply medicine to people's hearts.[17]

Liu here uses Confucian idioms, directly quoting the Neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming (1472–1529) and paraphrasing the maxim "what grows in hearts subsequently harms politics" from *Mengzi* (The Mencius, ca. 300 BCE). Thus we can see that Liu consciously contextualises yoga into a grand and ambitious sociopolitical project that aims to reform the nation. He reminds the reader that "the Chinese teaching asks one to first [cultivate] one's own body and mind and then [deal with] the family, state, and world", which is a paraphrase of the famous sentence from *Daxue* (The Great Learning, ca. 300 BCE). According to Liu, the Chinese people *are* like patients suffering from fever and mania. Yoga is a preliminary prescription, the formulae Qingliangsan (Lat. *Pulvis refrigerans*, a traditional Chinese medical prescription comparable to antipyretics), used to resolve the superficial symptoms. If yoga works, he will further provide other supplementary medicines.[18]

Liu followed Nukariya, believing that yoga had been transmitted to the United States after the 1893 Chicago World's Parliament of Religions,[19] though, strangely, neither Nukariya nor Liu mention Vivekananda (1863–1902), who attended the 1893 Parliament and played an important role in spreading yoga through his lecture tours in the US.[20] However, according to Patrick Bowen's recent research, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, a small order of practical occultists, began teaching yoga earlier in 1885.[21] It is noteworthy that Nukariya and Liu differentiate "North American yoga" from "Indian yoga", which would perhaps surprise both the American and Indian yoga practitioners. The chapter titled "Distinction between North American Yoga and Indian Yoga" says that Indian yoga consists of Vedanta yoga and Patañjali yoga, which includes methods like "Raja yoga" (king yoga), "Gnani yoga" (wisdom yoga), "Karma yoga" (ritual yoga), and "Bhakti yoga" (devotion yoga),[22] whereas

17 Liu 1919 [1918]: 2.

18 Later, Liu would turn to anarchism and socialism and put forward his own utopian solution to the contemporary situation in his *Dongfang datong xuean*. See Wu 2010.

19 Liu 1919 [1918]: 8.

20 See de Michelis 2005: 110–126.

21 Bowen 2020: 143.

22 Liu 1919 [1918]: 90–93. The translations of the different yoga names are based on Liu's version, which may have been different from the prevailing understanding of yoga at the time.

> the American school of yoga learns from various schools their strong points and gets rid of their shortcomings. It extracts their essence, removes the tedious rituals, and adds the new continent's scientific and philosophical explanations. The application of new intellect makes it a brand-new theory. Therefore, it is very different from the yoga in India.[23]

Here Liu adds an affirmative comment to Nukariya's observation, admitting that "a student can surpass his master, and a latecomer can surpass the forerunner".[24] The case of yoga reminds Liu of China and Japan. At his time, Japan has become the superior power of Asia, surpassing its "old master" China and becoming one of the major channels of Western knowledge to the Chinese intelligentsia, of which Liu's translation of Nukariya's book is but one example. We can imply from this comment that, in Liu's opinion, North American yoga is not just different from but better than Indian yoga.

What Liu was seeking from Nukariya's book was not the ancient practice of Indian yoga, which is referred to as "but a heretic form of Zen Buddhism",[25] but the modern wisdom from the United States. In the first chapter of the Chinese version added by Liu, he depicts how human beings have been enslaved by machinery and modern technology. He believes that the developed Western countries, particularly the US, must have medicine for "modern disease".[26] The reason to learn from the US was apparent to Liu, for he appraises America as "the county with [the] latest thoughts", "most advanced materially, most advanced in the freedom of thought".[27] Since it is the yoga's effectiveness in modern society, or, if we say so, the "modernity of yoga", that attracted Liu, his preference for the "modern" North American school over the "traditional" Indian school is understandable.

Soon after the publication of Liu's book, *Jueshe congshu*, the journal of a Buddhist society called Jueshe (Enlightenment Society), published a review of it. The anonymous reviewer readily accepted the distinction between Indian yoga and North American yoga. It was also the latter, alongside the recent development of spiritualism in the US, that attracted this reviewer.[28] He agrees with Liu's perception of yoga as Qingliangsan. However, unlike Liu's sociopolitical project to reform society, the reviewer thought yogic practice, which focuses on the "self", should ultimately help the people be aware of the Buddhist concept of "selflessness".[29] In Liu's book, the view on the "self" is one significant difference between yoga and Buddhism. According to Liu, yoga's perception of the "self" as immor-

23 Liu 1919 [1918]: 93.
24 Liu 1919 [1918]: 93.
25 Liu 1919 [1918]: 19.
26 Liu 1919 [1918]: 7.
27 Liu 1919 [1918]: 7.
28 "Beimei yujiaxue ping" 1918: 1.
29 "Beimei yujiaxue ping" 1918: 4.

tal and imperishable is incorrect.[30] Here, we can see that the reviewer furthered Liu's comparison and positioned yoga as a preliminary method for Buddhist practitioners.

Multiple meanings of yogic terminologies could have further confused ordinary Chinese readers and blurred the boundaries between yoga and Buddhism. *Yujia xue* (the study of yoga), used by Liu, had been used by Buddhists for centuries to denote the Yogachara philosophy. For instance, in 1928 (or 1929?), Buddhist scholar Wang Yuji published *Yujiaxue shijieguan* (World View from the Perspective of the Study of Yoga), which was just such a Buddhist Yogachara book. Later, Liu's co-believers set out to incorporate yoga into a Buddhist narrative. In 1936 *Fojiao ribao* (Buddhist Daily), one of the earliest Buddhist newspapers in China, and *Haichao yin* (Sound of Sea Tide), a Buddhist monthly based in Hangzhou, published a news report translated by World News Translation Agency.[31] This report first appeared in the *New York Times* on 18 December 1935. The title of the original report was "Hindu Ascetic Fasts 45 Days, Walled Up; Utters Sacred Word at the Time Appointed and is Freed After Test of Samadhi Doctrine", and the report stated clearly that the yogi was practising "the Hindu philosophical doctrine of Samadhi".[32] However, the Chinese version changed this expression and called it a "Buddhist Samadhi". *Fojiao ribao* placed this report among other Buddhist news, while *Haichao yin* placed it in a section headed "Materials on Modern Buddhism".[33] This needs to be understood in the context of the Yogachara revival, which is discussed below.

2 The Theosophical Society

On 26 June 1919, the Saturn Lodge, the first official Theosophical lodge in China, was established in the Shanghai French Concession.[34] The Indian theosophist Hari Prasad Shastri (1882–1956), then teaching at Shengcang Mingzhi University established by the Jewish merchant Silas Aaron Hardoon (1851–1931), became the first president of the Saturn Lodge. Shastri was a Sanskrit scholar and yoga teacher. He studied traditional non-dualist Adhyātma yoga (inner-self yoga) under the guidance of an enlightened Mahatma, Shri Dada of Aligarh (1854–1910).[35] Before arriving in Shanghai, Shastri had stayed in Japan for two years and taught

30 Liu 1919 [1918]: 197.
31 Shijie xinwen yi she 1936a, 1936b.
32 "The Hindu Philosophical Doctrine" 1935.
33 Shijie xinwen yi she 1936a, 1936b.
34 Chuang 2020: 155.
35 For an account of the life of Shri Dada, see Shastri 1948, a book compiled years after Shastri had settled in the UK and established his yoga institution Shanti Sadan.

yoga there.[36] By the time Shastri reached Shanghai, yoga was already a familiar topic among the international theosophical community.[37] Shastri established a yoga study group called "Holy Yoga" in Shanghai.[38] He also lectured on yoga to the public. For instance, on 25 February 1922 he delivered a speech at 7A Ezra Road on "Yoga and Yogees [*sic*] in Modern India".[39] Due to a lack of records, the precise content of the lectures is not clear. Since 7A Ezra Road had been a regular congregation venue for the theosophists in Shanghai, some early theosophists were probably the first yoga practitioners in modern China. Wu Tingfang (1842–1922), a Chinese diplomat and keen theosophist, was among these early yoga practitioners.[40] Shastri also claimed to have taught Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), the revolutionary leader.[41]

As an orator and writer, Shastri actively engaged in public life. Yoga remained one of the many topics Shastri would lecture on in the years to come. On 24 September 1926 he lectured on "Indian Mysticism and Yogi Philosophy",[42] and on 8 October 1926 he lectured on "Yoga philosophy".[43] By then, the theosophist branch had been reorganised. Alongside the Shanghai Lodge, Shastri founded the "China Lodge" with Chinese theosophists in 1925.[44] In the same year the society established the Besant School for Girls, which emphasised religious education and respect for different faiths.[45] However, it is not clear whether Shastri lectured on yoga at the Besant School or not.

Besides the education movement, there is also evidence that the Theosophical Society interacted with the Buddhist community in Shanghai. For example, in June 1937 Curuppumullage Jinarajadasa (1875–1953), future president of the Theosophical Society Adyar, came to Shanghai. Besides delivering a lecture on "The World and Individual" before the Theosophical Society on 14 June,[46] he was invited by a Buddhist association to talk on the history of Buddhism.[47] The following notice in Chinese also appeared in *Shen bao* (Shanghai News), one of the first

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36 Hashimoto 2020 doubts the credibility of Shastri's account, claiming that Shastri used this as a cover story to hide the fact he was actually working as an undercover British intelligence agent in Japan and China.
37 Bowen 2020: 145.
38 Chuang 2020: 172.
39 "'Yoga and Yogees in Modern India'" 1922.
40 Chuang 2020: 172.
41 Another claim Hashimoto believes is unfounded. Hashimoto 2020: 80.
42 "'Indian Mysticism and Yogi Philosophy'" 1926.
43 "'Yogi Philosophy'" 1926.
44 Chuang 2020: 156.
45 "Besant School for Girls" 1925.
46 "Mr. C. Jinarajadasa is to Lecture" 1937.
47 "Mr. C. Jinarajadasa Will Speak" 1937.

Chinese-language newspapers that had been established by the British businessman Ernest Major (1841–1908):

> Indian yoga scholar and Buddhist master Mr Jinarajadasa dropped in Shanghai during his trip back to India after visiting Japan. The *Faming xuehui* (Association of Buddhist Studies) of this city has learnt of Jinarajadasa's fame in India and that he has studied Buddhism in depth, and therefore invited him to deliver a public lecture. Jinarajadasa has decided to lecture at 8 o'clock pm tomorrow (23rd [June]) on the subject of "Introduction of Buddhism" at Jingyeshe No. 418 Hard Road. He will talk about the past and present of Indian Buddhism.[48]

Here Jinarajadasa is called a "Yindu yujia xuezhe, foxue dashi" (Indian yoga scholar and Buddhist master). A similar description, "Yindu yujia xuezhe Jinarajadasa Jinnai jushi" (Indian yoga scholar and Buddhist householder Jinarajadas Jinnai[49]), is used in a lecture proceeding published the same year in the *Foxue banyuekan* (Buddhism Half-Monthly).[50] Given that Jinarajadasa was a Sinhalese Buddhist and that the Theosophical Society was favourable towards Buddhism, Jinarajadasa's being called a Buddhist master or householder is understandable. In this context, what is confusing in the title is the meaning of *yujia xuezhe* (yoga scholar). As discussed above, *yujiaxue* (study of yoga) traditionally refers to the Buddhist Yogachara school in a Chinese Buddhist context. Therefore, the general Buddhist audience might have speculated the meaning of *yujia xuezhe* as a follower of that school. We may also recall from the previous section the report of 1936 in *Haichao yin* of a yogic miracle. In that report "yogi" is translated exactly into Chinese as "yujia xuezhe" (yoga scholar). By this time, the Yogachara revival movement initiated by the "father of revival"[51] Yang Wenhui (1837–1911) had already become the most influential Buddhist movement in China.[52] Yang established connections with foreign Buddhists, including the Sinhalese Buddhist revivalist and theosophist Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933).[53] Jinarajadasa's contact with the Chinese Buddhist community revived the link between Yang and Dharmapala, who both envisioned a world Buddhist movement.

It is arguable that Jinarajadasa's Chinese Buddhist hosts, by employing this polysemic title, were intentionally trying to bring their guest into the Yogachara narrative, a Chinese version of the world Buddhist revival movement. Yet we can find hints of disagreement between the hosts and the guest. The English lecture notice

48 "Yindu yujia xuezhe" 1937.

49 Jinnai is the Chinese translation of Jinarajadasa's name.

50 "Fofa gailve" 1937.

51 Welch 1968: 2.

52 For a brief history of the Yogachara revival movement, see Yuan 2020.

53 For Yang's interaction with Dharmapala, see Welch 1964.

published in the *North China Daily News* and the Chinese one published in *Shen bao* both said that Jinarajadas would speak on Buddhism. The lecture proceeding published in *Foxue banyuekan* used the title "Foxue gailve" (Introduction of Buddhism). But what Jinarajadas eventually spoke about was the similarity between Buddhism and Hinduism and the necessity for Buddhists to study Hinduism.[54] By then, Hinduism was still less known, and Chinese Buddhists had for long seen Brahmanism as *waidao* (heretical). It must therefore have been difficult for them to accept Jinarajadasa's argument of "Hinduism as the mother of Buddhism".[55] On the other hand, Jinarajadasa, a Theravada Buddhist, might not have been aware that he was most probably understood by his audience as a follower of the Buddhist Yogachara school, which belongs to the Mahayana Buddhist tradition.

3 Indra Devi and Michael Volin

Apart from Liu's translation of Nukariya and the theosophists' sporadic yoga teachings, the first teacher to offer yoga classes regularly in China was Russian-born theosophist Eugenia Peterson (1899–2002), also known as Jane or Eugenie. She travelled to India in 1927 and established her celebrity as an actress and dancer using the name Indira Devi, which she would later change to Indra Devi. She learned hatha yoga from Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888–1989), the yoga master patronised by the Maharaja of Mysore who wanted Devi to help transmit yoga to the West.[56] After studying at Krishnamacharya's yoga school for eight months, in 1939 Devi accompanied her husband Jan Strakaty (1887–?), a Czechoslovakian diplomat, to Shanghai.

Shanghai was by then already a metropolitan city with a diverse international community. Buddhists like Liu Renhang and theosophists like Shastri had already introduced concepts and practices of Vedanta yoga and Patañjali yoga to the Chinese public. However, hatha yoga, in the form of physical culture, was still a novelty, though not unheard of. On 25 July 1939, the *China Press* published a story about American heavyweight boxer Lou Nova (1913–1993) being trained by a Hinduized yoga teacher, "Oom the Omnipotent" Dr Pierre Bernard (1875–1955).[57] From the pictures and explanatory notes (Fig. 1), we see the "philosophical fighter" Nova practising some yogic postures to control his muscles.

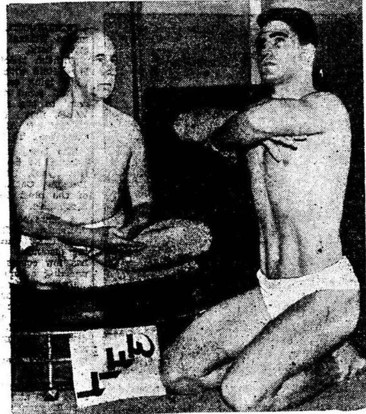
Before Devi left for China, Krishnamacharya told her to start her own yoga school. Though her husband Jan was not supportive, she nevertheless liked the

54 "Fofa gailve" 1937.
55 "Fofa gailve" 1937.
56 Goldberg 2015: 120.
57 On Bernard's life and contribution to modern yoga, see Love 2010.

"Oom The Omnipotent" Works Yoga Wonders On Lou Nova

And Thus—Philosophical Phighter Phinds Physical Phitness!

Plain, old-fashioned chinning is still good for a fighter, so Lou Nova chins himself plenty. One of Oom the Omnipotent's monkeys assumes the role of an assistant trainer.



Seated at the feet of Oom the Omnipotent, fighter Lou Nova goes through a set of muscle control exercises, obeying each command of the Hindu-ized philosopher.

A fighter's stomach muscles have to be tough. Here Dr. Bernard tests out Nova's control over the bread basket.

By PAUL ROSS
(NEA Service Staff Correspondent)

NYACK, N. Y.—Gene Tunney's penchant for Shakespeare used to give the wise boys a laugh. But now Lou Nova, rising young heavyweight, has come along with a topper. Lou is training on philosophy for his June 1 fight with Maxie Baer at the Yankee Stadium, New York.

It's not that Lou has abandoned the time-honored workout. Only that the 24-year-old pugilist spends a lot of his time at the feet of a 60-year-old Hindu-ized American who teaches him the involved mysteries of Yoga, an ancient Eastern philosophy which begins with exercises and ends with nearly incomprehensible concepts.

The Yoga expert is Dr. Pierre Bernard, known to the working press as "Oom the Omnipotent." According to Oom, Lou Nova's wind will be 400 per cent better by the time he climbs into the ring with Baer. "My gosh, I can see the difference already," Lou has reportedly declared.

MAYBE LOU WILL GET AIR-MINDED

The elderly Yoga practitioner became interested in Nova after the fighter had hung up a string of victories on the Coast. "He's about as fine a physical specimen as you could find to demonstrate Yoga," says Oom.

Lou, who is a physical culture fan, accepted an invitation to go to Dr. Bernard's health resort near Nyack, to learn the physical part of Yoga. Now he is being initiated into the complicated breathing exercises whose object is to "fill up" the body—even the intestines—with air and store up physical and mental energy.

Should Lou win the bout with Baer, he will begin training to fight Joe Louis. For that Dr. Bernard will teach him the mental part of Yoga. "I'll give him the whole works and he'll get it, too. He has a noodle on him that would fit a man of 40," says the Doc.

OOM IS MAN OF VARIED INTERESTS

Oom is quite a figure hereabouts. At one time he had a ball club to represent his place. Now he is head of a bank and a mortgage company, runs his reconditioning resort and maintains a flock of animals—including elephants, monkeys, llamas, a lion, a chimpanzee, an eagle—which he rents to circuses. He keeps a trainer to handle the beasts. The Yogi learn things from observing animals.

His title of "Doctor" was handed him by two Hindu universities. His interest in Yoga is inherited from his father and grandfather who were students in India and the Far East. Oom himself, has spent time there. According to those who know him, Oom is a regular fellow who can chat on anything from philosophy to batting averages.

FIGURE 1 Image of the *China Press* story about Lou Nova and Pierre Bernard. Source: Ross 1939, image archived at the Quanguo baokan suoyin (National Newspaper Index).

idea and started a yoga class.[58] As far as we know, it is the first of this kind after Shastri's yoga study group in Shanghai. However, exactly when she started her first class is unclear. According to Devi's biographer Michelle Goldberg, Devi reached Shanghai in December 1939,[59] but a report published in the *North China Daily News* on 29 October 1940 suggests that she had already been teaching yoga for a year and a half in China.[60] Nevertheless, she probably started her class soon after arriving in Shanghai.

Recruiting hatha yoga students in Shanghai proved difficult.[61] There is no clue of the lasting impact of either Liu's or Shastri's introduction of yoga to the city. According to the above-mentioned report, by the time Devi started her class, "nobody here knew anything about it, and most people had a notion that the practice of Yoga exercises meant lying on broken glass, walking on burning coals, sitting on nails, etc.".[62] Devi soon decided to reach out to various communities and organisations and eventually recruited her first students from the American expat community in Shanghai.[63]

Like other modern yoga teachers, Devi tried to dissociate yoga from ascetic practices and reintroduce it to the Chinese public as a practice that cures illness and helps one to attain permanent health and youth. A talk delivered at a Rotary club meeting on 5 December 1940 illustrates her attracting yoga pupils. Distancing herself from "'fanatic' ceremonies" conducted by "filthy fakirs", she called her yoga the "classical form which, by deep breathing, draws into the human body a sort of 'vital force' existing in fluid form in the air".[64] She called hatha yoga "the first phase of yoga" and tried to convince her audience that practising yoga can help recapture spiritual youth and cure various diseases.[65] Indeed, it was the physical benefits that drew people to her class. For example, a *North China Daily News* article quotes statements from Devi's pupils about how yoga cured their severe headaches, copied from an album she authored.[66] Goldberg also mentions examples of Devi curing pupils with insomnia and asthma.[67] Thus, while Devi introduced both spiritual and physical benefits of yoga, her practice, at least as far as the general public was concerned, was more about physical exercise and alternative therapy.

58 Goldberg 2015: 133
59 Goldberg 2015: 127
60 "Yoga Is No Mystery" 1940.
61 Goldberg 2015: 133
62 "Yoga Is No Mystery" 1940.
63 Goldberg 2015: 133
64 "Yoga Votary" 1940.
65 "Yoga Votary" 1940.
66 "Yoga Is No Mystery" 1940.
67 Goldberg 2015: 136

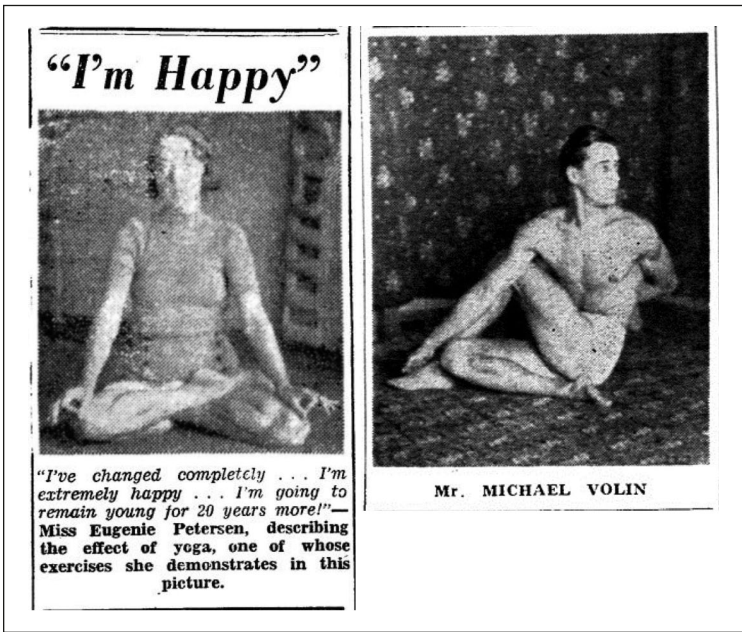


Figure 2 Photos of Devi (then using the name Eugenie Petersen) and Volin in yogic postures published in the *China Press* (6 December 1940) and the *North China Daily News* (18 May 1948), respectively. Archived at the National Newspaper Index.

With more and more pupils coming for classes, Devi moved to an apartment on 1826 Avenue Joffre in the French Concession. Michael Volodchenko (who later changed his name to Michael Volin and was also known as Swami Karmananda), a Russian sportsman born in the north-eastern city of Harbin, joined Devi as her assistant. Having undergone instructor's training, Volin started to teach a men's class. Thus Devi and Volin offered one morning and one evening class.[68] The popularity of both classes soon grew, and they moved to 9 Rue Francis Garnier, a spacious bungalow owned by Song Meiling (1898–2003), wife of the Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975).[69] In the new venue, Devi was able to teach twenty-five pupils simultaneously, and the total number of students exceeded 100.[70] No later than July 1941, Devi, using the name Eugenie Peterson, established

68 "Yoga Is No Mystery" 1940.
69 By then both Chiang and Song had moved to Chongqing, the wartime capital of China. Despite some claims to the contrary, Devi did not in fact teach Song yoga. See Zhongguo Yujia Daoshi Lianmeng 2020.
70 Goldberg 2015: 134.

the "Yoga Health Classes Scheal [*sic*]" with her as the principal and Volin as her assistant (Fig. 2).[71]

All these happened under the shadow of World War II. The Japanese navy attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The next day, the Japanese army took over the Shanghai International Settlement. Before long, the Japanese started to force citizens of the Allies, including many of Devi's pupils, to move to concentration camps. It became thus impossible for Devi to continue her yoga classes until 1945. On 25 November 1945, three months after the end of the war, a fragment of a notice of a "Lecture on Yoga" delivered by Devi appeared in the *China Press*.[72] Later, she made a trip to India in 1946, during which she completed her book on yoga, *Yoga: The Technique of Health and Happiness*. Returning to Shanghai in the same year, she planned, according to one news report published on October 27, 1964, to "revive [her] yoga classes". The report also mentions that she had learned a new technique that "enables people to dispense with glasses and strengthen their eyesight".[73]

However, as the civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party escalated, Devi left China for the United States and handed over the yoga school to Volin. An article titled "Devotees of Yoga in Shanghai" appeared in the *North China Daily News* on 18 May 1948 depicting Volin in a yogic posture. The article explains yoga as "a logical, exact and definite science" and says that hatha yoga "helps against insomnia, headache, neurosis, constipation and helps blood circulation".[74] The end of the article notes that Volin was still running the yoga school established by Devi. This is, however, the last clue of either Devi's or Volin's yoga teaching in China. Before long, the People's Liberation Army marched towards Shanghai and Volin, like Devi, fled the city. Over the previous decade, Devi and Volin had taught hundreds of students in their yoga classes, many of them Europeans and Americans living in Shanghai. After that, they spread yoga in North America, Europe, and other parts of the world. But the practice halted in China.

Conclusion

In the first half of the twentieth century, *yujia*, a loanword from Sanskrit that used to mean only doctrines and rituals related to the Buddhist Yogachara school, started to associate itself with a new import from abroad. Unlike the Buddhist Yogachara philosophy, this "new yoga" was not transmitted to China directly from India. It was instead a part of a diffusion of knowledge via a global network. Liu Renhang's

71 "Yoga Health Classes Scheal" 1941.
72 "Lecture on Yoga" 1945.
73 "Indira Devi to Revive Yoga Classes Here" 1946.
74 "Devotees of Yoga in Shanghai" 1948.

interest in yoga followed on from its popularity in the United States and resulted in his translation of Nukariya's seminal work. Theosophists like Hari Prasad Shastri introduced yoga to China and recruited the first group of yoga practitioners in the country in modern times. The cases of Indra Devi and Michael Volin show how Western mediators further facilitated the spread of yoga in China. Yoga is indeed a system of knowledge and practice that originated in India, but it is also the global network of knowledge production and diffusion that essentially constructed the Chinese public's understanding of it as a spiritual and physical practice. Liu Renhang's writings and the reports of various Buddhist newspapers and journals betrayed their intention to assimilate yoga to a modern Buddhist narrative, that of the Yogachara school in particular. However, such efforts could hardly succeed because the core process of knowledge production was beyond them.

Following the demise of the Shanghai concessions in 1945 and the disappearance of the large-scale international community by 1949, the spread of yoga in modern China halted abruptly and completely. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, contemporary research has almost totally forgotten this early history. The disappearance and oblivion of yoga reveal the limitation of this stage of the reintroduction of yoga in China. Though Shastri, Devi, and Volin did teach Chinese pupils, most of their yoga pupils were foreign residents in Shanghai. Though Chinese Buddhists like Liu Renhang introduced yoga to the Chinese public, their interaction with foreign yoga teachers seems confined to mismatched guest lectures. As a part of the modern Western lifestyle transplanted to westernised elite enclaves in Shanghai, yoga had not yet transformed itself into a popular Chinese idiom when "Global Shanghai" shut its doors in 1950. Nevertheless, yoga would find its way back to China four decades after Volin left, largely thanks to public interest in the extraordinary power of *qigong* (breathing training), an indigenous body technique that may have a distant connection with yoga through Buddhism.[75] Comparing the two stages of yoga's transmission to modern China—the one I have explored here and the one that followed with the *qigong* fever—would be worth exploring in future studies.

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75 For the *qigong* fever, see Palmer 2007.

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PART III

HISTORY OF ORIENTALISM

John Brockington

Force Majeure: Alexander Hamilton and the Start of Sanskrit Studies in Continental Europe

Abstract. Alexander Hamilton's pivotal role in the beginnings of Sanskrit studies in continental Europe has been well covered in Rosane Rocher's book and subsequent article on him. However, the role of historical accident in catalysing this and similar processes is worth emphasising. For Hamilton, who had gone just to consult manuscripts, detention in Paris for three years (1803–1806) because of the worsening political situation between Britain and France meant that he used his enforced stay on the continent, among other things, to teach Sanskrit to a number of scholars, in particular Friedrich and August Wilhelm von Schlegel. But the influence on Friedrich of the deployment of the older Schlegel brother, Carl August, to Madras with the Hannover Regiment is also relevant. The contrast in attitudes towards Indology in this period between continental European nations and Britain with its imperial outlook will also be noted.

Keywords. Sanskrit, Alexander Hamilton, Paris, Napoleon, Schlegel, Bopp

If the worsening political situation between Britain and France in the early years of the nineteenth century had not detained the Scotsman Alexander Hamilton in Paris, the start of Sanskrit studies in continental Europe would have been very different.[1] That is, of course, a considerable oversimplification but together the politics of nationality and militarism have clearly had a significant role in the process. The encounters between the various individuals have been well documented but the role of the political situation in bringing them about and the overall picture of the various interactions has been less studied and is the focus of this contribution.

1 I shall for convenience, though reluctantly, use hereafter simply Europe to designate continental Europe in contradistinction to Britain.

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1 Background

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, intellectuals and Romantics in Europe, though keen to have access to oriental languages and literature, had much less access to Sanskrit than the British, so the arrival in Paris of someone who had been in India, had learned Sanskrit, and belonged to the circle of Sir William Jones (1746–1794) prompted a number of them to seek him out. When the British became the dominant power in India, various officials had begun collecting and disseminating information on its culture, mainly through the Asiatick Society (as it was then spelt), founded by William Jones in 1783 under the patronage of the Governor General Warren Hastings.[2] There had been earlier individuals who gained at least some knowledge of Sanskrit but their impact in the West was minimal and in most instances their contributions remained unpublished.[3]

At first British knowledge of Sanskrit texts had mainly been gained through Persian sources—examples are John Zephaniah Holwell's *Interesting Historical Events* of 1767 and Alexander Dow's *History of Hindostan* of 1768—but the situation changed when Warren Hastings became Governor General (1774–1785, preceded by two years as Governor of Bengal). The first significant attempts to study Sanskrit started with compiling a Hindu legal code under his patronage (he was opposed to the idea of imposing the British legal code on Indians). The transition

2 Hamilton in his periodical contributions paid extensive tribute to Jones's work but was also willing to disagree with him. For example, his 1809 review of Charles Wilkins' Sanskrit Grammar in the *Edinburgh Review* (13: 366–381) upholds the usefulness of studying Sanskrit by defending Jones' conclusions about the affinities of certain European languages with Sanskrit, but elsewhere he expresses doubts about Jones' conclusions on the origin of nations. Similarly, in two reviews in 1802 he severely criticised Francis Buchanan's claim that the antiquity of Hinduism was a spurious myth invented by brāhmans.

3 Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) learnt enough Sanskrit to participate in debates with *paṇḍits* (and also knew Tamil and Telugu); Heinrich Roth (1620–1668) compiled a Sanskrit grammar as early as 1660 (the manuscript is now in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Rome); Johann Ernst Hanxleden (1681–1732) compiled a Sanskrit grammar, *Grammatica Grandonica*, published only in 2013 from the manuscript preserved in a Carmelite monastery; Jean François Pons (1688–1752) in 1733 sent a large number of manuscripts to the Bibliothèque du Roi, including a Sanskrit grammar which is probably by Pons himself. A later missionary scholar was Paulinus à S. Bartholomaeo (born Filip Vesdin, 1748–1806), who drew on Hanxleden's work and himself published a Sanskrit grammar in 1799. As late as the start of the nineteenth century, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805), despite having learnt some Sanskrit in India, translated several Upaniṣads into Latin from Dārā Shukōh's Persian translation, *Sirr-i-Akbar,* as *Oupnek'hat (id est, secretum tegendum*, Paris, 1801–1802), by which Arthur Schopenhauer first became acquainted with the Upaniṣads. Anquetil-Duperron's more significant earlier work, his *Zend-Avesta: ouvrage de Zoroastre* (Paris, 1771), had been promptly but mistakenly denounced by William Jones as based on manuscripts which were modern forgeries, since he did not appreciate the complexities of the situation. See Brockington 1989: 98.

stage is seen in Nathaniel Brassey Halhed's *Code of Gentoo Laws* (1776), which was a digest made in Sanskrit by a group of *paṇḍits* from various Hindu legal texts, translated via Bengali and Persian into English, but this was soon followed by his *Grammar of the Bengal Language* (1778), in which the remarks on Sanskrit rather than its actual subject matter excited interest among reviewers and scholars in Europe. Warren Hastings introduced Jones to the *Bhagavadgītā*.[4] Hastings also encouraged Charles Wilkins (1749–1833), the first British civil servant to learn Sanskrit, to produce his *Bhagavadgītā* translation of 1785, followed after he left India by his *Grammar of the Sanskrita Language* of 1808, using type which he carved and cast himself.[5] Then in 1789 came the publication of Jones's translation of Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā*, which roused Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) to such enthusiasm, while more generally British orientalists in India provided Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) with the material for his idea of India as the cradle of civilisation.

2 Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824) started his career as a cadet in the Bengal army, arriving in Calcutta in 1783, was promoted to ensign in 1785, and at some point became a government interpreter and, it seems, a secretary to the Governor General, Lord Cornwallis.[6] He joined the Asiatick Society in 1785 within a year of its establishment (but did not contribute to *Asiatick Researches*). He soon became interested in Sanskrit, seeking but apparently failing to get dispensation from military duty in order to pursue his studies in it,[7] since he resigned from government

4 Jones's wider agenda for his activities in India meshed well with Hastings's fostering of orientalist scholars as a means to understand and so control the people he was governing. Typical of this and his judicial background is his decision to learn Sanskrit in order to read a copy of the Laws of Manu (*Mānavadharmaśāstra*) presented to him; his translation (*Institutes of Hindu Law*) was published in 1794. Regarding the publicity given to Jones's remarks in his "Third Anniversary Discourse" to the Asiatick Society (February 1786) on the relationship of Sanskrit to other Indo-European languages we should note the—admittedly rather less specific—comments made independently a couple of centuries earlier by Thomas Stevens (in 1583) and Fillipo Sassetti (in 1585).

5 Brockington 1989.

6 The principal sources for Alexander Hamilton are the various excellent studies by Rosane Rocher (1968, 1970, 2002, 2004), on which I base the main facts about him in this contribution; these will not usually be separately footnoted hereafter. Also, for details on various minor figures I have used Klaus Karttunen's online database *Persons of Indian Studies* at https://whowaswho-indology.info/.

7 He wrote to Lord Cornwallis, on 4 March 1790, asking for facilities to pursue his study of Sanskrit, citing both the example of the salary granted to Charles Wilkins for that purpose

service in October 1790 in order to concentrate on them (and no doubt the private trade which must have financed his later lifestyle). Presumably, he studied with a *paṇḍit*, as William Jones, Charles Wilkins, Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765–1837), and Horace Hayman Wilson (1786–1860) all did. He returned home to Greenock in Scotland in 1795.

At this point a comment on the degree of interest in India shown in Scotland is relevant. The background is the high proportion of young Scots, like Hamilton, among the recruits to the East India Company in its early years. The generally sympathetic attitude of the Scottish Enlightenment towards Indian culture during most of the eighteenth century began to change towards its end. This change is reflected in *An Historical Disquisition* by William Robertson (1721–1793),[8] the noted historian and former Principal of Edinburgh University, which is written from the earlier sympathetic standpoint but is aware of and indeed explicitly rejects the attitude of European supremacy so soon to become standard, which is exemplified in James Mill's (1773–1836) *History of British India* (1817). Some Scots at least seem to have retained the more sympathetic attitude longer than the English, many influenced by the teaching of Dugald Stewart (1753–1828) at Edinburgh in the 1790s.[9] For example, Vans Kennedy pointed out Mill's lack of knowledge of Indian languages in a paper to the Bombay Literary Society in February 1820 and Mountstuart Elphinstone was motivated to write his *History of India* (1841) by realising the weaknesses in Mill's work.[10]

In 1798 Hamilton moved to Edinburgh and became one of the founders of—and a frequent contributor to—the *Edinburgh Review*, contributing also to the *Monthly Review* and the *Asiatic Annual Register*, as well as engaging in research in the British Museum. His reviews in these journals show the breadth of his learning and his wide interests in literature, travel, and Scottish affairs in addition to Indian politics, while his Sanskrit scholarship earned him the nicknames "Sanscrit Hamilton" and "the Pundit". His Indological research led to his visit to Paris in 1802, as soon as the Peace of Amiens (signed 25 May 1802) promised better relations between Britain and France, to consult Sanskrit and Bengali manuscripts in the Imperial Library. However, he had to remain for some considerable time because of the worsening political situation; in the event, he used the enforced stay to teach Sanskrit to a number of scholars and to compile (with Louis-Mathieu Langlès, 1763–1824, the curator of oriental manuscripts and a Persianist) a catalogue of the Sanskrit manuscripts stored in the Imperi-

and "the importance of the Sungscrit in a political view [. . .], it being the only language universally diffused over every part of Hindustan". Rocher 1968: 6–8.

8 Robertson 1791.

9 Rendall 1982.

10 Rendall 1982: 67–68.

al Library,[11] thus initiating the first significant encounter of European scholarship with the Sanskrit tradition. Through the influence of French scholars (in particular the senator Constantin François de Chassebœuf, Comte de Volney, 1757–1820) and an appeal to Talleyrand (1754–1838) by his American cousin, also named Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), he was exceptionally allowed to remain in Paris, rather than being detained at Fontainebleau, and indeed to lodge in Friedrich Schlegel's house for some months. The imminent publication of the catalogue probably influenced his release from France in 1806 on the intervention of the orientalist Antoine Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838). Hamilton also began to teach Sanskrit to Volney, Claude Fauriel (1772–1844), another lodger Gottfried Hagemann,[12] and most significantly to Friedrich Schlegel himself.

When Hamilton finally returned to Britain in 1806, he took up the post "to teach the Sanscrit and other Hindoo Languages"[13] at the newly established East India College (located briefly at Hertford Castle but moved to new buildings at Haileybury in 1809), to which he was appointed even before leaving Paris (another reason for de Sacy's urging his release). The College was oriented more to practical than academic concerns, to training "writers" (junior clerks) for service in India and not for academic careers, which points up very clearly the contrast in attitudes between Britain and the rest of Europe.

The background to its establishment was that the Governor General, Lord Wellesley, had unilaterally declared the founding of Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800 as an "Oxford of the East", which the East India Company (EIC) threatened to close, but as a compromise it was downgraded to a school for Indian languages, and the East India College was set up to give three years of teaching to all "writers" appointed to its civil service, focusing mainly on Western subjects but including elementary teaching in Indian languages. Hamilton was the author of a report on the state of oriental learning in France which Charles Grant, a Director of the EIC, presented as part of his case for the establishment in England of the East India College; his candidacy for the post at the college was supported by Charles Wilkins, at this period Librarian to the East India Company and named as Oriental Visitor for the college. The relative prominence given to Sanskrit at Haileybury

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11 Hamilton/Langlès 1807. However, the Vedic manuscripts sent by the Jesuit missionary, Jean Calmette (1692–1740), were omitted from their catalogue because they were mostly not in *devanāgarī* (Sweetman 2019: 800). As a result of France's colonial position in Asia, large numbers of Asiatic manuscripts had arrived at the Bibliothèque Nationale under an acquisition programme instituted in 1718 by the Abbé Bignon as the director of the then Bibliothèque du Roi, which acted as a magnet for scholars from elsewhere.

12 Though planning to become an Indologist, Hagemann died young in 1809 before publishing anything. Another lodger with Schlegel was Helmine von Klencke (1783–1856), soon to marry A.-L. de Chézy.

13 Rocher 2002: 383, citing India Office Records J/2/1, 150–151.

compared with Fort William seems to have been due to both Wilkins's influence and Hamilton's personal status, but Hamilton had repeatedly to urge its continued support there and at Fort William. Besides the Sanskrit language, Hamilton also taught Bengali, Indian literature, and Indian history, as well as publishing a number of works for the use of the students, including his *Hitopadeśa* edition published in 1810 and grammatical analysis of 1812. He also used his acquaintance with Grant to request copies of grammars and dictionaries from India. Hamilton taught at Haileybury until his retirement in May 1818.[14] He was a founder member of the Royal Asiatic Society, established in 1823, but died the following year in Liverpool.

3 European Sanskrit studies

Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) had not planned to study Sanskrit when he went to Paris in June 1802—initially to study Persian with Antoine-Léonard de Chézy (1773–1832)—but then stayed till mid-1804, Hamilton's presence there encouraging him to do so. In 1796–1797 he was in Jena, joining the literary circle round Goethe and Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), to which his brother August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) already belonged, but soon quarrelled with Schiller and moved to Berlin until late 1799. The brothers were leading figures within Jena Romanticism and founders of the *Athenaeum* (1798–1800) as a mouthpiece for it, thus setting the tone of German Indology for many years, although in the case of Friedrich this was later modified by a move towards a more conservative Roman Catholicism than he had at first adopted when he and his wife joined the Catholic Church in 1808.[15] Around 1817 he was appointed by Klemens von Metternich (1773–1859), the legation secretary to the Imperial Diet in Frankfurt am Main. However, he never gained a university post, either in Sanskrit or in European literature.

14 He was succeeded by Graves Chamney Haughton (1788–1848), who had learnt Sanskrit at Fort William; like his predecessor, much of his energy went into producing textbooks for his students. Subsequently, in 1832, Haughton was a candidate for the first Boden Professorship of Sanskrit at Oxford but withdrew in favour of Horace Hayman Wilson. Later Sanskrit teachers at Haileybury were Francis Johnson (1795/96–1876) and Monier Monier-Williams (1819–1899).

15 Friedrich also established during his stay in Paris the journal *Europa* with the intention of introducing German readers to the best of French culture, reflecting his vision for a Europe united under German leadership based on the supposed harmony of the Middle Ages (Tzoref-Ashkenazi 2006). Equally unrealistic was his view of Sanskrit as the source of all languages and all ideas and his placing European medieval feudal society and the Indian caste system on an equal footing.

Friedrich Schlegel's *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808) stems from Hamilton's teaching of Sanskrit and comparative philology—perhaps including his concern with linguistic typology[16]—and had an enormous impact through the prestige of the Schlegel family, establishing him as the first serious student of Sanskrit in Germany; for example, large parts of it had been translated into French by the following year.[17] Schlegel's initial interest in India may have come from the great popularity of Forster's translations of Jones's English translation of Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* (1791)[18] and of *Bhagavadgītā* selections, as well as from occasional Indian themes in the work of his friend Novalis (pen-name of Georg Philipp Friedrich, Freiherr von Hardenberg, 1772–1801). Hints of this can be found in his *Gespräch über Poesie* of 1799. However, there was then a further factor. In 1782, a year before Hamilton's arrival in Calcutta, Karl August Schlegel (1762–89), an older brother of August Wilhelm and Friedrich, had arrived in Madras as part of the two Kurhannoversche Regiments recruited by George III (both King of Great Britain and Elector of Hanover) to assist the East India Company against the French in India and Hyder Ali in the Second Mysore War (1780–1784). He also worked as a cartographer for the Governor of Madras and compiled his *Versuch einer militärischen Geographie des Carnatiks*[19] and died in Madras on 9 September 1789.

In the preface to his *magnum opus* Friedrich Schlegel mentions Karl's death after spending the final years of his brief life to travel in and study of the genius of India[20]; the perhaps romanticised example of his older brother was clearly a major factor in stimulating Friedrich's interest in ancient India, which began to be realised on his arrival in Paris. Also in the preface, he acknowledges his indebtedness to Hamilton[21] and expresses the hope that Indian studies will lead to a transformation of European culture comparable to the enthusiasm for the Greek world in

16 Plank 1987.

17 It also contains translated extracts from several Sanskrit works in an appendix.

18 Certainly, writing in May 1803 to his brother August Wilhelm, Friedrich expresses hopes of soon being able to read *Śakuntalā* in the original. Johann Georg Adam Forster's (1754–1794) translation also aroused the enthusiasm of major literary figures like Goethe (seen in his adding "Vorspiel auf dem Theater" as the second of three prologues to *Faust*, as well as in his often quoted epigram on "Sakontala") and Herder, to whom he sent a copy.

19 The German text and an English version, also written by Schlegel, have both recently been published, along with a study on them by Dietmar Rothermund and Schlegel's own map (Ahuja/Christof-Füchsle 2020: 79–91, 93–152, 153–200; map at 148–149). Other officers in these Hanoverian regiments also published material from their time in India, including Carl Conrad Best, Friedrich Ludwig Langstedt, and some anonymous authors. See Tzoref-Ashkenazi 2009.

20 Schlegel 1808: xii–xiii.

21 Schlegel 1808: iv.

the Renaissance.[22] August Wilhelm dedicated a poem to Karl August in his 1800 collection of poems.

August Wilhelm Schlegel was first known as a literary figure, as a poet and translator, and in 1796 at the invitation of Friedrich Schiller he had settled in Jena, joining the circles round Goethe at Weimar and Schiller at Jena. In 1804 he became tutor to the children of Baronne Anne-Louise-Germaine de Staël-Holstein (Madame de Staël, 1766–1817), travelled Europe with her, and remained intimate with her until her death.[23] Inspired by his brother Friedrich's work, by 1815 he was learning Sanskrit in Paris with de Chézy and Franz Bopp (1791–1867). In 1818 (coincidentally the year of Hamilton's retirement) Schlegel was appointed to the first chair of literature and art history (Lehrstuhl für Literatur und Kunstgeschichte) at the University of Bonn, which during his tenure became virtually a chair of Sanskrit. The post was created by the King of Prussia[24] at the instigation of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), who did much to promote Sanskrit, which he had learnt from Bopp while he was the Prussian ambassador to Britain, and from August Wilhelm Schlegel in Paris. August Wilhelm edited and translated into Latin several major Sanskrit texts (*Bhagavadgītā*, an incomplete *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Hitopadeśa*[25]), as well as establishing the *Indische Bibliothek* (1820–1830), the first German journal solely on India. In connection with his Sanskrit studies he visited Paris in 1820–1821 and London (accompanied by his student assistant Christian Lassen[26]) in 1823, mainly in order to meet Henry Thomas Colebrooke, with whom he exchanged correspondence from 1820 to 1827,[27] despite their very different approaches to Sanskrit.[28] August Wilhelm visited London again in 1832, on which occasion he met Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1883).[29]

In this way Hamilton became directly or indirectly the teacher of almost all the first generation of German Indologists. For example, Bopp was stimulated to study

22 Schlegel 1808: x–xi.
23 Paulin 2016.
24 The Rhineland, held by the French between 1797 and 1814, was promised its own university in the proclamation which marked its recovery in April 1815 by Frederick William III of Prussia, who later was persuaded by Humboldt also to set up a chair of Indology at Berlin.
25 See Brockington 2002.
26 Christian Lassen (1800–1876) was heavily involved in Schlegel's editing and translating of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Hitopadeśa*. Subsequently he was the first to decipher the Brahmī script and became Professor of Old Indian Language and Literature at Bonn (extraordinary in 1830, ordinary in 1840). Another of August Wilhelm's students was the poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856).
27 Rocher/Rocher 2013.
28 Colebrooke corresponded with several other German Sanskrit scholars, including Othmar Frank and Friedrich August Rosen. A major attraction for European scholars was his Indian manuscript collection, which he donated to the East India Company Library in 1819.
29 Paulin 2016: 510–515.

Sanskrit by Friedrich Schlegel's work and, since London was ruled out by Napoleon's Continental System, studied Sanskrit largely by himself in Paris between 1812 and 1818 where he also taught August Wilhelm Schlegel. There he consulted Hamilton (then visiting Paris), and was later supported by him in London, as also was Othmar Frank (1770–1840, appointed to chairs at Würzburg in 1821 and then Munich in 1826, and compiler of a Sanskrit grammar). Bopp also met Wilkins and Colebrooke while in London from October 1818 to 1820. Bopp, having taught Sanskrit to Wilhelm von Humboldt, was recommended by him for the post in oriental languages and general linguistics at Berlin which he held from 1821 to 1867.[30] Bopp's *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache* of 1816 marks the true beginning of the discipline of comparative linguistics, started by Friedrich Schlegel, through the systematic grammatical comparison of the five languages studied. He broke completely with the Indian grammatical tradition, for example setting a new pattern by using Latin case names. His interest was not in what Sanskrit revealed about India but what it revealed about the origins of language, in contrast to Hamilton's more practical conception of Sanskrit as a key to all of classical Indian culture.[31]

In France itself Claude Charles Fauriel, one of Hamilton's students mentioned in the previous section, became professor of foreign literature at the Sorbonne in 1830. Mainly interested in Provençal but also on the editorial board of the *Journal Asiatique,* Fauriel assisted Schlegel in designing the *devanāgarī* type used for his *Indische Bibliothek*.[32] Volney, a professor of history at the École Normale, Paris, from 1794 and a member of the Académie Française from 1795, having studied with Hamilton, thereafter cited Sanskrit quite frequently in his writings, seeing it as the lost original "Scythian" of older theory. More significantly, Hamilton's

30 One of his students there was Theodor Aufrecht (1822–1907), first Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at the University of Edinburgh, appointed in 1862.

31 However, we may note that Bopp thought highly enough of Hamilton to seek his support for publishing his *Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache* and that Hamilton wrote a full review of it in the *Edinburgh Review* (33: 431–442). In 1819 Bopp published *Nalus, carmen sanscritum e Mahàbhàrato* containing text, Latin translation, and notes, setting a long-standing precedent for using the Nala episode as a text for beginners. It was from Bopp's *Nala* and Wilkins's grammar and dictionary that Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866), the poet and translator, learnt Sanskrit. Rückert is best known for his *Die Weisheit des Brahmanen* in six volumes (1836–1839), but also translated the *Bhagavadgītā* in 1837. One of Bopp's students was Friedrich August Rosen (1805–1837) who from 1828 was Professor of Sanskrit at the new University of London (later University College, London), to which were soon added Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani; he was primarily a Sanskritist, working on an edition of the *Ṛgveda*, left incomplete at his early death, although his translation of the first book was published posthumously; he also worked as a cataloguer for the British Museum. Another, and better known, student of Bopp was Theodor Benfey (1809–1881).

32 Paulin 2016: 498–499.

activities subsequently encouraged Antoine-Léonard de Chézy to start studying Sanskrit and de Chézy went on to become the first French professor of Sanskrit—indeed, the first on the continent—at the Collège de France in 1815.[33] Though in Paris during Hamilton's stay, and indeed introduced to his future wife Helmine by Friedrich Schlegel's wife Dorothea, de Chézy had not in fact attended Hamilton's classes, being too hesitant, reclusive, or just unwell, and only began the study of Sanskrit by himself after Hamilton had left. He was a prime exponent of the "Florist" approach to oriental culture in early nineteenth-century French scholarship which valued it for its romantic and exotic setting.[34] The "Florist" approach is also seen in other French Indologists such as Alexandre Langlois (1788–1854) and Garcin de Tassy (1794–1878), but a reaction against it set in from the mid-1820s, seen among others in the Persianist Julius von Mohl (1800–1876) and in Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852).

4 Conclusion

Whereas Indian studies in Britain were connected to colonialism, the situation was rather different in Europe (and indeed also in America), and this is reflected in the different approaches. There was not the same tendency to see the subject in purely practical terms, and chairs of Sanskrit were established somewhat earlier and became more widespread, particularly in Germany. European and especially German scholars were heavily influenced by classical philology and approached Sanskrit as an object of historical study, whereas early British orientalists, having learnt the language from *paṇḍits* in the same way as native students, were more attuned to the Sanskrit grammatical tradition and saw Sanskrit literature as a continuous, indeed living tradition. No doubt Alexander Hamilton too studied with a *paṇḍit* and so developed an interest in the language and culture broader than the purely philological.

33 Among others he taught were Johann Gottfried Ludwig Kosegarten, Eugène Burnouf (his successor at Paris), Alexandre Langlois, and Auguste-Louis-Armand Loiseleur-Deslongchamps.

34 McGetchin 2003. This is obvious in the opening of the debut article that as one of the editors he contributed to the first issue of the *Journal Asiatique* in 1822: "Les Muses grecques veulent bien aujourd'hui faire les honneurs à leur *sœurs* des bords du Gange, et suspendre un moment les doctes accords de la lyre, pour faire place aux accens, un peu légers peut-être, du luth indien" (*Journal Asiatique* 1: 3–4). The Société Asiatique, founded in 1822, was the earliest orientalist society in Europe, preceding the Royal Asiatic Society by a year and the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (founded 1845) by over two decades.

The political and military background to the arrival of Sanskrit in Europe is the build-up to the Napoleonic Wars and the wars themselves. Improving relations between Britain and France following the Peace of Amiens allowed Hamilton to travel to Paris to consult manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale but their worsening detained him there and resulted in his teaching Sanskrit to various scholars already interested in oriental studies. Among these, Friedrich Schlegel's interest in India had doubtless also been sparked by his brother Karl's service in India with the Hanoverian regiments—another consequence of the Franco-British hostilities. The humiliation of the German states by Napoleon, who defeated Prussia at the battle of Jena-Auerstedt in October 1806, perhaps encouraged Schlegel's more fanciful ideas about India and Germany as a counterbalance. Germans could substitute a kinship with India for the colonial ambitions that the French shared with the British. A positive aspect of the political fragmentation was that Prussia, under the direction of Sanskrit enthusiast Wilhelm von Humboldt, enlarged the concept of a university and established chairs of Indology, being imitated by the various German rulers within their own states. Romantic ideas were soon abandoned by German Sanskrit scholars from Bopp onwards but were stronger in France, where the less dynamic de Chézy perhaps retarded as much as he furthered the growth of Sanskrit studies.

In a very real sense, therefore, Alexander Hamilton's enforced stay in Paris was crucial for the history of Indology in Europe. His presence there was a catalyst for Indian studies and his legacy is one of personal influence through his teaching and example (in Paris even more than at Haileybury) rather than publication. Hamilton's longer stay in Paris with its results, as well as Karl Schlegel's service in India, were all triggered by Napoleon's imperial ambitions.

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Nadia Cattoni

Alice Boner (1889–1981) and Promoda Charan Mittra (1901–1976): A Forgotten Significant Encounter

Abstract. This chapter analyses a central encounter in the life of the Swiss artist and scholar Alice Boner (1889–1981) in the form of her forty-year relationship with Promoda Charan Mittra (1901–1976), a Bengali lawyer she met in 1935 in Varanasi. Studying Alice's diaries, photographs, and drawings, as well as correspondence between the two, it aims to identify the roles Promoda Charan Mittra played in Alice Boner's personal, intellectual, and artistical life, as well as her understanding and rendering of India through this specific encounter. Questioning Promoda Charan Mittra's absence in the scholarship on Alice Boner, the chapter also shows Mittra's agency in this encounter and in its reception.

Keywords. Alice Boner, Promoda Charan Mittra, art history, orientalism, India-Switzerland

Alice Boner (1889–1981) was a Swiss artist and scholar who spent half of her life in India, in a simple but beautiful house situated on the banks of the Ganga River in Varanasi.[1] There, she became fascinated with Indian art, mythology, and philosophy. She travelled throughout the subcontinent to visit shrines and temples where she studied extensively artistic motifs and sculptures, which she then incorporated in her art.[2] She also engaged with Indian texts and thought, and published several books and articles related to Indian art history.[3]

In Varanasi, as well as in the different places she stayed in India, Alice Boner developed an important network: a mix of intellectuals, artists, people from the

1 I came to know of Alice Boner in 2015 when Maya Burger drew my attention to the fact that I could go for a month's residence as a researcher in Alice's house in Varanasi. I spent there the hottest month of August of my life but have fond memories of my stay in this beautiful and inspiring place. With a view on Assi Ghat from my window and terrace, I could sense the energising and tremendous life taking place on the sacred riverbank twenty-four hours a day.

2 Beltz 2021: 330–331.

3 See her bibliography in G. Boner/Fischer 1982: 126. For a general overview of her life and work, see Kuratli/Beltz 2014.

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aristocracy and from royal families, scholars sharing her interests for Indian arts and politics. Especially, she shared a long friendship with the musicologist and Indologist Alain Daniélou (1907–1994), his partner the Swiss photographer Raymond Burnier (1912–1968), and Alfred Würfel (1911–2011), a German Indologist she first met in Paris in 1932. They all lived in Varanasi during the same period around 1940.[4]

In many of the studies dedicated to Alice Boner, her strong network and the important encounters she made in her life are indexed.[5] But very little is written about her forty-year relationship with Promoda Charan Mittra (1901–1976).[6] Yet this man is extensively present in the archives we have about Alice Boner:[7] Promoda Charan Mittra, alias Montu, is mentioned in Alice's diaries since 1937;[8] the two corresponded with one another for forty years from 1935 to Mittra's death in 1976;[9] and he appears on 307 photographs and three drawings in her collection.

This chapter aims to highlight this forgotten significant encounter in Alice Boner's life, trying to identify the roles Promoda Charan Mittra played in Alice Boner's personal, intellectual, and artistical exchanges, as well as her apprehen-

4 Several pictures from the Alice Boner Collection at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich attest these friendships. See, for example, ABF 32-110.

5 Beside her prestigious encounters (with, for example, Rabindranath Tagore, Vallathol Narayan Menon, Jawaharlal Nehru, etc.), Alice Boner patronised artists such as Uday Shankar, Ustad Allauddin Khan, and Shanta Rao, among others.

6 The only mention is found in the book written by Kuratli and Beltz on the occasion of a collaborative exhibition called “Alice from Switzerland: A Visionary Artist and Scholar Across Two Continents” organised by the Museum Rietberg in Zurich and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai in 2014. See Kuratli/Beltz 2014: 30–31, and for the photographs, 36–39. The authors also mention the 707 letters of their correspondence (30).

7 These archives are preserved at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich and contain not only an important collection of Indian art but also Alice's personal archive, including her diaries, correspondence, and photo collection. I thank Esther Tici and Josef Huber for their support in the archives and Johannes Beltz for his precious help, particularly his information regarding the collection and our discussions about Alice Boner and Promoda Charan Mittra.

8 A selection of Alice's diaries was edited and published by her sister Georgette Boner with Luitgard Soni and Jayandra Soni. This book, published in German and English editions in 1993, is referred to in citations hereinafter as *Alice Boner Diaries*, with quotations from the English edition. The original diaries, letters, and photographs from Alice's personal archive at Rietberg are cited here with the date and, where known, the place and archival reference number. Alice's diary entries quoted here and the letters exchanged with Mittra are in English, despite Boner's mother tongue being German, and Mittra's Bengali. I have lightly edited them for sense or added bracketed clarifications but otherwise preserved their original style and content.

9 The majority of this correspondence are letters written by Alice Boner since they were preciously kept aside by Promoda Charan Mittra from the beginning of their exchanges. Yet some letters by him are included. The last letter we have in the collection is dated from 15 January 1975, but Alice writes in her diary on 18 March 1976 that she has received a letter from Montu.

sion, understanding, and rendering of India through him. Alice Boner is a figure through whom we can understand and study India–Europe connected history.[10] From this perspective, we shall focus on her relationship with Promoda Charan Mittra as a key to understanding that history. In Alice's biographical path—the point of departure of Carlo Ginzburg's microhistory—her encounter with Montu is the mirror of global issues and intertwined realities. These aspects will be discussed below following three points. First, in section 1, we will present Promoda Charan Mittra's private relationship with Alice Boner and question his presence/absence in Alice's archives and works on her. In the second section we will show how, from an orientalist perspective, she projected onto him her own perception and understanding of the Indian heritage. And finally, in section 3 we will attempt to demonstrate that Promoda Charan Mittra was an essential pillar of her artistical and scholarly work in and on India.

1 The presence/absence of Promoda Charan Mittra

We do not know much about Promoda Charan Mittra, but the correspondence he exchanged with Alice Boner reveals information about his life and personality. Alice met him in India, most probably in the second half of 1935. She was already forty-six years old, and he was thirty-four. The first letter we have in their correspondence is dated 24 December 1935 from Mumbai and written by Alice: "Dear Mr. Mitra, As you see, I am still here, in the bondage of my second life. And I don't know yet when I will be released."[11] At the time, she was travelling with the dance company she was directing with Uday Shankar on a tour through India.[12] She was

10 Alice Boner is herself a figure who needs more attention from the scholarship to understand her role in that history. From this perspective, see, for example, the chapter written by Beltz/Kuratli 2013 in a volume that discusses the history of exchanges between European intellectuals and India in the twentieth century. Also of relevance is a thesis currently being written by Diane Hartmann at the University of Lausanne provisionally titled "Pratiques dansées et religions de l'Inde. Revivification et traduction dans l'œuvre d'Alice Boner".

11 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 24 December 1935, Bombay (place names are retained as written in the sources). In her diary, the first mention of "Montu" appears in an entry dated 2 April 1937. But she did not write frequently during this period, writing on 23 July 1935 (one day after her birthday), then on 27 January 1936, and then on 27 February 1936, where she mentions the house she found in Varanasi. There are then no entries until 22 February 1937.

12 This is most probably what she means by "the bondage of my second life", travelling throughout India with the dance company. As will be discussed in section 2, going to India was something Alice had wanted to do for many years. This huge step in her life—her real encounter with India—was the beginning of her "second life". The first life was her artistical life in Europe.

also looking for a house in Varanasi and asked different people to assist her, Mittra included: "Did you by any chance find for me the sacred abode on the Ganges?"[13]

Mittra was a Bengali lawyer. He lived in Varanasi and was unmarried.[14] According to Alice's letters, he played cricket and travelled for this purpose: "My dear Mr. Mitra, I don't know how long this cricket match will go on [for], but still I have a strong hope that some day you might return to Benares."[15]

The correspondence between Alice and Mittra is much varied in its form and content: from brief notes to long letters, from exchanges of information to personal matters, from letters written when both were in Varanasi to long-distance letters. Alice was more at ease with writing than "Montu", as she started to call him. She often chastises him for failing to answer her letters, or for being too brief or not personal enough in his writing. This figures throughout the whole corpus of correspondence, especially when she is away for months on end, as she was in 1940. Writing from Rajpur in August that year:

> My dear Montu,
> [. . .]
> You very kindly support [suggest?] that I should continue to write often, without waiting for a reply from you. I feel very flattered at the idea that you are to[o] anxious to receive letters from you and I would like to do as you wish.[16] But you see, when I write letters[17] and no reaction what so ever comes forth from what I write, I loose [*sic*] all inspiration and don't know any more what to write. It is just like knocking and calling [on] a locked door and receiving no reply from within. Well, you feel there is nobody and you go away! [. . .] Correspondence should be like a ball which is thrown and returned immediat[e]ly. There is amusement and interest in the game only when it is swift and lively. But if you have to wait a fortnight for a reply which by then is necessarily out of date, it becomes dull and state [static?] like a Sunday sermon.[18]

Indeed, Alice *was* a prolific writer.[19] Over the years Montu became increasingly impatient to receive her letters[20] and they developed a strong relationship. They

13 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 24 December 1935, Bombay.
14 Kuratli/Beltz 2014: 30.
15 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 5 February 1936, place unrecorded. See also her letters from 24 December 1935 (Bombay) and 14 July 1945 (Binsar) for references to cricket.
16 I have retained this sentence as it appears in the original letter, but Alice surely means "anxious to receive letters from *me*" (not *you*).
17 Underlining in the original is retained throughout.
18 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 22 August 1940, Rajpur.
19 This is attested by the diaries she wrote from 1920 through her entire life.
20 See, for example, his letter dated 11 September 1963, Kalkutta.

met daily when they were in Varanasi,[21] travelled together (even in Europe), and took care of each other.[22] In his memoirs, Daniélou notes their intimate and long relationship with the light tone that characterised his style:

> One fine day, Alice had had enough. She left the troupe in the middle of a tour and returned to India with a young Bengali lawyer, Montu Mittra, who was to be her faithful companion for many years and who died in 1975.[23, 24]

This growing intimacy figures throughout their correspondence and is sometimes expressed in romantic tones. For example, when Alice left India in 1946, she wrote, while on board the *S.S. Strathaird*:

> I have been the whole day watching from the decks of the boat, but unfortunately I could not even have a glimpse of you. It worries me, what prevented you from coming[?] [Like] yesterday, you definitely promised you would be here again to see me. It is agonising to know that you are so near and yet invisible. It greatly adds to my Bombay general misery and discomfort.[25]

In a letter written later in the voyage, she writes:

> I was terribly sad not to see you the next day when you had promised to come. I stood on deck nearly the whole day, till my back was too much [in pain], but not a glimpse of you was to be seen. The third day also some visitors came, but not for me! It still worries me, why you did not come.[26]

And finally, we learn from her diary:

---

21 In the archives, I found many notes in which Alice asked Montu to come round for lunch, dinner, or some other reason.

22 Many passages are related to their health condition. In a letter dated 14 July 1945 (Binsar), Alice shares with Montu a recipe given to her "by an American lady, and which seems to be excellent for stomach trouble".

23 According to Alice's diary, Montu is dead in 1976, the year I have given for his death in this paper. On 20 May 1976 she writes that she has received a letter announcing his death on 10 May (8 May is also written in brackets).

24 Daniélou 2015 [1981]: 95, my translation. The original French reads: "Un beau jour, Alice en eut assez. Elle abandonna la troupe au milieu d'une tournée et repartit pour l'Inde en compagnie d'un jeune avocat bengali, Montu Mittra, qui devait être son fidèle compagnon pendant de nombreuses années et qui mourut en 1975." Daniélou relates, in an expeditious mode and with some inexactness, Alice's encounter with Mittra when she was working and travelling with Uday Shankar. We shall return to this in section 2. See also footnote 35. We find another mention of "Montu Mittra" in Daniélou's memoirs, on page 193: "J'avais été introduit chez Vizi par l'ami d'Alice, l'avocat Montu Mittra, qui était très lié au Mahârâj-Kumâr." "Vizi" was the name given by the British to the Maharaja Kumar of Vizianagram.

25 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 29 July 1946, *S.S. Strathaird*.

26 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 4 August 1946, *S.S. Strathaird*.

> A letter has come from Montu in the meantime, and I learnt that my guessing was right, that he felt too much to be able to see me again.[27]

Contrary to what we can find in Alice's diaries and in her correspondence with Montu, the first and unique mention of Promoda Charan Mittra in the scholarship, as we said, dates from 2014. If this is understandable for books focusing on her work and legacy[28]—even if a mention in her biography could have been inserted—this is more intriguing in a book like *India: My Karma*, written by Alfred Würfel and published in 2004. In Würfel's recollections of India, Alice Boner is mentioned several times and two subchapters are dedicated to her, one focused on his encounter and friendship with Alice and a second one on her life and work. Although Würfel spent much time with Montu, as is attested in Alice's diaries, photographs, and correspondence, there is no mention of the Bengali in his memoirs. For example, talking of a visit to Khajuraho, he says that he had "the privilege of seeing the temples under the guidance of Alice Boner",[29] focusing on the chance he had to share moments with Alice, whom he considered one of his mentors, but not mentioning Montu even though he was also part of the trip.[30] More evident is a second example with a picture inserted in his book. Würfel shows a series of photographs illustrating his life and prestigious encounters in India: his friend the Raja of Kuchaman, Indira Gandhi, and the president Dr S. Radhakrishnan. On two pages side by side, three pictures illustrate his friendship with Alice Boner: a portrait of her with the caption "Alice Boner, the sculptor, at Banaras in 1937",[31] a picture of him with Alice and Uday Shankar in Varanasi in 1935,[32] and a picture of Rabindranath Tagore, accompanied by Würfel and Mittra (Fig. 1).

The picture is captioned "Rabindranath Tagore received me at Almora in 1937". Since it is Alfred Würfel's memoir, the focus is naturally on *his* story, but this meeting had been organised by Alice Boner and she wanted Montu to be there, as is attested in a letter.[33] But Montu's name is not even included in the image caption.

This gap between the presence of Montu in Alice Boner's life and archives, and the absence of Promoda Charan Mittra as a "significant encounter"—or even as an encounter—in the writings on and around Alice Boner is astonishing. To un-

27 Alice's diary (1941–1948): 198.

28 As, for example, *Rūpa Pratirūpa* edited by Bettina Bäumer in 1982 or *Alice Boner und die Kunst Indiens*, edited by Georgette Boner and Eberhard Fischer in 1982.

29 Würfel 2004: 82.

30 This visit took place in April 1937. See *Alice Boner Diaries*, 37–41, and section 2 below where this visit is discussed in detail.

31 This picture was taken by Würfel and is in the Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zürich, ABF 31-27.

32 Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zürich, ABF 309-14.

33 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 11 January 1937, Kalkutta.

Figure 1 Untitled [Rabindranth Tagore with Montu Mittra and Alfred Würfel], India, Almora 1937–1938. Gelatine silver baryta paper, 4.4 × 6.8 cm. Credit: Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zurich, ABF 17-4.

derstand the life and work of a historical figure, one should consider a forty-year friendship, even if that friend is not an intellectual, artist, politician, or member of a royal family. Why are we confronted with this ambivalence? Was this something emanating from Alice herself? For example, did she try to maintain a clear line between her private and professional life when it came to transcribing her life and legacy? In a short autobiography written in Varanasi in 1978 and published in *Alice Boner und die Kunst Indiens*,[34] Alice does not say a word about Montu and in the fourteen photographs illustrating her life, none of them show her in his company. Perhaps, so long as it was in her hands or in the hands of her relatives, she did not want exposed what she considered her private life. This would explain why Daniélou, who speaks of Alice with some irony and distance,[35] evokes Alice and Montu's relationship in his memoirs while Würfel, closer and loyal to Alice, remains silent.

But this theory can no longer be sustained since, as we shall see, a clear delimitation between Alice's private and professional life did not in fact exist.[36] Promoda

34 Boner 1982 in G. Boner/Fischer 1982.

35 In the quotation cited above, Daniélou suggests that Alice left Uday Shankar to go with Montu Mittra. Talking of Alice's encounter with Uday Shankar, he says: "C'est là qu'il rencontra Alice Boner, une jeune suisse de Zurich, héritière d'une importante fortune industrielle. Alice s'intéressa à ce très beau jeune homme et décida de le ramener en Inde pour lui faire étudier sérieusement la danse indienne" (Daniélou 2015 [1981]: 94). About Alice herself: "Elle fut ma voisine pendant de nombreuses années à Bénarès. Avec Raymond, nous étions les seuls autres étrangers à vivre dans la cité. Elle avait confiance en Raymond parce qu'il était suisse mais elle se méfiait quelque peu de moi. Je m'étais en effet totalement intégré dans la vie hindoue. Je parlais et écrivais couramment la langue. Alice resta toujours une Européenne s'intéressant à l'Inde. Elle ne porta jamais le sari, insistait pour s'asseoir du côté des hommes dans les réceptions ou les concerts" (95).

36 Alice was most probably aware of these intertwined spheres and did not try to completely erase their trace as she donated her entire collection of photographs to the Museum Rietberg, as well as her correspondence with Montu.

Charan Mittra was active in both spheres and in the two sections below we will try to highlight his role in Alice Boner's network and art.

2 Montu, the "Oriental"

Alice Boner was fascinated by India from a young age[37] and she engaged deeply with its cultural and spiritual heritage in her art. She first went to India in 1930 with the dancer Uday Shankar, whom she met in Zurich in 1926 during a performance held in the Kursaal.[38] For her, the dancer "was the insider to this world who knew two Indian languages"[39] and who gave her the concrete opportunity to travel to India. Uday Shankar was the medium through which Alice was able to connect with India and its culture, which she had known only through her imagination and readings. This was an important moment, representing the beginning of her "second life".

With Uday Shankar, Alice engaged deeply in the study of body movement for her work called "The Indian dancer".[40] She took dozens of pictures of him while dancing, assuming poses or in front of sculpted representations. Urmimala Sarka Munsi, analysing Alice Boner's work in collaboration with Uday Shankar, points to the seriousness of her work and their "cross-pollination". Nevertheless, she judiciously remarks that "Shankar is represented in Boner's art as an Oriental subject/dancer".[41] Indeed, despite her deep and sincere interest in India and Indian art, and her pioneering inclusion of Indian themes in her art, we can also find in her representation of India the construction of a phantasmatic Orient. This is also observable in her writings about Montu and in some of the photographs she took of him.

Alice Boner's relationship with Uday Shankar deteriorates from 1935,[42] the same year she met Promoda Charan Mittra and decided to settle in Varanasi. Although Mittra is not an artist and the relationship he shared with Alice was different from the one she shared with Uday Shankar, we can trace similarities in both encounters. First, Montu was also an "insider to this world" and a new medium through which Alice was able to get an access to India. And second, she pursued with him—although to a lesser extent—the work she had started with Uday Shan-

37 Kuratli/Beltz 2014: 17.
38 Kuratli/Beltz 2014: 17. Alice Boner and Uday Shankar's friendship and mutual artistical influence is well studied. See, for example, most recently, Sarkar Munsi 2021.
39 Sarkar Munsi 2021: 24.
40 Dance and movement were already a theme in Alice Boner's artistic research before her encounter with Uday Shankar. See G. Boner 1982.
41 Sarkar Munsi 2021: 48.
42 Sarkar Munsi 2021: 44.

kar in photographing and drawing Montu in various circumstances and places in the same "Oriental subject" position.

In 1935 Alice was more familiar with India as she travelled around the subcontinent, visited many places, and met many personalities. But Promoda Charan Mittra's entry into her life was probably of great help and maybe a reason for her decision to settle in Varanasi, the place where Montu was then living. He very soon became a pillar in her personal life. Two excerpts written the same day in her diary exemplify Alice's perception of Montu as an "insider". Projecting her own understanding of India, she identifies and essentialises Mittra as part of the culture and the land where he grew up. This was written on 2 April 1937, narrating Alice and Montu's journey to Khajuraho in the company of Burnier, Daniélou, and Würfel.

> In the afternoon we drove with Montu's brother to Govindghar [. . .]. Then the journey went on, over hilly terrain on the summit of which there was, among lonely forests inhabited by tigers, another small trianon; and then through plains with flaming red trees. Montu climbed one of the trees in order to pluck a twig for me. How nice he looked up there, one with the tree, the branches and the flowers!
>
> I almost forgot to mention the second evening. I went with Montu and Alfred to the temples in moonlight. Captivated and overwhelmed, we could hardly tear ourselves away from the spot. Montu too shared the enthusiasm of us Europeans, though in a more measured and less enduring way. Finally he slipped away from us and went up a temple. Indeed, from a distance his appearance was in such harmony with the surrounding, a rock of these rocks, a life of these spirits, all this is his, belongs to him, and is not anything alien or mysterious, as for us: this moon, this landscape, these forms, these colours are in his blood, are part of his self; why, then, should the delight extricate him from himself?

She goes on, developing the image of an eternal, maternal, and great Indian past:

> But why this fascination of ours about what is strange and new, this fascination which causes an oblivion of our origin, of our past? Is it the case that something here encompasses us, something that is further back, greater, deeper and more maternal than everything around us at home?[43]

This perception of Montu as an embodiment of India and of the Indian cultural heritage is pursued in a series of photographs taken in Aurangabad in 1938.

In the way the visual representation was thought and executed, it is as if Montu were receiving the teaching directly from the Buddha statue,[44] as if there were a

43 *Alice Boner Diaries*, 237, 240.

44 I thank Simone Voegtle for her confirmation of the statue being a representation of the Buddha and for her identification of the two Bodhisattvas at the entrance of cave number two in Aurangabad.

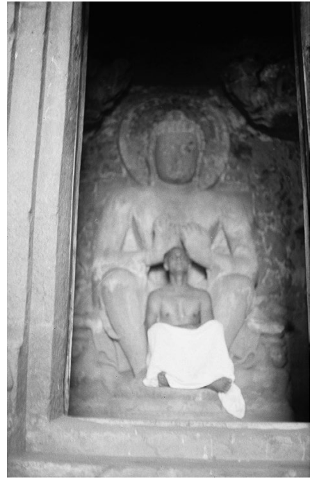


Figure 2 Untitled [Montu Mittra in front of rock relief], India, Aurangabad 1938. Cellulose nitrate, 4 × 6.3 cm. Credit: Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zurich, ABF 296-56.

Figure 3 Ohne Titel [Montu Mittra in front of rock relief] India, Aurangabad 1938. Cellulose nitrate, 4 × 6.3 cm. Credit: Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zurich, ABF 296-55.

direct and concrete connection between the human and the divine. Montu is completely embedded within the representation, as if there were no distance between the sacred representation and he, a total continuity. Moreover, in the scenography designed by Alice there is a symmetry between the sculpture and Montu's body. In Figure 2 he is seated in the same position as the statue, duplicating the posture of the Buddha. In Figure 3 Montu's arms follow the line of the Buddha's bodyside. This gives the illusion that Montu is a continuation of the statue. Sarkar Munsi analyses a photograph of Uday Shankar taken in 1930 in front of a sculpture of the goddess Durga in Mahabalipuram and underlines the "continuity between the visual representation of real life and the sculpture".[45] In the picture, like Montu, Uday Shankar wears only a white *dhoti*. In the collection, several other photographs show the same treatment of the subject, and for some of them—like two pictures where Montu wears ornaments on his ears—the comparison with Uday Shankar could continue.

But instead I will conclude this section with the description of an event found in the correspondence between Alice and Montu which explains why Alice painted

45 Sarkar Munsi 2021: 47.

only three portraits of Montu, in contrast to the multiple choreographed photo portraits and pictures she took of him.

On 18 April 1936, Alice wrote:

> Dear Montu, I wonder whether I may really ask you to sit once more for a portrait. You may not be very hopeful about it after the first tentative, and it may also be too irksome. Well, then you simply say no, as I quite understand. But if you are willing to give me another chance, then let me know when, any day in the early morning or in the evening, except to-day.[46]

Apparently, to pose as a model was more difficult for Promoda Charan Mittra than it was for Uday Shankar, possibly because of the nature of his relationship with Alice and also as a possible reaction to the vision she was projecting on him.[47] Following a letter written four days earlier, the tentative Alice is talking about took place during the night of 13 April. Alice apologises for having lost her patience and refers to the difficulties they must, or she must, face in their relationship. This demonstrates just how close they were:

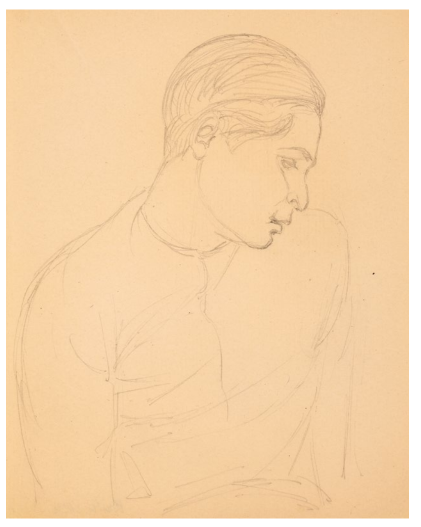
> My dear Montu,
>
> I fear I was somewhat unpleasant last night. I feel very very sorry about it and pray you would forgive me and try to understand.
>
> The unnatural circumstances, under which we have to live, put such a strain upon us, that at times it becomes almost untolerable [*sic*]—at least for me. And when in such a moment something intervenes, which, without any necessity, still more curtails a thing already so terribly curtailed—then it may happen that the pot overflows. . .
>
> I know I must find within myself the strength for greater patience. Please try to help me.
>
> Your's [*sic*] with love, Alice[48]

Alice finally completed two portraits of Montu that same year, in 1936, in pencil. Altogether, there are three portraits (Figures 4–6) in Alice's collection—one, a painting, is undated—while artistic photographs with Montu as the main subject (not pictures illustrating life moments) are more numerous and span a longer period of time. Nevertheless, the depiction of Montu as an Oriental subject in photographs does not continue beyond the end of the 1940s.

46 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 18 April 1936, place missing.

47 We will return to this in the conclusion.

48 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 14 April, year and place missing. The year is not mentioned but the letters in the collection follow chronological order and the topics are related.



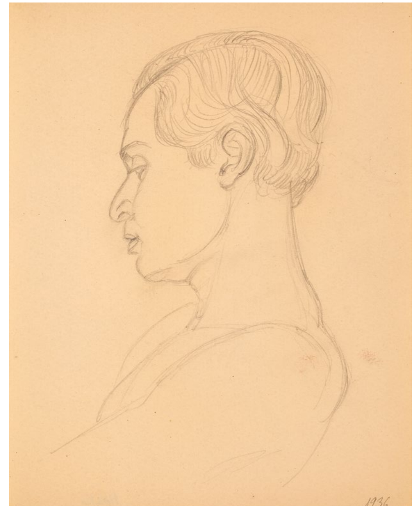


Figure 4 Portrait Sketch, Man (Montu). Author: Alice Boner (1889–1981) 1936. Pencil on paper, 19.9 × 15.7 cm. Credit: Gift from the heirs of Alice Boner. Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zurich, AB 655.

Figure 5 Portrait Sketch, Man (Montu) Author: Alice Boner (1889–1981) 1936. Pencil on paper, 19.9 × 15.7 cm. Credit: Gift from the heirs of Alice Boner. Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zurich, AB 656.

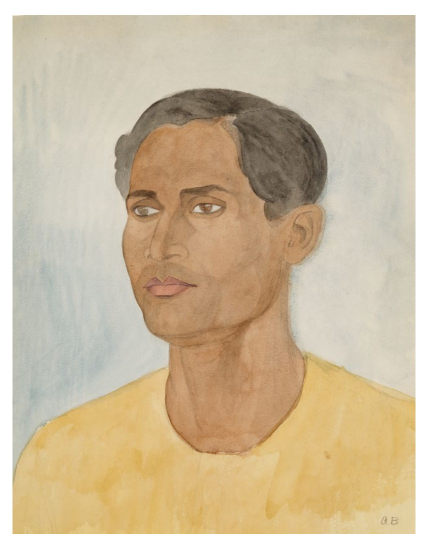


Figure 6 Portrait of Montu Author: Alice Boner (1889–1981). Watercolour on paper 43.4 × 33.6 cm. Credit: Gift from the heirs of Alice Boner. Alice Boner Collection, Museum Rietberg Zurich, AB 1694.

3 Montu, the intermediary, advisor, and moral support

As an insider, Promoda Charan Mittra was supportive and helped Alice Boner in every part of her life in India. Without him, she probably would have experienced greater difficulties. He was a reliable intermediary, their growing personal relationship reinforcing their professional exchanges. This is evident in their correspondence, where personal passages intertwine with professional information. It is difficult to qualify their formal or professional relationship as egalitarian since Montu, most of the time, was executing Alice's demands. Nevertheless, his access to local people and sources were precious for Alice's work and she consulted with him on many subjects. His action in various fields of expertise shows his agency and his mobilisation as an active—and not passive—party in this encounter.

We can see, specifically in her diaries, that Alice battled with many doubts about her art and struggled with questions about her creative process. Montu was precious support for her in these circumstances, encouraging her and always looking positively at her artistic work.

> April 7, 1937. Banaras. I showed Montu photographs of my long forgotten sculptures. The result was unexpected. He was captivated by them and said that therein lay my strength. He couldn't overcome the fact that I was capable of this and that I gave it up, asked how it could be possible, what could be the reason, and said that I should take it up again immediately.[49]

She was not expecting a critical and argued point of view on her art, but Montu gave her something else, equally as valuable. He gave her strength, confidence, and the courage to pursue her quest. It continued over time, as in 1949 when she was working on her Vishvarupa:

> March 12, 1949. Banaras. [. . .] When I woke up today after a long, good sleep I decided to tell Montu objectively on Sunday about my art dilemmas. But how should he be able to understand such complications. No, I have to find clarity on my own.

But finally, three days later, she decided to ask his opinion:

> April 12, 1949. Banaras. On Holi day, i.e, on March 15, I began the conversion of the Vishvarupa picture into colour. At that time, when the weather was already quite warm, I asked Montu whether I should still start with it or rather postpone it. Surprised, he asked: Why not? And today, after a month, more has been achieved that I had ventured to hope. The composition has received body and life, and the basic colour is already there. It went sur-

49 *Alice Boner Diaries*, 242.

> prisingly quickly and easily, after the many problems of this winter. Now I am suddenly full of joy and confidence, and often quite fascinated by the picture.[50]

He gave her silent but strong support to go on.

On more concrete aspects, Montu was an administrative support, an intermediary in Alice's network, a research assistant, and an advisor in art buying. This meant that he participated actively in the peripheral and preliminary aspects of her work as a scholar and that he was included in the decisions Alice took as an Indian art collector. He was also learning Sanskrit with her.[51] The archives show that Montu was involved in Alice's personal papers, specifically regarding Indian administration, and that he was charged with taking care of the Assi Ghat house when she was away.[52] He was frequently asked to organise meetings and be the intermediary between Alice and one or other person she wanted to meet, also being part of the discussion. He was himself much involved in mundane life, in the company of Alice but also alone, as for example when he was invited to go to Nepal to see the royal coronation[53] or when he travelled without Alice in Great Britain.[54] In 1964, planning her legacy, Alice asked Montu to be the executor of her affairs in India.[55] He was also involved in the "*Citraśāstra* affair",[56] a palm-leaf manuscript published by Alice Boner and Pandit Sadasiva Rath Sarma[57]—a figure of the Revivalist Movement in Orissa—soon dogged by allegations of inauthenticity.[58] Alice was very worried about this affair and shared her concerns with Montu in several letters. The letters indicate that questions over the manuscript's authenticity had already been debated in 1963, three years before Boner and Sarma's publication.

50 *Alice Boner Diaries*, 277, 278.

51 See letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 4 May 1956, Almora. Also letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 17 September 1953, Davos-Platz.

52 Kuratli/Beltz 2014: 30.

53 See letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 16 April 1956, Almora.

54 See letter from Promoda Charan Mittra to Alice Boner, 9 August 1939, 29 Belsize Park, Hampstead, London. Alice and Montu were together in Europe, in Paris. But Montu then left for London and Alice for Ascona before they met again in Vienna before returning to India. Alice teased Montu about being on his own in London: "I hope your journey was quite pleasant and you have accustomed yourself to the new situation—of standing alone in the big, big world!" Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 2 August 1939, Paris.

55 See letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 3 August 1964, Almora. Also letter from Promoda Charan Mittra to Alice Boner, 9 August 1964, 29 Ramapura, Varanasi.

56 On this affair and the manuscript, see Fischer/Pathy 2020.

57 Boner et al. 1966.

58 Fischer/Pathy 2020: 79.

> My worries about the nasty rumours spread in India that our manuscripts are fakes I told you already.[59]

> The nasty rumours about our manuscripts has [*sic*] become a rather serious affair. Brill, who first did not seem alarmed, has now become afraid and wants some tests and proofs that they are genuine. I have tried my best, but for testing chemically the palm-leaves they are too young. They cannot test anything below 500 years of age![60]

Montu tells her, like the lawyer he is, to let the other prove falsehood first before looking for proof of authenticity.[61] In the same affair, he was then consulted on the trust Alice wanted to found to cover her expenses for "this research work with Pandit, travels, manuscripts, pandits, copyists, photographers, typists, etc.".[62]

As mentioned, Montu was also involved in Alice's research. She would ask him to copy out passages from books in his letters when she did not have the book with her. He was also asked to contact pandits able to resolve Alice's queries:

> I would like you to solve for us a problem which has cropped up in connection with one of Dr. Jung's books. In this book he analyses some Mandalas which contain Swastikas, and he gives a different interpretation according to the side to which it is turning. This is perfectly all right. But he considers the Swastika turning to the right as so:
>
> 卍 and to the left as so: 卐
>
> while I feel that just the contrary is the case. Would you be able to find out from an authoritative pandit, which of the two Swastikas is considered the right one in India? For me there was never any doubt about this question, till I found this opinion of Mr. Jung, which is quite contrary.[63]

We have many references in the correspondence in which Promoda Charan Mittra was working as an intermediary and responsible for finding people able to resolve Alice's research problems or help in the understanding of texts or ideas.

Finally, Alice Boner was also a patron and art collector. Over the years she built up a beautiful collection of Indian art works (sculptures, bronzes, musical instruments, etc.), among which was a very valuable collection of miniature paintings.[64] In this undertaking, too, she relied on Montu's advice, and she did not take a decision before first getting his opinion:

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59 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 16 June 1963, Basel.
60 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 11 July 1963, Chianti.
61 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 15 August 1963, Davos.
62 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 6 September 1965, Zürich.
63 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 17 September 1953, Davos-Platz.
64 Kuratli/Beltz 2014: 43.

> Kapoor has suddenly turned up and brought a rather extraordinary Mogul painting which I would like you to see. Please come as soon as you can. Kapoor said he would come at 5 pm. for my decision. It is rather a big bite. Can you come before him? If not I shall try to postpone decision by one day.[65]

All these examples show Promoda Charan Mittra's involvement in Alice Boner's professional activity in India and the multiple skills he possessed and put at her service, yet all from an intimate and trusting personal relationship.

Conclusion: Including oneself in history

The study of the encounter between Alice Boner and Promoda Charan Mittra adds a dimension to the Swiss artist and scholar. On the one hand, the analysis of this intimate and significant relationship helps us comprehend Alice Boner's understanding of India and its manifestations in her art and thought. On the other hand, it places Promoda Charan Mittra in the scope of the twentieth-century history as being a part of the exchanges between Europe and India. But it shows also that this encounter, simultaneously intertwined in an intimate relationship and embedded in global history, is not unilateral and that it is possible to trace both parts. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam underlines: "Every encounter obviously requires at least two parties. Yet, there can be no assurance that the two will be equally present at the meetings, or that their voices can be equally heard or recovered by later investigators."[66] Indeed no such assurance was self-evident as we began our case study. But we have seen in the examples discussed above that a reconstruction in which both parties are equally present is possible when including all the sources at our disposal. Moreover, in this encounter we found that both parts were active: two worlds, two personalities, one symmetrical meeting—to invoke Romain Bertrand's "histoire à parts égales". Even though at first glance—owing to the scholarship available on Alice Boner and maybe also to her strong character (evident both in the correspondence and in the way she led her life)—this is not immediately obvious, we have shown that Montu was an active agent in a myriad of ways. First, in the portraits, Montu finds it difficult to pose for Alice. Tempting as it would be to dismiss this episode, it is reasonable to read it as Montu's reaction to or discomfort with Alice's (orientalising) gaze. The second way is in Montu's engagement in Alice's artistic work and social and professional networks. This part of their relationship is not only based on Alice's demands and circle but also on Mittra's full awareness of how indispensable he

65 Letter from Alice Boner to Promoda Charan Mittra, 27 April 1949, place missing.
66 Subrahmanyam 2017: 289–290.

was and how he could be embedded in this network made up primarily of European and Indian intellectuals.

Moreover, what is interesting in this case is how both Alice Boner and Promoda Charan Mittra consciously thought about their legacy and their place in the future reconstruction of history. On a one hand, Montu, well aware of Alice's social status and involvement in the art world, carefully retained all her letters over forty years, which were then given to Alice after his death in 1976. On the other hand, Alice, at the end of her life, gifted to the Museum Rietberg not only her art collection, art work, and professional notes but also her private writings and correspondence, including the letters lovingly preserved by Montu. She perfectly knew that in these private archives, Montu was taking a central place. These two correlated actions from Montu and Alice are a synonym for the certitude they both felt that all the voices should be heard.

> This is the first time in thirty years that I am actually living in your house. In the past years I lived one or two days sometimes. This time I made up my mind to stay for a month and so I came to your place straight from the station. It is now ten days that I am in your house. I did not realise before, although I have been coming to this house for the last 30 years that Ganga could be like a living personality and this is the reason why Ganga is called mother.[67]

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67 Letter from Promoda Charan Mittra to Alice Boner, 1 September 1965, Assi Sangam Varanasi.

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Angelika Malinar

"The Great Unveiling": Annie Besant and the *Bhagavadgītā*

Abstract. The importance of the *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG*) in the larger debates on Hinduism that evolved in the nineteenth and early twentieth century has been widely acknowledged in various academic studies. The text became an arena for negotiating Western-style historical and philological analysis, Indian scholastic discourse, and interpretations of individual authors—Indian and Western—pursuing their own philosophical, religious-spiritual, and political commitments. Some of them proved to be quite popular among contemporary audiences and thus constitute an interesting site of the entangled history of the colonial-modern discourse on Hinduism. Theosophist Annie Besant's translations and interpretations of the *BhG* are part of this discourse. At a biographical level they are connected to her moving to Indian and settling down in Varanasi as representative of the Theosophical Society. With respect to her larger engagement with the "ancient wisdom" of the East, these publications indicate her increasing commitment to Hinduism and Indian nationalism. Furthermore, Besant seeks to establish herself as an authority in theosophical circles, wherein several translations and interpretations of the text had been published. By combining historical and allegorical perspectives in her interpretation of the *BhG* she connects the "hidden meaning" of the text to both individual spiritual aspirations and concrete political constellations. In her interpretation the metaphor of "the unveiling" as the *modus operandi* of the Divine plays a central role. The metaphor serves to draw together the history of divine *logos*, the place of individual agency in this history, and the authority of spiritually advanced persons (including herself) in disclosing its meaning.

Keywords. theosophy, modern Hinduism, *Bhagavadgītā*, translation studies, colonialism in India

Introduction

The importance of the *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG*) in the larger debates on Hinduism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century has been widely acknowledged in various academic studies. The text became an arena for negotiating Western-style text-historical analysis, Indian scholastic discourse, and interpretations of individual authors—of Indian and Western affiliation—pursuing their own philo-

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sophical, religious-spiritual, and political commitments. The authority of the last of these was contested, if not outrightly rejected, as "amateurish" by academic and scholastic authorities alike. Nevertheless, some proved to be quite influential and even popular among contemporary audiences, for example Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial* (1885). These individualised forms of engagement with the *BhG* constitute a site of entangled history worth exploring, for they entwine not only "Eastern" and "Western" views but also the individual authors in complex interactions (personal, intertextual, etc.). In the following, I shall discuss Annie Besant's translations and interpretations of the *BhG* against the background this constellation. Soon after moving to India and settling in Varanasi, Besant published two translations of the *BhG* (1895, 1905) and two lecture series (1896, 1906) on the text. Concerning her larger engagement with the "ancient wisdom" of the East, these publications indicate her increasing commitment to Hinduism after settling in India first as a representative, then as president of the Theosophical Society. In this period Besant sought to establish herself as an authority in theosophical circles, where several translations and interpretations of the text had been published. Furthermore, her esoteric views were complemented by a reformist agenda that she put into practice in her increasingly anti-colonial commitment to India's "uplift" and various educational projects. Her second translation and the 1906 lectures on the *BhG* are part of this agenda. In what follows I shall discuss the format and purposes of Besant's translations and the interpretative perspectives she uses in her lectures. Particular attention will be given to *Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad-Gita* (1906) since it presents most comprehensively her views on the intrinsic connection between collective history and individual spiritual development. The analysis will also deal with some of the historical and intercultural contexts of Besant's engagement with the text. An important element of these contexts is the general concern for the authority of religious traditions and of its interpreters which interconnected outsider and insider perspectives in complex ways.

1 Contextual considerations

According to Ronald Neufeldt, theosophical interpretations of the *BhG* follow ideas of cosmos and history as formulated by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who extensively used Indian terms and sources, and only differ from each other regarding the practical application of the text's doctrines.[1] The text is considered to teach an esoteric knowledge found in all systems of thought. It must be understood as an

1 Neufeldt 1986: 11–12. For an analysis of Blavatsky's engagement with Indian themes and issues, see Burger 2014 and the essays in Rudbøg/Sand 2020.

allegory of cosmic evolution and the struggle of the "lower soul" to be liberated from its material fetters.[2] Neufeldt suggests that the divergent views on the text's usage are connected to typically "Western" or "Indian" perspectives. Because of this distinction, he finds Besant's work on the Gītā "difficult to place", although he discusses her in the section on "Western" views.[3] Viewing theosophical interpretations of the *BhG* as a site of religious encounter allows us to grasp better the intentions of individual interpreters. Considering such factors means viewing theosophical interpretations not solely as a closed discursive universe but also as mirroring and propelling colonial-modern entanglements.[4] Religious encounters in colonial India were shaped by newly created political and legal frameworks affecting religious communities,[5] and by debates about which religious texts and practices are authoritative and who is authorised to interpret them. Traditional authorities were challenged by critics and reformers inside and outside the fold. Texts and practices came under scrutiny under the paradigms of "reason" and "science" and were probed with respect to their being a source for social and political practice. The relevance of texts was explored by individuals whose authority in these matters was questioned by other participants in this discourse. New agents were entering a stage that previously was reserved for those "officially" admitted into this field of cultural production.

An essential aspect of this constellation is that the established mechanism lending authority to translations and interpretations of religious texts where challenged by processes of religious individualisation and (de-)traditionalisation that enabled individual, non-expert engagements with foundational texts to find audiences.[6] In the nineteenth century, the public gave considerable attention to interpretations of authoritative texts by individuals who neither belonged to established scholastic traditions in India nor modern Western-style academic institutions authorising their expertise. On the one hand, such religious individualisation was connected to controversies about "traditional" religious authorities. On the

2 Neufeldt 1986: 31–32.

3 Neufeldt 1986: 25.

4 Neufeldt touches upon this when he notices that William Q. Judge (1851–1896), co-founder of the Theosophical Society, was influential in the United States, whereas Besant's publications were influential in India. Judge's translation appeared in 1890 (see Judge 1913), and between 1887 and 1895 he published "notes" on the first seven chapters of the *BhG* in his magazine *The Path*. In 1918 the notes were published in book form together with notes on the remaining chapters by one of Judge's students (Judge 1918). The different spheres of influence point to tensions within the Theosophical Society, which emerged after the death of Blavatsky and the ensuing controversy about Besant becoming president of the Society. See Dixon 2001.

5 For instance, legislation granting "freedom" to exercise religion as part of Queen Victoria's 1858 Proclamation, or to promote "reform". See Adcock 2014; Malinar 2015.

6 For a study of the process of religious individualisation in history, see Fuchs et al. (2020).

other hand, new publication technologies and the formation of a public enabled new (mostly middle-class) audiences to engage in these issues. The case of the *BhG* provides an excellent example of this situation as it assumes a central place in colonial-modern debates on Hinduism.[7] The text becomes an arena in which to negotiate the hegemonic claims of modern Western epistemic regimes of historical and philological analysis ("Orientalism") vis-à-vis the Indian scholastic tradition and their modern representatives, as well as individuals pursuing their own commitments.

As mentioned before, an essential aspect of this constellation is that interpreters engage individually with the text independent of established authorities licensing such engagement, such as scholastic training, being part of a teaching genealogy and of academic institutions. This development began with the first translations in English.[8] While early Western translators of the *BhG* required the assistance of Indian pandits, it resulted in translations that disconnected the *BhG* from the established contexts of its study as pointed out by Javed Majeed: "Translation begins to obviate the need for commentary. It produces the Gīta as a text in its own right which is no longer embedded in a succession of abstruse commentaries".[9] This reflects a "protestant notion of the self-evident nature of scriptural truth in translation which can be grasped by the reader's own judgement".[10] While this is undoubtedly one aspect of the "undermining of 'brahmanical' authority",[11] such disconnecting also belongs to the methodological repertoire of historicism and textual criticism which played a leading role in establishing modern academia towards scholastic-theological traditions in Europe. These and other developments, such as new media and audiences, fostered subsequent appropriations of the *BhG* by individuals lacking authorisation by either Brahmanical scholarship or Western academia.[12] This is also true for Besant.

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7 See Sharpe 1985 on the range of Western interpretations and translations of the *BhG*. Also see the essays in Minor 1986.
8 Majeed 2006.
9 Majeed 2006: 310.
10 Majeed 2006: 313.
11 Majeed 2006: 310.
12 See the essays in Minor 1986 for analysis of interpretations of the *BhG* by Tilak or Gandhi; on the latter, see also Majeed 2006.

2 Besant's translations of the *BhG*

In 1895 Besant added to the range of theosophical publications on the *BhG* with her translation of the text. She acknowledged the support of four "friends", namely Pramada Das Mitra, Ganganath Jha, Kali Charan Mitra, and Upendranath Basu.[13] The level of Besant's command of Sanskrit is unclear, as is the extent of the contributions by the Sanskrit expert "friends". The collaboration with renowned Sanskrit scholars points to the alliances she sought with representatives of Hindu tradition who engaged in Western academic discourse by drawing on their expertise and command of Sanskrit as pandits.[14] Such alliances were the basis for her lobbying for establishing the Central Hindu College in Benares as a place of learning, combining elements of Western and "traditional" education. Her second translation is motivated by this educational project (see below).

The translation gained popularity when in 1907 Natesan & Co, a Madras based publishing house, republished it, now including the Sanskrit text. G. A. Natesan explains in his note to its first edition that he wanted to "place a cheap edition" of the *BhG* with the original text and the English translation "within the easy reach of the English reading public".[15] He expresses his gratitude to Annie Besant—"that warm and tried friend of India whose services to our land it were vain to count"[16]—for letting him use her translation. The hope that it "will find a place in thousands of homes both in India and elsewhere" seemed not to have been entirely in vain as the first edition (10,000 copies) was soon followed by two others in 1908 (20,000) and 1911 (50,000). Another edition was published in 1922 with fewer copies (5,000) but nevertheless attests to its popularity in this period. The 1895 translation received mixed reactions.[17]

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13 Sharpe 1985: 104 states that Besant's contribution to theosophical *BhG* translations and studies was slightly delayed and refers to a "first translation" published in 1904. Without providing references, Neufeldt 1986: 25 mentions two translations.

14 Pramadadas Mitra was a renowned Sanskrit scholar at the Benaras Sanskrit College and the Anglo-Saxon Government College, Benaras; on his dispute with Sanskritist George Thibaut, see Dalmia 1996. Ganganath Jha (1872–1941) was a famous Sanskrit scholar; an important Indological research institute was named after him (Ganganath Jha Research Institute, Allahabad). Upendranath Basu (1864–?) was, with Bertram Keightley, the first general secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society until his resignation in 1908, and one of the founders of the Central Hindu College.

15 Cited in Besant 1922: ix.

16 Ibid.

17 While staying in South Africa, Mohandas K. Gandhi arranged in 1905 a reprint of the translation that included Besant's portrait on the title page. When Besant protested the reproduction of her portrait, Gandhi apologised, explaining that "it has arisen from excessive reverence for yourself" (Gandhi 1960, vol. 4: 429–430). On the other hand, Besant and her translation were attacked by Srinivasa Aiyangar in a scornful condemnation of Besant's alleged vilification of Hinduism. He launched his attack in the name of his guru Yogi

It is dedicated to "all aspirants in East and West". On the one hand, the dedication hints at the topic of an East–West synthesis that will become an important goal for Besant in the years to come. On the other it is a text to be used in individual practice that aims, Besant explains, to lift the aspirant from the "lower level of renunciation where objects are renounced" to the "loftier heights where desires are dead" and the "union with Divine Life is achieved and maintained in the midst of worldly affairs".[18] In contrast to other publications,[19] Besant presents yoga here not as a specific philosophical-religious tradition (as it is treated in classical Indian doxographies and current academic accounts) but as a universal method and goal of spiritual development. Accordingly, the *BhG* is "a scripture of Yoga. Yoga is literally Union, and it means harmony with the Divine Law, the becoming one with the Divine Life, harmony with the highest self, divine life".[20] Therefore, achieving harmony is the core of the yoga of the *BhG*; it means recognising that opposite states are part of the Divine. This teaching is presented in the dramatic conflict of Arjuna, who is called to fight against those he owes love to liberate "his nation" from a usurper.[21] Following here the general approach in theosophical interpretations, Besant interprets the *BhG* allegorically. Thus the battlefield of Kurukṣetra represents the "battlefield of the soul", Arjuna the struggling soul, and Kṛṣṇa the "Logos of the Soul".[22] The *BhG* is a lesson for all "aspiring souls" in East and West who have the same goal but approach it differently.[23] Without referring to any of her theosophical predecessors or explaining the motivation for another translation,[24] Besant deals with some technical aspects of the translation. For example,

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Parthasarathy Aiyangar and the "Orthodox Hindu Society whose humble slave I am" (Aiyangar 1915: 8). Says Aiyangar: "Translate the Gītā she must, and Jacob's ladder let down she must! [. . .] 'Enough' says the Orthodox Hindu, turning up his nose at it. Why? Because it is not Kṛshṇa that he is asked to see in the translation, but Mrs. Besant's ignorance and vanity and audacity compounded. [. . .] Challenging Bishops and Archbishops is easy, but not a mild Brahmana" (Aiyangar 1915: 59). This attack also illustrates the contestation of unlicensed engagements with the text, which was in the case of Besant also fuelled by her reformist agenda and what was viewed as a "scandalous" private life.

18 Besant 1895: v.

19 In her *Introduction to Yoga* (1908), Besant presents yoga as both a universal science and an Indian philosophical-spiritual tradition.

20 Besant 1895: vi.

21 Besant 1895: viii.

22 Besant 1895: ix.

23 Besant 1895: x.

24 This contrasts with Judge's "Antecedent words" to his rendering of the *BhG* (Judge 1913), wherein he acknowledges Subba Row's allegorical interpretation of the *BhG* as laying the foundation for the theosophical interpretation of the text (Row 1921; see Neufeldt 1986: 13–15). Before Row's lectures were published in book form, parts of them appeared as "Notes on the Bhagavad Gita" in 1887 in volume 8 of Helena Blavatsky's journal *The Theosophist*; on the journal, see Burger 2014.

she explains that in some cases, technical terms have been left untranslated—*manas* and *buddhi* are mentioned—"to gain something of keep to the precision of the Sanskrit" and avoid confusion for practitioners.[25] For the sake of clarity, adjectives have been formed from Sanskrit nouns using the affix "ic"—although "its use is sometimes a barbarism".[26] Names and epithets (except for patronyms) have mostly been left untranslated because, says Besant, they would be grotesque in an English translation that takes away the musicality and literary charm they have in Sanskrit.[27]

Ten years later, in 1905, Besant published a second translation together with the scholar and fellow theosophist Bhagavan Das (1869–1958). This translation is intrinsically connected to their efforts to establish the Hindu Central College in Varanasi, an educational institution administrated not by the colonial government but by Hindus themselves. The translation differs from the first only in rendering specific terms and omitting some annotations. However, it is enhanced considerably to serve as a textbook for self-study and in class. It now contains the original Sanskrit text, a "free" and a "word-for-word" translation, a summary of contents, an introduction to Sanskrit grammar, an appendix with alternative readings, and an index. Included are also texts (in original Sanskrit and translation) that place the text more specifically in a Hindu environment: *Bhagavadgītāmāhātmya* (The Greatness of the Gītā)[28] from the *Varāhapurāṇa*; *Karādinyāsa* (The Arrangement of the Hands [etc.] For the Gītā)[29] presented in the table of contents as serving "the Tantra way of practising" the *BhG*, and *Gītā Dhyānam* (The Meditation on the Gītā; according to the table of contents: "The Thought form of the *BhG* for the Purpose of Meditation").[30] The overall intention is to support an independent study of the text for those who engage with the text "mainly for the sake of its priceless teachings".[31] In this way, the edition is symptomatic of the changing status of genealogical transmission as being no longer the only way to authorise individual religious interpretation and spiritual practice. Furthermore, the translation is presented as if unconnected to theosophical views; there is no dedication nor a

25 Besant 1895: xi. Other terms in the translation are also treated in this way. For instance, *dharma* is left untranslated but is commented upon in footnotes (for instance, *BhG* 1.40, 2.6). The only exception is the uncommented translation of *dharmakṣetra* (*BhG* 1.1) with "holy plain" (which is kept in the 1905 translation). The word *yoga* is often translated with "union" but occasionally remains untranslated.

26 Besant 1895: xi.

27 Besant 1895: x–xi.

28 Besant/Das 1905: xxiii.

29 Besant/Das 1905: xxviii.

30 Besant/Das 1905: xxxii.

31 Besant/Das 1905: i.

prefaced interpretation, as is the case with the first translation.[32] The edition was used as a textbook in the Hindu Central College (and other colleges) after it was merged with the newly founded Benaras Hindu University.[33]

3 Besant's lectures on the *BhG*

Besant's views on the *BhG* are available in two lecture series held for members of the Theosophical Society in 1896 (Benares) and 1905 (Adyar). Although the lecture series present similar interpretations of the *BhG* as a yoga text, they differ in style and treatment. The first series was published with the title *The Three Paths to Union with God* (1897). In accordance with Besant's translations, the *BhG* is presented as a treatise on three paths of yoga practice that must be followed to obtain *yoga*, union with the "Supreme Spirit". Accordingly, Besant deals in her three lectures with three paths of *karmayoga* (action), *jñānayoga* (wisdom), and *bhaktiyoga* (devotion). The three yogas are not viewed as separate paths but as methods that the perfect yogin must master all. Having obtained this mastery, the yogin "is approaching the state of Yoga, where all paths blend into one, and where the Supreme will unveil Himself to the man who is free from the illusions of matter".[34] The veil metaphor alludes to Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and is used in the lectures to describe the goal of truth-seeking and the mechanisms of its working.

The just quoted passage already illustrates this emphasis on the goal of "unveiled" truth; in the exposition of the three paths, the metaphor also plays an important role. Following the theosophical variety of evolutionary monism,[35] the three paths are presented as being connected, on the one hand, to the general evolution of the supreme spirit, and on the other, to the qualities of individual consciousness which are classified according to the three *guṇas*, the "dynamic

32 An exception to this rule is the addition of annotations to the translation of the *Bhagavadgītāmāhātmyam* and the *Gītākarādinyāsa*. It is explained, for instance, that the "fruits of reading" (*śravaṇaphala*) the *BhG* listed in *Bhagavadgītāmāhātmyam* may seem "somewhat fantastic", but only if understood as referring to mere reading, or "lip-repetition", and not to the mastering of the *BhG* in "life-repetition". The different portions whose study are said to yield these fruits represent "stages in human evolution" and the achievements connected with them (Besant/Das 1905: xxvi). On the correspondences between text, body, and mind established in the "Tantric" text, Besant comments that they may seem to the "western world [. . .] fantastic and superstitious; to the eastern world, in which the faint tradition of the Great Science lingers, they sound as echoes of a mightier age, when Gods and Men walked familiarly together in the Hidden Ways" (Besant/Das 1905: xxx).

33 See Renold 2005.

34 Besant 1897: 18.

35 See Nanda 2016 on the implementation of evolutionistic ideas in Blavatsky's interpretation of ancient Indian "wisdom" and its impact on Indian intellectuals.

qualities of nature" taught in Sāṃkhya philosophy. These qualities "veil" the higher forms of consciousness every living seeks to obtain, being pushed forward by evolutionary progress.[36] The veil metaphor is also used in the exposition of *jñānayoga*, yoga of knowledge, when it is viewed as being instigated by the drive to seek the inner world that is behind the "veil of objects", to realise the discriminative insight (*viveka*) that discloses the illusionary nature of the object-word. Besant takes modern science as the signifier of this strive when referring to the telescope that "unveils the infinite world of the vast".[37] But there is knowledge beyond the scientific insights, which becomes evident in the persistent dissatisfaction that lingers despite the discoveries. Besant now adds an auditive aspect to the veil; the veiled Self has been "speaking", "whispering" that "[i]t is hidden beneath the veil of Māyā"[38]—an almost occult expansion of the Schopenhauerian trope which Besant does not elaborate further. But there is another shift in the use of the trope, when Besant uses the plural to illustrate the presence of the Supreme Self in all beings and objects, in the "veils" which Nature (*prakṛti*) constantly produces as the "outer semblances", and "visible appearances of the Unity that is the Supreme".[39] Pluralisation and diversification lend the veil a reality that is more than a mere illusion.[40] The veils are appearances, embodiments of the Supreme. This quality makes "veils" desirable and attractive even if this invites the initial misunderstanding of the individual consciousness that the attraction lies in the objects.[41]

In the lectures Besant occasionally quotes from the *BhG*, but more often she draws on other established authorities, referring among other things to the Upaniṣads, Rāmānuja, and Nārada *Bhaktisūtra*, citing puranic narratives, and a story told by Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions. This strategy points to a hesitancy on her part to claim authority on the text, which she seems to acknowledge when she declares herself "quite incompetent to lecture on that divine book".[42] On the other hand, she feels confident dealing with a "humbler topic", namely, the three paths of yoga. Thereby, she claims an authority on a par with other theosophical interpreters without adding novel elements (as can also be seen in the relatively conventional employment of the veil metaphor). Furthermore,

36 Besant 1897: 5.
37 Besant 1897: 28.
38 Besant 1897: 30.
39 Besant 1897: 36.
40 Despite the illusionary character ascribed to the outer world, theosophy does not advocate an Advaita type of monism, as is also apparent in the acceptance of the *prakṛti* concept of Sāṃkhya which entails the acceptance of the reality of the world.
41 Besant 1897: 38. In this passage, the connection of the divine veil(s) to the larger history of mankind is not mentioned; this novel element is introduced in the second lecture series (see below).
42 Besant 1897: foreword.

her referring to Vivekananda is interesting since he, like Besant in these lectures, also refrains from engaging with the text of the *BhG* in greater detail. Instead, he expounds the "three yogas" from his Advaitic perspective, using various metaphors (the veil only rarely) and narratives for illustration.[43] In both cases, such forms of treatment point to the growing interest in universalising presentations of religious texts by individuals outside or independent of the scholastic or academic circles that were recognised as the authorities in these matters. Yet the legitimacy of such interpretations was contested by academic and scholastic authorities. Furthermore, the individual interpreters were competing with interpreters seeking to establish themselves as representatives of Hinduism, and this resulted in complex relationships of competition despite shared anti-colonial or reformist agendas.[44] Besant's continuing engagement with the *BhG* can also be seen as indicative of her attempts to consolidate her spiritual authority in the Theosophical Society and to establish herself as championing the cause of Hinduism. The textbook-like character of the second translation with its aim to reach a much wider readership attests to these intentions, as does the second lecture series with its emphasis on the dynamics of history and the importance of individual spirituality for the evolution of mankind.

The second lecture series was published nine years after the first, in 1906, with the title *Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad-Gītā*. Compared to the 1897 lectures, they present a more comprehensive treatment of the text, with numerous quotations and "hints" on how to study it. Accordingly, Besant deals with individual doctrines and the *BhG* as a whole, as can be seen in the titles of the individual lectures: (1) The Great Unveiling, (2) A Yoga-Shāstra, (3) Methods of Yoga-Bhakti, and (4) Discrimination and Sacrifice. The double entendre implied in "hints" points to a change in Besant's self-perception as a lecturer. She suggests that she is merely giving "hints" and not a comprehensive interpretation as is the case with scholastic and modern academic commentators. As if repeating the caveat of the first lecture series, Besant declares her "utter inadequacy for the task"[45] because of the complexity of the issues at stake.[46] However, this rhetoric is not mere *captatio*

43 Besant attended this event as a representative of the Theosophical Society. A detailed comparison of Vivekananda's and Besant's views on the *BhG* is beyond the scope of this article; on the tensions between Vivekananda and theosophy, see Emilsen 1984.

44 The tensions between Vivekananda and the Theosophical Society (represented by Besant), and later Gandhi and Besant, are examples of this constellation; on the larger contexts, see, for instance, the studies of Gandhi 2006 and Scott 2016.

45 Besant 1906: 1.

46 In this way she replaces her previous self-declared incompetence (see above) with a piece of advanced knowledge about the text and its message. This move is emphasised when Besant says that she feels this inadequacy "more strongly than it is possible for any one of you to feel" (Besant 1906: 1).

benevolentiae, as it serves to stress her possessing in-depth knowledge of spiritual processes that allows her to give "hints" on how to understand and practise the *BhG*. This deeper knowledge allows her to assume the role of a teacher expounding essential messages of the text. In her exposition Besant employs both insider and outsider perspectives. From the very start both perspectives are enacted in her distinguishing between "inner" and "outer" levels of interpretation. Both levels are connected to her interpreting the *BhG* as both an allegory—as most theosophical interpreters do—and a historical document about the manifestations of the "Divine logos" in the "outer" world.[47] The historical manifestations also affect the individual, the "inner life" of consciousness; this assumption provides the basis for the allegorical interpretation. The interconnection between history and allegory is the novel element in the second lecture series that reshapes Besant's approach to the *BhG*. While her general interpretation of the three yogas does not fundamentally differ from the earlier lectures, it now includes an explicit historical and thus "worldly" orientation that corresponds to her increasing political activism for the "Indian cause". The following thus focuses on this novel element presented in the 1906 opening lecture entitled "The Great Unveiling".

4 "The Great Unveiling"

The dramatic title of the first lecture corroborates the already mentioned function of titling the whole lecture series as "hints". By pointing out that the text is a veil to be unveiled, Besant—as if being simultaneously in front of and behind the veil—hints what is to be seen and known when approaching the *BhG* as a "presentment".[48] In this way, she puts herself into the position of teaching a secret doctrine and claims to have access to esoteric truths in the footsteps of Blavatsky. This positioning as disciple of Blavatsky's teachings and representative of the Theosophical Society is also evident in the lecture title, which alludes to Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (first published, 1877). The *BhG* is included in the "secret doctrines" as a text that helps the continuing historical "unveiling" of the "Divine" (Logos) if approached correctly by knowing teachers and aspiring adepts. Finally, Besant enhances her use of the veil metaphor by connecting the veil(s) with actual history and its temporalisation in enactments of "unveiling".

This enhanced perspective also has repercussions for her reading of the text. The *BhG*'s role in the "Great Unveiling" explains its complexity: "To speak of the Gītā is to speak of the history of the world, of its vast complexity, of that

47 See Neufeldt 1986: 26. in the preface to her 1895 translation, Besant only mentions the allegorical interpretation.
48 Besant 1906: 10.

web of desires, thoughts, and actions which makes up the evolution of humanity".[49] No less complex or even confusing is how this is addressed. For her, to look for straight, logical coherence misunderstands the text's provenance. She vividly describes the confusing features of the text: "many a one who reads it, and would fain understand it, finds it—as indeed did the first hearer—difficult, complex and even confusing, flying apparently from one subject to another, speaking now of one method and then of a method apparently opposed, sometimes seeming to give counsel along one line and then counsel along another".[50] But these features are just typical of "divine instruction" that defies worldly logic.[51] The *BhG* is truth-finding in practice; it enacts the "unveiling" of the supreme, "mysterious" divine Logos. Such unveiling does not follow ordinary conventions of instruction. Says Besant: "the way of the Divine Teacher is not the way of the human pedagogue" as he does not teach in "textbooks written for a boy to learn, exercising his memory rather than unfolding his life".[52] The unveiling of the meaning of the *BhG* thus entails the unfolding of life and vice versa; the adept must live through the teachings "step-by-step".[53] It is not the teacher's task to offer clarifications that only touch upon the "outer things".[54] Instead, the performative, interactive dimension of "true reading" propels an individual's spirituality and is also fruitful for humanity at large since it "marks a point in human progress".[55]

Next, Besant explains the inner and outer dimensions of the "unveiling" that the *BhG* brings about. Criticising the modern tendency to reject the idea that historical truths are conveyed in sacred literature, Besant calls for the acknowledgement of the historical dimension of this literature instead of viewing it as allegory alone.[56] For her, allegory is nothing but history on a smaller scale: at the level of the individual. The interpretation of the historical meaning of the *BhG* follows the theosophical view of history as mirroring the cosmic evolution of the supreme spirit. Theosophy interprets history along the lines of an evolutionary teleology in which Darwinian, Hegelian, and messianic parameters are combined with Indian

49 Besant 1906: 1.

50 Besant 1906: 2.

51 Besant seems to hint here at the shortcomings of Western academic critics, who denounce the *BhG* as a "hotch-potch" of doctrines that hardly makes any sense. For a critical discussion of Western text-historical approaches to the *BhG* vis-à-vis scholars proposing a "holistic" interpretation, see Malinar 2007.

52 Besant 1906: 2–3.

53 "[O]nly as, step by step, the living is accomplished is the profound unveiling of the mysteries possible for the individual heart" (Besant 1906: 5).

54 Besant 1906: 5.

55 Besant 1906: 6.

56 Besant 1906: 6.

ideas of recurrent world-ages and the doctrine of *karman*.[57] Accordingly, Besant states: "History is the working out of the LOGOS plan, His plan, His scheme for evolving humanity; and history is also the story of the evolution of a World-Logos".[58] History is thus the gradual appearance of this plan as history. In this view the *BhG* is both document and part of this process, the "Great Unveiling" of *logos*. When reading the *BhG* as history, "it is the Great Unveiling, that makes you understand the meaning and the purpose of human history, and thus enables you to scan, with eyes that see, the panorama of the great unfolding of events in nation after nation, and in race after race".[59] What is seen is a teleology driven by spiritual progress, which is also marked by reversals, setbacks, and destruction. According to their karman, all human beings are part of this process but individually involved in this. Cosmic history is thus mirrored in individual life, making it an allegory of the larger, historical struggles: "[W]hen we say allegory, we only mean a smaller history, a lesser history, the salient points of which, reflections of the larger history, are repeated in the life-story of each individual Jīvātmā,[60] each individual embodied Spirit."[61] For the advanced adept, the perfected yogin, history means working on unveiling a future evolution that cannot be grasped fully in the present and appears to most individuals as a struggle. According to Besant, all sacred scriptures convey this double meaning of history and allegory and reveal that individual life is a reflection and an enactment of the "greater Life".[62] Having both meanings in view results in steadfastness: "He who thus reads the Gītā in human history can stand unshaken amid the crash of breaking worlds. And you can also read it for your own individual helping and encouraging and enlightening, as an allegory, the story of the unfolding Spirit within yourselves."[63]

Besant next turns to what the *BhG* discloses when drawing away "the veil that covers the real scheme which history works out on the physical plane".[64] It uncovers the historical crisis of ancient India's destruction, but it is a destruction that ultimately results in progress as it helps India to prepare for its future. At such moments of crisis, the ruling *logos* (*īśvara*) of the present world-system appears in the physical form of an *avatāra*. In the *BhG*, Kṛṣṇa assumes the role of *avatāra* and unveils to Arjuna, the individual self, the lesson and drama of history. For the

57 For a general outline, see Wessinger 1988; Viswanathan 1998. For the application of the *karman* doctrine to individual life-history and collective histories, see Malinar 2013, 2018.
58 Besant 1906: 6.
59 Besant 1906: 8–9.
60 The individual is called her using the Sanskrit *jivātman*, the living self, which is ontologically viewed as a part (using the Sanskrit word *aṃśa*) of the higher self, the *logos*.
61 Besant 1906: 6–7.
62 Besant 1906: 8.
63 Besant 1906: 9.
64 Besant 1906: 9.

individual spiritual development, and thus allegorically speaking, Kṛṣṇa represents the *logos* of the supreme spirit that is present in everyone who guides the "lower intellect" (*manas*) represented by Arjuna. These two "presentments" of the Divine belong together and must be understood as such. Besant elaborates firstly on the historical meaning, the decline of ancient India that once was the "world-model of a nation".[65] Echoing nationalist and evolutionist reinterpretations of the Indian classical doctrine of the world-ages, she describes the ancient Aryan civilisation in glowing terms and speaks of a golden yet "infant civilisation"[66] that gave birth to the word Dharma, "Duty, Fitness, Right Order".[67] This word is both a keyword in the history of the Indian subcontinent and the more extensive evolution of humanity.[68] Despite the nationalist overtones of her depiction of the "golden age" of the Veda, Besant does not call for its revival but rather for progressing into a more "mature" future by transposing "ancient wisdom" in a modern framework. India's decline is seen as conforming to a law of nature (and thus divine *logos*) since a civilisation deteriorates "like all things human" once it has served its function. At the same time, the presence of Kṛṣṇa, as the *avatāra* of the currently ruling divine *logos*, discloses India's future role in history as the "World-Saviour".[69] The function of an *avatāra*, the veiled appearance of the Divine in history, is to "unveil" the true significance of death and destruction, to prepare India for a leading role in the future. The price for such a "high office" that any nation has to pay is "treading the valley of the shadow of death [. . .] drinking to the very dregs the bitter cup of humiliation" to prepare the ground for assuming this role; only after the crucifixion is there the resurrection.[70] Besant uses Christian terminology to describe a unique soteriological moment that changes history, as Christians would claim, to illustrate a natural law that serves the "divine plan", "the life behind the veil". Christian terminology is reframed by evolutionary historiography and embedded in the classical Indian cosmological model of repeated descents (*avatāra*) of the divine connected to repeated revelations of religious-philosophical doctrines. This model is an important feature of theosophical historiography wherein it is reinterpreted according to a teleology of the progressive "unveiling" of the divine spirit in various veils.

In putting this into concrete terms for the *BhG* and India at large, Besant adopts Blavatsky's idea to connect the embodiments of the god Viṣṇu with Darwin's the-

65 Besant 1906: 10.
66 Besant 1906: 10.
67 Besant 1906: 12.
68 According to theosophical doctrines, each civilisation contributes an essential term to the evolution of the spirit, a "peculiar word from the Eternal that each one was to speak" (Besant 1910: 1–2).
69 Besant 1906: 12.
70 Besant 1906: 15.

ory of evolution.[71] According to this idea of "avataric evolution"[72] the epochs in history converge with the puranic accounts of the ten *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu. The *BhG* marks the epoch of the eighth *avatāra*, Kṛṣṇa, who appeared to "start the Indian nation on [. . .] the bitter path of humiliation and of suffering".[73] The *BhG* enacts this process when Kṛṣṇa reveals himself in chapter 11 as death-bringing time that resulted in the downfall of the Indian kingdoms, as Besant points out (quoting *BhG* 11.32). The epic battle signifies the end of ancient India as it paved the way for the various conquests India had to endure in the following centuries, such as by Alexander the Great, Central Asian Islam, and European nations, the last of which played "with the dice of war and commerce for the ruling of India".[74] While all this meant India's "crucifixion", it is only half the story because the "waves" of conquest also "fertilised" the land and left "some new thought, some fresh idea, some treasure to enrich her ever-growing thought".[75] Such new thought was, Besant suggests, contrary to purifying, exclusivist ideas of nationhood. At the same time, the foreign invasions weakened the Indian nation; it was also "enriched by the experience gathered from many nations who came to mingle with her own".[76] All this prepared the ground for India's "resurrection" as future world saviour. When read from an allegorical perspective, Arjuna represents the individual's involvement in this history. Seen from a historical perspective, Arjuna's arguments against the war were a realistic but short-sighted diagnosis of the situation: "[H]is ideas of the gradual decay of dharma, which would inevitably follow the slaughter on Kurukṣetra, were all correct. [. . .] His vision was not, then, a blinded vision, only it did not see far enough."[77] Arjuna could not see the India of the future, and therefore he wrongly thought that destruction could be avoided. He had to be taught that nothing can stop the course of history as the divine plan must be carried out (Besant quotes *BhG* 18.59–61, 11.32). This plan also includes taking proper care of the transition from the old system to the new one. This is the reason, says Besant, why Arjuna was told to fulfil his "inborn duty" as a warrior. His task was to serve as a "bridge" between the old and the new: "[T]hose who steadfastly

71 See Blavatsky 1891, vol. 2: 274–275.
72 Cf. Brown 2007a, 2007b; Nanda 2016: 308ff.
73 Besant 1906: 12–13.
74 Besant 1906: 14.
75 Besant 1906: 15.
76 Besant 1906: 15. Besant views such "mingling" as a preferred "shape" for high office, which she also points out concerning Arjuna, whose genealogy attests to the caste confusion he dreads. After recounting Arjuna's mixed pedigree, Besant states that "there were the mingling of strange and diverse currents in the veins of this Arjuna, chosen friend of Shrī Kṛiṣhṇa, chosen tool for the work of transition. On which facts the thoughtful may fitly ponder" (Besant 1906: 22). Later in her life, she presented herself as "mingled" when she claimed to be "Western-Born but in Spirit Eastern"; see Malinar 2013.
77 Besant 1906: 19.

perform the dharma of the older forms into which they were born, although they know them to be dying, until the new are ready, form the bridge over which the ignorant may walk in safety amid the crash of a falling system into a new system."[78] In this way, Besant hints at her political ideas of India's progress to freedom and leadership through reform, not revolution.[79] The inevitability of the destruction and the call to perform his role as an instrument of the divine was the "great unveiling" for the individual represented by Arjuna.[80] In concluding her exposition of the historical meaning, Besant again points to the mechanism of unveiling through which "the life that is behind the veil" manifests itself and becomes visible. If this mechanism is understood, doubts vanish and "in every struggle we can throw ourselves on the right side",[81] which means to cooperate with the ruling *logos* in the "Great Unveiling". With these remarks, Besant turns to a brief explanation of the allegorical meaning as usually propagated in theosophy.[82]

Against the background of the double meaning of the *BhG*, Besant turns in the second lecture to the "nature of the Gītā in its essence"; that is, as a scripture of Yoga (Yoga-Shāstra[83]) given by the "Lord of Yoga himself".[84] The "true meaning of Yoga" and the methods of becoming a yogin constitute the actual teaching of the *BhG* that needs to be understood and practised. The three pathways taught in the *BhG*, namely *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga*, and *jñānayoga*, are presented by Besant as aspects of a single spiritual method that are united and transcended by the perfect yogin. Quoting *BhG* 6.46, Besant states that the yogin is "greater than the men who are treading one or the other or the third of these three paths that lead to complete yoga; [. . .], for he sums up their separate characteristics all within himself".[85] Accordingly, Besant defines yoga by quoting *BhG* 11.7–8 wherein Kṛṣṇa answers Arjuna's request to see his teacher's divinity by pointing to his "Sovereign Yoga"; that is, the unity of world as assembled in a single, divine body. Supreme yoga is

78 Besant 1906: 22.

79 At this time, she did not openly commit herself to the political struggle against the colonial rule because her activities were observed with suspicion by the authorities. With her "reformist" positions, she sided with what was called the "moderate" faction of the Indian National Congress. However, she was also criticised for a patronising attitude that was regarded as resembling the imperialist positions she otherwise castigated; see Malinar 2018.

80 Besant 1906: 25.

81 Besant 1906: 27.

82 Arjuna represents the "lower mind" (*manas*) struggling with the passions represented by his relatives, the ties of the past. This lower mind is doubtful and seeks knowledge in the higher Self represented by Kṛṣṇa. When the *manas* obeys the higher self, all doubts and passions are overcome: "The Self without must vanish before the Self within is realised" (Besant 1906: 32).

83 See also the preface in Besant 1895.

84 Besant 1906: 36.

85 Besant 1906: 60.

“the vision of the union of the many seen in the One”.[86] In contrast to many other interpreters, Besant regards *BhG* 11 as the essence of the text, the message that is reiterated throughout the text. The practice of yoga thus necessarily results in seeing the One in everything, transcending with is called “good” and “bad” karman and uniting oneself with the Self. The yogin is “the man who, realising the Unity, lives it”.[87] This entails engaging in yoga directed at both levels of seeking such union, the outer and the inner, the historical and allegorical.

Final remarks

Besant’s translations and interpretations of the *BhG* are guided by a universalising understanding of yoga as a spiritual science of universal relevance and an integral part of ancient Indian “wisdom”. While following the view—formulated in Indian commentarial traditions—that the *BhG* teaches three forms of yoga to obtain liberation from the constrains of corporeal existence, Besant understands them as parts of the one and only yoga as a method to unify oneself and history with the “life of the Divine”. This understanding is in accordance with the general theosophical appropriation of yoga as an “ancient science” ready to be employed in the contemporary world. The monistic approach to the diversity of the world championed by theosophy turns yoga into a method and state of inner-worldly harmony with the manifestations of the Divine. For Besant, yoga is a worldly activity open to all and not as an ascetic pathway to be practised exclusively by male renouncers. She is well aware that this interpretation is not in accordance with “orthodox” interpretations, but she defends her position against her critics:

> I have here seen men who claim to speak for Hindu orthodoxy, who claim to defend it against the teaching of the Theosophist, I have here seen it put forward that no man can be a yogī, unless he live far apart from men in cave or jungle or desert [. . .]. I have heard it said that no man can be a yogī who is in the midst of activity, working, labouring, endeavouring to help all good things that are in the world.[88]

In her 1906 lectures she overrules this view by turning the *BhG* into a document of the evolving history of the Divine *logos*. For Besant, the “unveiled” Divine is not a transcendent entity but obtaining knowledge of the whole picture, an insight into an ever unfolding divine drama.

86 Besant 1906: 52.
87 Besant 1906: 56.
88 Besant 1906: 39.

Her use of the metaphor of the veil supports this "non-orthodox" interpretation of yoga and thus its appropriation in championing theosophical teachings. The metaphor also connects the two lecture series and allows tracing the development of Besant's views on the *BhG* and of her assuming authority as an interpreter who can give "hints" to its deeper meanings and practical application. In the earlier lectures, Besant deals primarily, and rather conventionally, with the contrast between "veiled" and "unveiled"[89] states and stages of evolution which apply to both individual consciousness and the Supreme Spirit. In the second lecture series she emphasises the historical dynamics of the unveiling of the Divine. The use of the metaphor is not surprising given the centrality accorded to the veil in theosophy and modern intellectual history and fin de siècle East–West encounters in general. However, it seems that the famous trope of the "veil of Maya", coined by Arthur Schopenhauer as an emblematic expression for "Indian wisdom", has mostly preoccupied Western interpreters. Departing from Schopenhauer's and Blavatsky's employment of the veil metaphor, Besant initially focused on what is behind the veil. In her second lecture series she expands the metaphor by pluralising it. She stresses the significance and appearances of veils at individual and collective levels, with nature and the Divine manifesting in and through them. Therefore, veils are not mere illusions; they are "semblances", "presentments", and they are diverse as unity ("Divine logos") is not present in and as a single homogenous and monolithic entity, but in multiple and manifold forms. Consequently, Besant views chapter 11, Kṛṣṇa's appearance as "All-Form" (*viśvarūpa*) and "Time" (*kāla*) as the core of the *BhG*. Besant pluralises and temporalises the nature and function of veils in casting history and life-histories as enactments of veiling and unveiling: *avatāra* Kṛṣṇa is a veil that serves the unveiling of a future about to happen ("history"). Arjuna's envisions this future, but with a mind "veiled" by doubts and passions which are removed by Kṛṣṇa's yoga-doctrines as pathways to unite and "harmonise" oneself and one's actions with the "life behind the veil". But this life, according to Besant, cannot be separated from its being constantly unveiled in veils. Therefore, both history and individual existence have the quality of drama, of a struggle for something other, which is present as and in veils and yet beyond them. No veil is useless since it has a function in the evolution of the self; thus everyone is involved and called to practise yoga to "harmonise", to engage in history and the political and social circumstances of the present as a form of one's

89 The metaphor of the veil and the various narratives connected to it (about Isis, Salome, and other "veiled" figures) in combination with the trope of "unveiled", "naked truth" at this time had already become a preoccupation in Western literature and philosophy. This preoccupation is also one of the reasons why Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* appears emblematic. The focus of interest was either on what is behind the veil or on the veil itself. This situation is also mirrored in the numerous academic studies on the topic; see, for instance, Assmann 1999; Ziolkowski 2008.

spiritual quest. In this way, Besant appropriates the text to expound a universalising theosophical framework, which she uses to formulate and justify her intensifying sociopolitical commitment to India and Hinduism.

With her translations and lectures Besant sought to establish herself as a spiritual authority in the theosophical circles, but at the same time she propagated the persistent authority of the *BhG* (and, by extension, of "ancient Indian wisdom") when coping with colonial-modern challenges. Such claims to authority received mixed reactions, ranging from ridicule and contempt to praise and admiration. Many such reactions were probably also fuelled by her widely known history of political activism, which also affected her private life in numerous ways. After moving out of the domestic sphere into the political arena, voicing her views in public, she became a theosophist and entered the realm of religion and viewed herself as a spokeswoman for "ancient Indian wisdom" and, later the "cause of India". When reviewing the literature, it seems that her biography has attracted more attention than her intellectual endeavours, which were regarded as dilettante and lacking authority. However, contemporary audiences used her translations, and read the lectures. A study of these texts thus enhances our understanding of the dynamics of the colonial intellectual and sociopolitical discourse and of the participating individuals.

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Galina Rousseva-Sokolova

Unlikely Encounters: Ideas about India in Two Nineteenth-Century European Nationalist Narratives (Joseph Méry and Georgi Sava Rakovski)

Abstract. For many centuries up to the present day, Europe's fascination for India has inspired a plethora of writings, which, while talking about India, creatively mirrors the assumptions of their authors about their own societies and zeitgeist. Since Voltaire, who moulded out of a less than perfect knowledge about India abundant ammunition for his war against the Catholic Church, imaginative interpretations have flourished, tinted by ideological commitments, intellectual biases, and emotional attachments of many hues. To invoke Benedict Anderson, the nineteenth century has seen the development of the concept of nations as "imagined communities", a process intensified by the democratisation and growing affordability of printed books and, in particular, the emergence of periodical press in national languages. In this chapter we will show how images of India were embedded in the creation of nationalist narratives through two very different examples taken from the far ends of Europe: the works of Joseph Méry, a popular French novelist, playwright, poet, and librettist, and the articles of Georgi Sava Rakovski—a Bulgarian revolutionary intellectual and an activist of the independence movement against the Ottoman empire. The commonality in the examples lies in the type of readers they targeted: both addressed popular audiences, a fact which shaped the content of their messages as well as the particular way they made use of Indian references.

Keywords. India, Joseph Méry, Georgi Sava Rakovski, nationalism, narratology.

In his widely influential book *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson locates the birth of European nationalism towards the end of the eighteenth century.[1] As he convincingly argues, it was an assisted birth, the result of seemingly fortuitous

1 The inclusion of this chapter is itself, in retrospect, the result of an unlikely encounter. I met Professor Maya Burger briefly at a conference in 1997. A few months later she called me in Sofia and offered me a position at the University of Lausanne as her assistant. I am not sure how she evaluates, in hindsight, that particular decision of hers. As for me, it changed my life in more radical ways than is appropriate to detail here. Another source of inspiration were the discussions with my students from the Interdisciplinary Seminar offered by the Jindal School of Liberal Arts of O.P. Jindal Global University, India.

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but nevertheless congruent historical factors. During the following decades, its fuzzy contours solidified in images and narratives fuelled by a specific kind of imagination, nurturing a sense of brotherhood between people who would never meet, promoting collective memory (or, occasionally, collective oblivion), generating fresh supplies of meaning and purpose where other sources were drying out, and establishing a firm sense of the community's borders, beyond which otherness reigns. While the historical circumstances and cultural roots shaping emerging ideas of nation-ness varied greatly across geographical space, the commonalities are striking. Even today the hold of nationalism on the public imagination, the persistence of its emotional power against the forces of globalism, continue to intrigue and puzzle.

In the slow process of the emergence of national identities in Europe, the conceptualisation of the Other was a necessary parallel outcome. A nation, says Anderson, is an "imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign",[2] inferring the importance of borders in this definition. The workings of human imagination need support. An ideal entity is easier to perceive, understand, and explain when framed by other entities, similar in structure, differing in content. Thus a nation, any nation, would remain a fuzzy concept if not solidified by the awareness of limits beyond which other nations exist. In some respect borders hold together nations in the manner of exoskeletons.

Borders, though, are problematic. While their very existence sustains and reinforces the idea of nation-ness, locating them is a risky and contested affair, fuelling feelings of animosity and, sometimes, major wars. The Other just across the border is an intimate enemy, too close to feature in nation-building narratives without prompting a sense of rivalry or competition. Hence the appeal of distant Others, located beyond undisputed borders. Such an Other provides a malleable and unthreatening support against which the creativity of national storytellers can work unchallenged. For a very long time India has been to European nationalisms such a harmless Other. This chapter aims to bring into focus how two historically and stylistically very different European nationalist narratives, born at approximately the same time but thousands of miles apart and in very different historical circumstances, can be connected through the unlikely Indian theme. Through close reading and comparative analysis, I hope to make apparent structural similarities in the way ideas about India are embedded in and support the respective conceptual frameworks of the authors.

2 Anderson 2006: 6.

1 Sublime colonisation: Joseph Méry's India

In the story of this research the first narrator came into view as the result of an unlikely encounter: some years ago a colleague from the Centre of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Latin American Studies at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, Professor Sovon Sanyal, presented me with a very short nineteenth-century novella by Joseph Méry called *The Elephants and the Monsters* (*Elefantes e Monstros*), which he had translated from Portuguese.[3] The text was intriguing. It was a cheap, dime-store novel, articulating the Indian reality as entertainment for a popular, unsophisticated audience. While the history of intellectual exchanges and (mis) understandings between Europe and India[4] has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, this kind of glimpse into common assumptions in nineteenth-century popular culture is rare. The French original was located in a volume collecting several novellas by Méry, *La comédie des animaux: histoire naturelle en action*, published in 1886, twenty years after the death of its author.[5] It is safe to assume that the text first appeared during Méry's lifetime as a feuilleton in the periodic press.

Joseph Méry was born in Marseille in 1797 or 1798. His early years in the south of France are reflected in his oeuvre as a longing for warm climates and sun-drenched landscapes and have certainly informed his fictional engagement with the exotic horizons of India, Java, and Africa. At his heyday he was a notorious figure of Parisian literary life. A prolific and multifaceted writer, he crossed genre barriers and produced poetry and opera librettos as well as more than fifty novels and novellas. Part of the Romantic movement, he was connected to, and occasionally lauded by, Victor Hugo, Gérard de Nerval, Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, and Théophile Gautier. His wit and talent for improvisation were recognised and appreciated and he was a staple in the Parisian salons. At least three biographies of him were published during his lifetime or shortly after his death in 1866. As the Portuguese novella translated by Sanyal suggests, he must have even enjoyed some international notoriety. This makes his fast decline in fame soon afterwards puzzling. Throughout the twentieth century Méry is practically unknown.

One of the reasons may be that Méry does not seem to have invested much energy in attending to his literary legacy. Much of his fictional work appeared as feuilletons in the *Revue de Paris* and other periodicals. While many of them were later collected and reprinted in books, their very briefness and profusion,

3 Méry 2014.

4 I will mention here only Wilhelm Halbfass's *India and Europe* (1990), now regarded as a classic, but a number of less wide-scope publications have appeared since.

5 I am grateful to the editors of this volume, Philippe Bornet and Nadia Cattoni, for helping me locate this reference.

the melodrama, the exoticism, and the high productivity rate of the author work towards classifying them mostly as commercial crowd-pleasers. Brian Stableford, who produced a recent annotated English translation of some of Méry's works, qualified as "speculative fiction", suggests in his introduction that Méry may have succumbed to the temptation (since writers for periodicals were paid by the line) to fill in space by unduly prolonging informal dialogues. Nevertheless, Méry's talent and wit, as well as his bold experimentation with formats mixing fiction and non-fiction, brings Stableford to compare him with Edgar Allan Poe.[6]

As Stableford's publication suggests, there may be a renewed interest in Méry's work since the French National Library made available some of his previously undiscoverable books through the Gallica website.[7] It seems amateurs of science fiction and fantasy were the first to identify Méry as an early representative of the genre. On the other hand, Claudine Le Blanc has produced a study of the Romantic adaptation of the Sanskrit drama *Mṛcchakaṭika* (The Little Clay Cart) by Śūdraka for the French theatrical scene by Nerval and Méry.[8] There are certainly more rewarding explorations to be conducted, even though the most original parts of Méry's creation are scattered amid an incredible abundance of printed words.

The so-called "Indian trilogy" by Méry was a critical and commercial success. The preface to the 1861 publication of *Héva*, the first of the three novels, mentions thirty preceding editions since the first one in 1840. The other two novels are *La Floride* (Florida) and *La guerre du Nizam* (The War in Nizam—"Nizam" surprisingly featuring here as the name of a province). Out of the three only the first and the third take place in India. *La Floride* is located in Africa, as the term was apparently used throughout the nineteenth century in reference to diverse alien territories. *Héva* is a prime example of the way Méry takes advantage of the Indian context—it is no more than a setting, a series of props thinly spread over the plot to give the readership a sense of exoticism. The author gives hints about the imaginary character of the territory he is mapping. This is the beginning of *Héva*:

> On the Coromandel shore, not far from Madras, in lands formerly deserted, lies a landscape of such beauty that travellers never described it, because it is beyond words [. . .]. I have over my predecessors a substantial advantage in rendering this landscape: I have never seen it. If I had, I would have renounced any attempt. Hence this is my portrayal, and I guarantee to its likeness.[9]

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6 Méry 2012: 7.

7 See https://gallica.bnf.fr.

8 Le Blanc 2009.

9 Méry 1861: 27–28. Unless otherwise specified, all translations are the author's.

As fictional as his Indian setting may be, it is still consistently informed by the various readings of Méry on Indian history, geography, and culture. References are interspersed throughout the plot in a quantity sufficient to give it an aura of realism and solidity without compromising the freedom of the author to arrange, interpret, twist, and extrapolate according to his own vivid imagination and, probably, to the expectations of his readers. Thus, amid the paradisiac South Indian landscape, in the middle of a jungle, composed of exotic trees, populated with a fauna both ferocious (tigers) and benevolent (elephants), lies a "ravishing country house" (une ravissante maison de campagne) where Héva, the heroine of the story, languidly enjoys, in the company of her husband and a swarm of enraptured suitors, a dinner of extravagant sophistication under "un *chattiram* délicieux".[10] The skin tone of the gallants may be brown and their compliments may allude to "the blue God" (Vishnu) and Lakmé (Lakshmi); but they are still featured as elegant grand bourgeois in the salon of a Parisian coquette, weirdly reminding the reader of the protagonists of a Balzac novel.

The plot of *Héva*, like that of most of Méry's other novels and novellas, is a melodrama, mixing heroic deeds (a tiger hunt), a murder plot, male comradeship, treason, jealousy, and romance. The signature combination with a faraway setting is typical of his oeuvre, a key to his critical and commercial success and to his stature and reputation as a popular writer. The fact that he often followed his own perfected recipe to produce an extraordinary volume of publications should not translate into assumptions about its lack of literary merit. Méry's prose can be, at times, surprisingly original and witty, if too abundant (or hastily written) for its own good. Méry continuously expressed and articulated the Romantics' fascination with the Orient as a wonderland which embodies much of what Europe lacks, undisturbed by an absence of accuracy which his contemporary audience would not have recognised but sounding captivatingly imaginative and even humorous to their present-day counterparts. Like Syaly, the learned brahman, a secondary character in *Héva*, who, after offering hospitality and supper to two lost foreign travellers, launches into a rant spurred by "a nationalist pride worthy of an Englishman",[11] makes fun of Homer's lack of poetic imagination, and mocks the religious architecture of the ancient Greeks, arguing that both are incomparably inferior to their Indian counterparts.

India in Méry's so-called "Indian trilogy" functions as a narrative tool to exotify the otherwise conventional melodramatic plot, to set the writer's imagination free from the demands of plausibility, and to feed a certain escapist appetite, kindled in

10 Conjuring a sense of tangibility and scientific seriousness Méry goes as far as explaining in a footnote that *chattiram* (by which he means an open, roof-covered structure) comes from *tchatour*, Sanskrit for "four".

11 Méry 1861: 100.

the audience by the Romantic zeitgeist. Revealingly, the Indian "trilogy" actually features India in only two of the books. The fact that the second novel, *La Floride*, takes place in Africa did not seem to trouble any of his readers—a clear indication that, to the general French public, India was not quite yet the name of a concrete entity (geographical and cultural) but more of a symbolic dreamland where the exquisite and the horrendous coexist on a scale unimaginable in everyday life. These common assumptions of the nineteenth-century French reader regarding India are perhaps one of the most interesting insights Méry's novels offer us—the abundance of deities, both crude and terrifying, a fuzzy understanding of the caste system, the perceived arrogance of the British, tigers versus elephants, the horrors of the 1857 rebellion (in *The Elephants and the Monsters*). In this free-handed instrumentalisation of India, Méry merely follows some illustrious footsteps. A hundred years before him, Voltaire, through a plethora of writings, moulded out of a limited or frankly erroneous knowledge about India an arsenal for his personal brawl with the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Voltaire's fame as well as his witty and dazzling style probably contributed more to shaping the emerging perceptions of the French public about India than the more scholarly works and translations already available during his time.

But this is not the only India Méry is hiding up in his sleeve, or, more precisely, it is not the only usage he puts India to. In one of the most original pieces of his abundant fictional prose he explores the subgenre of alternative history through a novel about Napoleon under the title *Histoire de ce qui n'est pas arrivé* (The Story of What Never Happened).[12] He transforms the unsuccessful siege of Acre (Saint-Jean d'Acre) in 1799 by the young General Bonaparte into a victory. Thus he imagines the Egyptian campaign to have continued eastward to Syria and, finally, to Mysore, where an alliance with Tipu Sultan (Tippoo Saïb in Méry's version) culminates in a triumphal battle, opening for the French army the gates of the East to further conquests. Méry was an admirer of Napoleon. Together with his writing partner of the early years, Auguste Barthélemy, they produced an epic poem, *Napoleon en Égypte* (Napoleon in Egypt) (1828), as well as two shorter continuations—*Le fils de l'homme* (The Son of Man) (1829) and *Waterloo* (1829). He was also most certainly inspired by another exercise in the same genre of alternative fiction around a similar theme—Louis Geoffroy's *Napoléon et la conquête du monde* (Napoleon and the Conquest of the World) (1836; reprinted as *Napoléon apocryphe*), which reimagines a more positive development of the disastrous Russian campaign. *Histoire de ce qui n'est pas arrivé* was published in a collection titled *Les nuits d'Orient: contes nocturnes* (Oriental Nights: Nocturnal Tales) in 1854.

12 Stableford translates it as *The Tower of Destiny: A Story of Events That Did Not Happen*, in reference to a Napoleon quote figuring as a motto in the novel.

There is historical truth in Napoleon's ambitions towards India. The French admiral Suffren was an ally of Hyder Ali, father of Tipu, during the Second Anglo-Mysore War in 1782–1783. Subsequently, Tipu Sultan sent several embassies to Louis XVI to plead for an alliance against the British. In the meantime, however, the French Revolution intervened, and contacts were resumed only with the rise of Napoleon, who announced to the Directoire his intentions to join forces with the Indian prince and attack the British. He had to renounce his strategy after the unsuccessful siege of Acre. This is where Méry's story deviates.

The portrait of Napoleon is undoubtedly that of a national hero. The general is a visionary, an idealist, the embodiment of the French spirit, at once powerful and enlightened. Its foundation is grounded in another mythological figure—that of Alexander the Great. In Méry's grand narrative Alexander was more a cultural hero than a conqueror, driven by the idealistic vision of a spiritual union between the East and the West. Alexander's poor health as well as the weakness of his army prevented him from achieving his goal, which gives legitimacy to Bonaparte's endeavour.[13] Alexander is a "semi-God",[14] constantly recalled throughout the journey, in characters' dialogues or narrator's explanations. Traces of him are everywhere and Bonaparte is just following in his illustrious footsteps. This elevates Bonaparte above the vulgar aspirations of the belligerent coloniser. Towards the end of the novel Méry's tone reaches a messianic pitch:

> There was something stirring and supernatural about that great name [of Bonaparte], which frightened the imagination. Bonaparte had not revealed himself as some vulgar conqueror disembarked on the coast of Malabar or Coromandel; he was like a providential genius emerged from the confines of the world, escaping the English fleets, crushing the cavalries of Egypt between the pyramids and Tabor, the human mountain and the mountains of God, and, always driven by the divine breath, arriving across immense solitudes on Indian soil to accomplish there a mysterious work of civilization, which would be the renaissance of the Indian Orient.[15]

The function of Alexander in the narrative is to mark the contrast between Bonaparte's lofty, almost philosophical aspirations and the vulgarity of the British—the bad Other, the greedy colonisers, the usurpers of Destiny's righteous demand. They lack the sophistication of French culture, they are cruel and pragmatic, they even lack a proper army (a noble extension of the young general's persona), pos-

13 "Prenons Saint-Jean-d'Acre, et cherchons ensuite les traces d'Alexandre ; elles sont imprimées au désert" (Méry 1854: 14) / "Let's take Saint-Jean-d'Acre, and then seek the footprints of Alexander; they're imprinted in the desert" (Méry 2012: 154).

14 Méry 1854: 64.

15 Méry 2012: 199; Méry 1854: 66. Henceforward when Stableford's translation is cited, it will be given first, followed by the reference in the original text.

sessing only a fleet, and they have a despicable capacity of forging opportunistic alliances with rival Indian princes. Why did the French miss the opportunity to secure their Indian territories? Why were they deaf to Tipu Sultan's pleas for help? They were too busy listening to philosophers and making revolutions!

> That conquest, which shook Bengal and caused consternation among those who were then our enemies, scarcely gazed the ears of the Statesmen of Paris; they had so many other things to do! They were reading *Candide*, and learning by heart the twenty-four verses of the anti-national poem that stigmatized the Maid of Orleans, victorious over the English, and the philosophical Titans were building the folio foundations of the *Encyclopedia* in order to climb up to heaven and dethrone God![16]

This is perhaps the place to mention that *Histoire de ce qui n'est pas arrivé* is not a straightforward apology of French superiority. The text is multilayered, peppered with irony and wit, and altogether fun to read in spite of some unnecessarily lengthy passages or repetitions. The French are often mocked—for being self-centred, verbose, inefficient, poor-spirited, and for assuming that the world is uniformly charmed by their grace, intelligence, and general brilliance. To this list Méry adds, when it comes to military ambitions, a stubborn affinity for gloomy cold realms, like the Rhine or Russia, instead of the sun-lit South. The author's light-heartedness goes as far as including, in the middle of the story, a witty entr'acte at the Paris Grand-Opéra where le tout-Paris discusses and, in a way, appropriates, the news of Bonaparte's Indian success.

This being said, let us move to the image of the good, the distant Other, against which the French national soul is made to emerge—namely, India. To Méry's typical nomenclature of exotic sunny landscapes, vegetation (tropical oaks, baobabs, palm trees, miraculous herbs), animals (tigers and elephants, again), and the idea that Indian arts, poetry, and culture are even older that those of Egypt and Greece[17] are added some darker shades, never really explicated, but consistently alluded to. Méry mentions "dead cities",[18] desert spaces, a civilisation that is in dire need of a revival, a proper renaissance. From those references we can infer an assumption, common throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe: while India is the land of a great ancient civilisation, its present state is deplorable. Indians have degraded from being the upholders of human spiritual progress to a sort of sleepy existence amid the ruins of their former glory. This view was shared and actively disseminated in France by Voltaire himself across a number of his "Indian" writ-

16 Méry, 2012: 201; Méry, 1854: 68.
17 Méry 1854: 28.
18 Méry 1854: 79.

ings, in particular *Fragments sur l'Inde* (Fragments on India).[19] In other words: India needs help, and Bonaparte, or France, is destined to be her saviour. The letter of Tipu Sultan[20] states it in unambiguous words: Louis XVI did not fulfil his colonial projects; it falls on the brave ruler of the Christians to complete the noble task. The French army is most welcome to march into Mysore.

The pragmatic motivation of Tipu Sultan, spurred by the necessity to find an ally against the army of the British and their Maratha supporters, is superseded in Méry's narrative by a grander and more fundamental sense of urgency. It is not about stopping the advance of the treacherous Lord Cornwallis in Karnataka; what is at stake is India herself. And France happens to possess what India lacks:

> What, then, is lacking in that land, the cradle of the word's wisdom and poetry? It lacks the intelligent breath that awakens. France retains that breath on her lips; she will exhale it everywhere.[21]

Méry gleefully imagines an intrinsically Francophile India. More than an encounter between cultures, alien to each other, what takes place is a sort of instant recognition of inborn affinities. It is a sweeping love at first sight, a match made in heaven where India is the bride. As Méry puts it: "L'Inde est française de coeur" (India is French by heart).[22] And he elaborates:

> We excited the most passionate sympathies among the sons of Aureng Zeb and the worshipers of Brahma. [. . .] the two peoples seem to have been born together in perfect accord [. . .]. The Indians understood everything that was charming and serious in the people of France, who made Bengal tremble on a day of battle, gliding with laughing on the foam of their gulfs, playing with tigers in the jungles, and holding a ball the day after a combat or on the eve of an attack.[23]

Languid and wasted before the salvific touch of her beloved, India becomes once again "fecund with arts, poetry and enthusiasm".[24] Or, perhaps, should we speak of a colonisation made in heaven? The Romantic metaphors throw a veil of beauty

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19 For instance: "Toute la grandeur et toute la misère de l'esprit humain s'est déployée dans les anciens brachmanes et dans les brames, leurs successeurs. D'un côté, c'est la vertu persévérante [. . .]. De l'autre, c'est la superstition la plus méprisable." And, a bit further: "La plupart d'entre eux vivent dans une molle apathie. Leur grande maxime, tirée de leurs anciens livres est qu'il vaut mieux s'asseoir que de marcher, se coucher que s'asseoir, dormir que veiller, et mourir que de vivre." See Voltaire 1773: 42–43.
20 Méry 1854: 70.
21 Méry 2012: 210; Méry 1854: 79.
22 Méry 1854: 74.
23 Méry 2012: 206; Méry 1854: 75.
24 Méry 1854: 77.

and magic over the self-evident subjugation of the bride in this newly formed matrimonial union. Elsewhere in the novel Méry speaks, in less lofty terms, of the advantages for Europeans to take Indian brides: they are graceful, docile, ready to adopt their husband's religion, and produce healthy progeny ("The children of these mixed races are superb."[25]).

The end of the novel is an epic ode to the completion of the union between the Orient and the Occident, imagined by Alexander, brought to fruition by Bonaparte; where the borders between nations, classes, and cultures fuse in a euphoria of cosmic proportion, a triumph of united humanity:

> At that sight the Occident uttered a cry of enthusiasm heard by the two neighbouring seas; the Orient replied with a religious hymn in that harmonious language, composed of golden notes, the sound of pearls, the melody of waves, the murmur of palms, and sunlight. All the ranks soon became confused: people and soldiers, conquerors and conquered, mingled their hands, their weapons, their banners, their flags; there was neither a victory, nor victors.[26]

And this is only the beginning. Méry's final paragraphs are a premonition of the world to come, where Java, Borneo, Japan, Nepal, Siam, Bhutan, and Assam come to benefit from the same awakening breath. The immense and noble endeavour, confided to France is assimilated to nothing less than a second Creation, after that of God.

In spite of the grandiloquence of the ending, the novel has the lightness of day-dreaming, a nationalist fantasy venting the frustrations of the French in the face of the British colonial success, without much agenda or gravity. The French national character, their assumptions of superiority and sophistication, their fondness for philosophising over action, their lack of pragmatism, and their inefficiency and petty political quarrels are often the target of an irony not deprived of subtlety. The success of the novel was most probably due to that overall pleasing quality, the expression of a collective wish to rewrite history fed by dreams of national grandeur. India, of which just enough was known to trigger fascination and desire, unhindered by considerations of veracity, is assigned the role of a malleable and friendly receptacle, a good and patient wife, waiting for her rightful master to oust the imposter from the nuptial chamber. Assumed to be incapable of autonomy or self-determination, she is longing for her perfect, soulful, coloniser.

25 Méry 1854: 39.
26 Méry 2012: 209; Méry 1854: 78.

2 A tale of origins: Georgi Sava Rakovski's India

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of Europe, a different national narrative was taking shape, with higher stakes and in dramatic circumstances. Georgi Sava Rakovski, as he came to be known,[27] was a contemporary of Méry and an important figure of the Bulgarian struggle for independence against the Ottoman empire. Like Méry he was a writer, poet, and journalist, but also a scholar, polyglot, political thinker, and ethnographer, as well as an adventurer and a revolutionary, who spent the best of his active years as a fugitive avoiding arrest. He died of tuberculosis in 1867, just one year after Méry, at the age of forty-six.

His extraordinary life is difficult to summarise. Born in 1821 to a wealthy family of craftsmen in the small mountain town of Kotel, he received an excellent education, first at home and then at the Greek Orthodox College in Istanbul. Istanbul is also where his political activities against the Turkish power began. In 1841, under threat of a death sentence, he took advantage of a Greek passport and flew to Marseille—the only geographical location where his and Méry's itineraries intersect. This stay in France was crucial for his later scholarly writings, which will be discussed here. Later he returned to his hometown and from that point onward lived the life of a rebel, relentlessly working to stir the national sentiments of his compatriots (and encourage them to open their purses for the cause of independence), constantly persecuted for his subversive activities, spending some years in an Istanbul jail, devising mostly disappointing alliances across the Balkans and beyond—in Serbia, Austria, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine, organising and sending armed groups of guerrilla fighters to Bulgarian territory, setting up a Bulgarian government in exile, all the while writing—some books but mostly articles in short-lived newspapers and magazines.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Romanticism was at its height and Rakovski, as a public intellectual in tune with novel European ideas, embraced the excitement. Unlike Méry, his Romantic ideas are not so much embodied in his creative writing. He was more attracted to the German thinkers, Alexander von Humboldt in particular, and the legacy of the Grimm brothers. He took inspiration from their effort to uncover the soul of the German nation by collecting and studying folklore. He created an ethnographic questionnaire and, while criss-crossing Bulgaria to prepare the future insurrection against Turkish rule, asked his local contacts to fill it with descriptions of beliefs, customs, rituals, and folk songs and tales. This was intended to give shape to the idea of a Bulgarian nation and to stir emotional

27 He was born Subi Stoykov Popovich and changed his name several times throughout his tumultuous life. Although Rakovski figures prominently in history books and literary anthologies, few texts are exclusively devoted to him and his oeuvre. The most detailed biography available seems to be Traykov 1974.

commitment among the masses, against the lure of Greek language, orthodoxy, and education. He used this material extensively to back up his big theory on the origins of the Bulgarian people which he developed towards the end of his life.

The special aura the European Romantics cast upon India was not lost on Rakovski. Having in mind his immediate preoccupations with the organisational aspects of the freedom struggle, India pops up surprisingly often even in his politically motivated short journalistic pieces. Not much was known about India in the Bulgarian public space. Few traders had ventured as far as Bombay and Calcutta. India had started to appear in publications in the Bulgarian language through books on geography. Traykov mentions an article on the East India Company in one of the early cultural periodicals *Bulgarski knijitsi* (Bulgarian Booklore) in 1858, as well as a book on ancient India and Egypt, translated by another famous activist of the period (known as the Bulgarian Revival), Lyuben Karavelov. The most thoroughly covered Indian event in the Bulgarian periodical press was the rebellion of 1857 against the rule of the British East India Company. Rakovski regularly published in his newspaper *Bulgarska dnevnitsa* (Bulgarian Daily) news about the military actions of the British against the Indian rebels, with vivid comments and sympathy for the plight of the Indian insurgents. At some point, he emphatically announced that "India was Indian once, and India will be Indian!"[28] The basis for this strong emotional commitment is clear: the analogy between the Indian mutiny and the situation of the Bulgarian people, subjugated and suffering under foreign rule. Rakovski says India, but means Bulgaria. Moreover, Great Britain was, at the time, one of the most prominent allies of the Ottoman empire on the international scene.

But beyond politics, Rakovski's engagement with the Indian theme developed far more robustly in different kinds of writings. From his French readings he came to share the view that India's past is glorious, having produced the foundations of European philosophy, science, and wisdom, but that her progress had been interrupted, due to attachment to superstitions and idolatry, thus condemning her to dullness and passivity. This is what he writes in the introduction to one of his books, on the importance of history:

> Otherwise [history], instead of yielding the expected benefit to future generations, can lead them into confusion and damage them, by instilling in them fear and weakness, so that they are stilted in a deadly immobility, awaiting all good and bad to be bestowed on them by fate [. . .]. The clearest example of this is with the multitudinous people of Hindustan, who, despite being the oldest people in the world and having been the first to develop sciences and arts and educating in them almost the whole world, and in spite of the fact that learned Europeans continue to this day to draw from their source, have

28 Traykov 1997: 43.

> remained stuck in their old fables and prejudices, explaining everything happening in the world, good or bad, with their gods and invisible imaginary spirits and have thus persisted in this state, losing their virility and courage and falling under the domination of one evil conqueror after the other.[29]

Rakovski's most "serious" (and often quoted even today) work dealing with India, *Bulgarska starina* (Bulgarian Lore), was published in 1865, shortly before his death. It was supposed to be part of a series, a scientific magazine on Bulgarian history, language, and ethnography, which never went beyond the first volume. It was conceived as the scholarly foundation of what had been Rakovski's lifelong mission: to awaken the national consciousness of his fellow countrymen, while simultaneously bringing Bulgarian culture into the field of vision of the European learned community, where it had been given, according to him, undeservedly little attention. Frustrated by this lack of visibility Rakovski set for himself a formidable goal: to prove that the Bulgarians were the first people to settle in Europe from Hindustan—the cradle of human civilisation—and, in addition, are the most legitimate and authentic heirs of the prestigious ancient tradition based on Sanskrit.

Throughout the more than 200 pages-long treaty Rakovski quotes extensively from European (mostly French, or in French translation) scholarly literature on ancient Indian philosophy and the Sanskrit language, using works of uneven merit but obviously popular and available in print at the time (Victor Cousin, Eugène Burnouf, Guillaume Pauthier, and Friedrich Max Muller, among others). From considerations on the antiquity and sophistication of Indian philosophy, as well as from works of comparative linguistics, where the connection between Sanskrit and most European languages had already been firmly established, he draws a radical conclusion: not only did European languages come from India, but humanity itself, born in Asia, started to disseminate westward from the Himalayas where it had taken refuge from the biblical flood. This first migration wave was led by the forefathers of contemporary Bulgarians, who populated the Middle East and Europe as far as the Atlantic Ocean:

> We will prove irrefutably that we are the first and oldest inhabitants of Europe and the purest heirs of the Aryans, [. . .] and that they [the Bulgarians] were not Tatars, as the foreign historians wanted to present them, influenced as they were by the biased and ignorant Byzantines who followed their own goals and agendas.[30]

For this ambitious aim Rakovski establishes two sets of proofs: one based on etymology, the other on a collection of Bulgarian folk sayings, rituals, and songs,

29 Rakovski 1969: 139.
30 Rakovski 1865: 11.

which, in true Romantic fashion, he considers a more authentic source of history than written documents. History (and here he blames explicitly Herodotus and Thucydides) has integrated fables and inventions, mostly coming from the priesthood, in order to keep the masses in ignorant darkness and to live on other peoples' toil and sweat[31]—an idea with Voltairean resonances, though Voltaire himself never appears among Rakovski's references.

In clearing the path for re-establishing the Bulgarians in the European historical narrative Rakovski has some accounts to settle first. One could imagine, given his lifelong political struggle against the Ottoman empire, that Islam and the Turkish dominance would bear, at least in part, the blame for the unfair oblivion. But in fact Rakovski's sharpest arrows are directed towards the Greeks and the undeserved, according to him, prestige of their classical antiquity, as language and texts. The critiques form several layers. First come several references to Hellenistic myths, suggesting that Greek philosophers owe more to India than they have admitted in their writings. Quoting Pauthier, who himself referred to a "curious tradition from Dabistan", Rakovski relates that Alexander the Great had sent from India to Macedonia, "among other curiosities", a logical system, on which Aristotle based his method.[32] Rakovski voices the kind of Hellenistic legends, according to which Democritus, Plato, Pythagoras, and others travelled to India[33] at a time in late antiquity when the prestige of "Indian wisdom" was well established. In Rakovski's version, though, that makes the Greeks plagiarists, the unsophisticated students of a brilliant tradition they later appropriated. The second point is the moral decadence of Greek gods and goddesses, who are nothing more than a bunch of drunkards, whores, and sodomites.[34] Their character testifies on the level of morality of the ancient Greeks themselves. The third argument comes out as a linguistic one, formulated in chapter four, "The Advantage of Bulgarian Language over the Old Slavic or the True Vocabulary of Hellenic Language". This is one of the longest chapters, where through long lists of words Rakovski attempts to establish that the "Hellenic" language is of mixed origin, that its words are mostly borrowed, but, first and foremost, that its connections with Sanskrit are far looser and more indirect than those of Bulgarian. In the conclusion of the book, describing the hypothetical itinerary of the first migration of humanity from Asia to Europe, this is the place he attributes to the Greeks:

> The minuscule *Hellenic* or *Greek* tribe also came out of their primitive dwellings in Hindustan, together with the *great clan* of the Bulgarian-Slovenians, but they were walking separately and apart from the Bulgaro-Slove-

31 Rakovski 1865: 17.
32 Rakovski 1865: 7.
33 Halbfass 1990: 16–17.
34 Rakovski 1865: 24.

> nians, through the forests, never mixing with them. The very name *Hellen* or *Greek* was attributed to them by the Bulgaro-Slovenians.[35]

Just like the British for Méry, the Greeks work for Rakovski as the bad Other, the anti-Bulgarians. Curiously, when it comes to consolidating national identity, Rakovski has no bone to pick with the Turkish language, culture, or identity. Even if he must have known that a minority of Bulgarian Muslims existed, in his mind the border between Turkish and Bulgarian did not need to be defended. On the other hand, Greece, who had recently gained its independence from Turkish rule, was exerting a fatal attraction to the nascent Bulgarian bourgeoisie through the prestige of its schools, its culture, and, in particular, through Christian Orthodoxy, as the Bulgarian clergy was subordinated to the Patriarchate in Istanbul, administered by Greeks. Rakovski states his animosity very directly:

> Hellenism with its "grand" ideas has been the greatest persecutor and destroyer of Bulgarianism, because the small Greek people has always tried to multiply at the expense of the Bulgarian one, with the goal to absorb it.[36]

The resentment leads Rakovski to avoid the very terms *istoriya* (history) and *filosofiya* (philosophy), compromised in his eyes by their Greek origin, and to replace them with *povestnost* and *lybomudrie*, two terms forged not only on Slavic lexical components but also, according to Rakovski, closer to Sanskrit and hence more "authentic".[37]

India, as the good Other, provides Rakovski with tools to fight for the soul of his nation, by belittling the Greek contributions to world history, relentlessly emphasising the antiquity and richness of his own language and culture and criticising in the process Western scholarship for failing to acknowledge the facts. The bulk of the text is a meticulous enumeration of concordances between Bulgarian customs, ritual formulas, folkloric songs, and their perceived Indian equivalents. From a scholarly perspective, these are at best speculative, often completely fantastical, based on shallow similitudes and homonymies, as well as a superficial understanding of Sanskrit concepts and realities. For instance, the use of decorated dogwood sticks (*survachka*), which children use in a sort of traditional New Year benediction, still practised today, are associated by Rakovski with the cult to the *lingam*, the phallic form of Shiva.[38] Rakovski is at his is most creative, though,

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35 Rakovski, 1865: 206. The emphasis in italics is in the original text.
36 Rakovski, 1865: 26–27.
37 The reception of Rakovski's lexical innovations was facilitated by the fact that the Bulgarian language was not completely standardised yet. For that reason, his prose is much more difficult, to a modern reader, than that of Méry.
38 Rakovski 1865: 36.

when it comes to etymologies—he seems to be able to find a Bulgarian root, or interpretation, for every name, across an array of languages, and to further demonstrate how these relate to Sanskrit. The very name of Sanskrit is attributed a Slavic origin—from the roots *sam-* (the most) and *skrit* (hidden).[39] The crucial term *Aryan*, through a complex logico-semantical chain, is discovered to be the equivalent of *Bulgarian*.[40] Since the first migration throughout Europe reached the Atlantic, the druidic religion also has Bulgarian roots and references to it can be found in folkloric songs. The ethnonym *Frank* is also, predictably, of Bulgarian origin, and so are all the names of the Merovingian kings. The rivers Rhine and Rhône are related to a Slavic root associated with the act of flowing. The Belgian tribes of yore are self-evidently Bulgarian. And so on.

Rakovski intended to be taken seriously—and he was. Unlike Méry he was not forgotten—a celebrated hero of the National Revival period, a town in southern Bulgaria was named after him, and so were many streets, schools, and institutions, including the Bulgarian Military Academy. His connection with India is also acknowledged in the public space—he is regularly pronounced "the first Bulgarian Indologist". The Georgi Stoikov Rakovski Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, a government school in Defence Colony, Delhi, also carries his name. His 200th birthday was celebrated with conferences, book releases, and exhibitions. Present-day Bulgarian nationalists have not forgotten him either and cite with gusto on social media his grand theories about the Bulgarians.

Because of Rakovski's stature and popularity, India also came to gain a stronger presence in the Bulgarian imagination, as a wonderland of gods and wise men but also as a faraway place with which Bulgaria is mysteriously, spiritually, connected. That idea too has persisted and survived in the public space today, even if the ancient Aryans are no longer perceived to be Bulgarians.

Conclusion: On the tangibility of shared imaginings

All things considered, Rakovski's *Bulgarian Lore* is no less the product of nationalist daydreaming than Méry's *History of What Never Happened*. One text presents itself from its very title as more than fiction, an openly distorted version of history; the other wants to be anything but fiction, an emanation of pure science. One is content with massaging pleasingly a hurting national pride, the other is engaged with the serious and demanding task of building that pride. The first dreams of an ideal colonisation, the second upholds dreams of independence from not one but two colonisers, one holding the land, the other, the soul. Strangely, they meet

39 Rakovski 1865: 61.
40 Rakovski 1865: 97–98.

in India, or rather on India. Ginzburg says that "between testimonies, both narrative and non-narrative, and the reality to which they bear witness there exists a relationship that needs to be analysed from time to time".[41] In spite of the apparent differences, already depicted and analysed above, the reality of Méry's and Rakovski's India is fairly consistent: a conveniently flexible Other, to be looked at for a pleasing reflection of the national self; a soft clay which yields to asperities and fills cavities, giving the appearance of a perfectly adjusted complement, allowing humanity to finally live to its fullest potential through the union of the Orient and the Occident; a stepping stone, ancient, prestigious, and welcoming, upon which a nascent nation can ground its honour and reclaim its pride; a mysterious and distant land, about which just enough is known to stimulate without obstructing the workings of imagination. The reality of this India is not diminished by the fact that it is imagined. After all, as Yuval Harari[42] has convincingly argued, some figments of our imaginations can be very real, as long as they are shared. Both Méry and Rakovski addressed a large and popular audience; both have drawn from as well as contributed to establish common perceptions about India in their time. Sometimes those perceptions got embedded in or gave support to emerging systems of references and conceptual frameworks; they evolved in the shared imagination of Europeans in a manner at least partially disconnected from "the reality to which they bear witness" – the geographical, cultural, historical India. In that respect, perhaps, the idea of India is not so different from the idea of nation.

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Ekaterina Velmezova

The "Ancient Indian Language" in the 1950 Linguistic Discussion in the USSR: The Significance of a "Missed Encounter"

Abstract. During the linguistic discussion officially organised in the USSR in 1950, Nikolaj Jakovlevič Marr's "New Theory of Language", which had dominated Soviet linguistics since the end of the 1920s, was overthrown. This made possible a return to the "paradigm" of historical and comparative linguistics. However, despite all the importance of "ancient Indian" linguistic material for the formation of historical and comparative linguistics, in the very discussion of 1950 the "ancient Indian language", contrary to all expectations, is scarcely mentioned. Among the possible explanations for this, this chapter highlights both the course of the development of historical and comparative linguistics and the political and ideological nature of the 1950 Soviet linguistic discussion.

Keywords. "Ancient Indian language", historical and comparative linguistics, "New Theory of Language", linguistic discussion of 1950 in the USSR, linguistics and ideology

In 1950 in the Soviet Union a discussion on linguistics was organised and carried out in the pages of *Pravda*, the central Soviet communist newspaper. The written dialogue that took place would radically change the face of the Soviet humanities.[1] During the discussion, the "New Theory of Language" developed by Nikolaj Jakovlevič Marr (1864/65–1934) was overthrown by Stalin, who appeared at the time to intervene in the discussion as a participant but who had in fact organised and initiated it.[2] Dominant in the USSR since the end of the 1920s, the "New

1 In 2020, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of this discussion, Lausanne Slavists published a collection of articles in which scholars from different countries analyse the historical context of the 1950 discussion, its ideological grounds, and its implications and significance for Soviet linguistics (Vel'mezova 2020b).

2 As the contemporary historian Boris Semenovič Ilizarov established upon carrying out research on Stalin's archives, contrary to popular belief Stalin himself authored his contributing article on linguistics with the help of consultations with a number of Soviet linguists (Ilizarov 2012: 254, 259).

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Theory of Language" was elaborated over the course of 1923 and 1924. This hegemonic theory replaced, in the Soviet context, the so-called "traditional", historical and comparative linguistics with its classical postulate about the existence of language families and ancestor languages, from which, through divergence, modern languages were supposedly formed. Marr, on the contrary, turned the classical scheme of historical and comparative linguistics "upside down", declaring that families of languages, in the sense in which they were understood by linguists of the nineteenth century, did not exist. Human languages, according to Marr, developed not by divergence but by convergence. What were "traditionally" considered to be linguistic families were, Marr argued, the results of linguistic hybridisation. This hypothesis was "supported" by Marr's thesis that the corresponding languages belonged to peoples situated at the same level (or stage) of socio-economic development, an element of the idea on "the unity of the glottogonic process"; that is, the unity of the development of all languages.[3] The concept of a linguistic family was thus replaced by the concept of the stage of language development.

During the period in which the "New Theory of Language", or Marrism, remained dominant in the Soviet Union (after the death of Marr in 1934, the dominance of this theory continued until 1950), historical and comparative linguistics suffered a great deal. Not only were Marr's supporters the first to obtain leading academic posts, but adherence to traditional historical and comparative studies could cost scientists not only their career—including the ability to lecture and publish their works—but also their lives.[4] The overthrow of Marrism by Stalin

3 In his various works, Marr would emphasise in this regard either linguistic hybridisation or the same level of socio-economic development of peoples as the basis of linguistic convergence. Over time, the latter factor (the same level of socio-economic development) began to occupy an increasingly dominant place in his works. Among other central theses of Marrism, his insistence on the importance of studying the origin of language and the need to work on linguistic semantics is worth mentioning here. On the whole, Soviet Marrism was often opposed to "traditional" or "bourgeois" Western science. Even having conceded its dominant position in linguistics to other currents (first "dissidents of Indo-Europeanism", then structuralism with its interest in synchrony, etc.) at the beginning and in the first half of the twentieth century, historical and comparative linguistics still continued to occupy a significant place in the language sciences. Semantics, so beloved by Marr, was indeed one of the weakest points of "Western" linguistics at the beginning of the last century. As for the studies of linguistic "prehistory", another central point of the "New Theory of Language", they were "banned" by the Linguistic Society of Paris immediately following the formation of the society in 1866. All of this allowed Marr to oppose his theories to "bourgeois linguistics" and, from the point of view of the ideological conjuncture of opposition between the USSR and the "West", between socialism and capitalism, contributed to the establishment of the dominance of Marr's theories in the USSR at the end of the 1920s. From monographic studies and collections of articles published in recent decades on Marr and Marrism see e.g. Alpatov 1991; Sériot 2005; Velmezova 2007).

4 One of the best-known tragic examples today is the life and fate of Evgenij Dmitrievič Polivanov (1891–1938), who in 1929 dared to openly oppose the "New Theory of Lan-

in 1950 resulted primarily in the rehabilitation of traditional comparative studies in the USSR. While not a linguist by training, Stalin nevertheless managed to understand that the method of historical and comparative linguistics was more “scientific” (again, in keeping with a “traditional” scientific linguistic paradigm) than Marr’s theories.

Historically, historical and comparative linguistics was based on the “discovery”, for European linguists, of Sanskrit by Sir William Jones (1746–1794) in 1786. It allowed linguists to conclude that ancient Indian, Greek, and Latin had developed from one common source, and to begin to trace the evolution of individual languages within the Indo-European family. Considering the importance of ancient Indian linguistic materials in the very first works on historical and comparative linguistics, and taking into account the fact that the 1950 discussion in the USSR was aimed at overthrowing Marr’s theories contradicting historical and comparative studies, it would be logical to expect that an important place would be assigned to the ancient Indian language in the 1950 linguistic discussion as well. As our analysis of the texts composing the discussion reveals below, however, this was not necessarily the case, and we are going to indicate several possible reasons of this situation.

The 1950 discussion was opened on 9 May with a polemical article by Arnol’d Stepanovič Čikobava (1898–1985). De facto the discussion ended with the publication of Stalin’s article on 20 June (publications continued after that, but nevertheless it was Stalin’s article that in fact ended the debate). A total of fourteen articles were published within the framework of this discussion in *Pravda* from 9 May to 20 June 1950.[5]

The “ancient Indian language”[6] is clearly mentioned only a few times in the entirety of the discussion; the relevant contexts are quoted below.

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guage”. The deliberate persecution of the scientist, which began as a consequence of his having crossed Marrism, eventually resulted in his being exiled from Moscow to Central Asia and being cut off from any possibility of working and publishing normally. In 1937 Polivanov was accused of spying for Japan and, in 1938, he was shot dead. His name was subsequently rehabilitated.

5 Within the limits of the discussion, articles were published every Tuesday from 9 May to 20 June 1950. As a rule, they could not be limited to completely unambiguous judgments: the Marrists also recognised the shortcomings of the “New Theory of Language”, and their opponents, meanwhile, did not always agree with each other on all points, while other participants tried to take a so-called “neutral” position, attempting to bridge the Marrists and their opponents. For a complete list of the articles published in *Pravda* between 9 May and 20 June 1950, see Vel’mezova 2020a: 8–9. The titles of the contributions published in *Pravda* in May and June 1950 did not contain any direct references to the problems of historical and comparative linguistics: they exclusively address Marr’s theories and the general situation of Soviet linguistics.

6 The participants of the discussion manifestly preferred the designation “ancient Indian language” to “Sanskrit”, for instance. We will keep this fact in mind by enclosing this designation in scare quotation marks.

Already in the article that opened the discussion and that was authored by a specialist in historical and comparative linguistics, Čikobava (who, therefore, was obviously also a critic of Marr), the "ancient Indian language" is mentioned in connection with the stages in language development identified by Marr:

> How many language stages are there in the languages? It is not known exactly. In one of his later works academician N.Ja. Marr roughly distributes languages according to the periods of their appearance in the form of the following scheme:
>
> I. Languages of the primary period system
> 1. Chinese
> 2. living Middle and Far African languages
>
> II. Secondary period system languages
> 1. Finno-Ugric
> 2. Turkish
> 3. Mongolian
>
> III. Tertiary period system languages
> 1. Survivors of Japhetic languages
> 2. Hamitic languages (near and far African)
>
> IV. Quaternary period system languages
> 1. Semitic languages
> 2. Prometheid languages, or the so-called Indo-European languages (Indian, Greek, and Latin).[7]

It should be emphasised here that, even overturning the Indo-European studies and replacing the concept of the language family with the concept of the stage of language development, Marr—like the first Indo-Europeanists in their time—mentioned "Indian, Greek, and Latin" in the same breath. However, the "meaning" that this series was endowed with was of course different—in comparison with the works of representatives of historical and comparative linguistics; here (initial) ontology was replaced by (secondary) convergence.

A little later in the same article, Čikobava himself resorts to an example from the "ancient Indian language". He does so, however, not in reference to the "stadial" classification of languages developed by Marr but rather the "traditional" genealogical classification. He thus compares the names of the number "three" in Russian, Latin, and "ancient Indian":[8]

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7 Čikobava 1950: 4. Here and below translations are by the author.

8 It is a well-known fact that the names of numerals from one to ten were a favourite material for comparison already in the works of early comparative linguists.

> Unlike the stadial classification of academician N.Ja. Marr, a genealogical classification developed on the basis of the historical and comparative analysis understood in a Marxist way, groups languages by origin, by genealogical principle, assuming different source sound material for different language groups [after which are quoted the examples, given in Cyrillic, from Russian, Latin, and Sanskrit, correspondingly: *tri*, *tres*, *trajas*]. Russian, Latin, ancient Indian, in this case, have a common source material, a common root.[9]

Čikobava further cites the name of the number “three” in Georgian and Turkish, saying that they cannot be directly compared to one another: “They cannot be compared: Georgian is not related either to Indo-European languages or to Turkish.”[10] An example from “ancient Indian” in this case turns out to be necessary to Čikobava’s criticism of Marr’s thesis regarding the possibility of comparing all languages with all languages, regardless of whether they constitute one family or a genetic group or not. He writes that

> academician N.Ja. Marr speaks of the kinship of languages by convergence: but convergence cannot explain the presence of common roots in Latin, Russian, and ancient Indian. On the other hand, the convergence of Basque with ancient Latin and with new Romance languages for at least two thousand years did not make Basque related to Spanish or French.[11]

From a scientific point of view, the historical and comparative method in linguistics at the time did not need additional justifications and proofs of its very right to exist. However, Čikobava understood very well that in the Soviet Union the scientific situation in the humanities depended on ideology. Thus, to prove his final correctness as an adamant supporter of the historical and comparative method, he—again, referring to the “ancient Indian language”—appealed to the authority of Friedrich Engels: “Historical and comparative analysis is applied by Engels in his works; for example, in the work ‘The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State’, where he compares the words denoting ‘kin’ in related languages: Latin, Greek, ancient Indian, Gothic, etc.”[12]

Another ardent opponent of Marrism, Boris Alexandrovič Serebrennikov (1915–1989), cited an example from the “ancient Indian language” to criticise Marr’s method of comparing words of different languages (and sometimes of the

9 Čikobava 1950: 4.

10 Čikobava 1950: 4.

11 Čikobava 1950: 4.

12 Čikobava 1950: 5. We shall leave aside here the complex problem of Engels’ attitude to historical and comparative linguistics, only noting that, during the Soviet epoch, the question of “Engels and linguistics” in general was of great interest to Soviet linguists (see e.g. Jarceva 1972).

same language) with each other on the basis of their formal similarity,[13] based on the material of modern languages and neglecting the historical development of words:

> What this neglect of the history of the word leads to can be seen in the following examples. In the article “Language” N.Ja. Marr finds a common element *bor* in the Russian word *bor* [‘forest’] and in the Latin *arbor*—tree. But N.Ja. Marr, unsubstantiatedly considering the established history of words as a continuous fiction of Indo-Europeanists, obviously did not consider that the Latin *arbor* once sounded like *arbos*, which is clearly evidenced by the character of the stem on *s*, which, under the influence of the rhotacism of the intervocal *s* in indirect cases, received in the nominative case the ending *r*. Hence, there is already an element of *bos*, and not *bor*, here. The established exact sound correspondences make it possible to associate *arbor* with the stem of the ancient Indian verb *ardxami*[14] with the meaning *to grow*, *to prosper*, based on the correspondence *dx – b* (cf. Latin *verbum – word*, Lithuanian *vardas – name* or German *Wort – word*). Thus, the compared element *bor* receives the more ancient form of *dhos*.[15]

Oddly enough, despite the importance of arguments in favour of a return to historical and comparative linguistics, there are no other evident examples from the “ancient Indian language” mentioned in the linguistic discussion of 1950. In the texts of its participants, there is mention of the “Indian languages”,[16] the “Indo-European languages” (very often),[17] and “Indo-European studies”[18] (“Indo-Euro-

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13 This formal similarity was associated with semantics of the corresponding words, for which Marr insisted on the importance of particular “semantic laws” (see Velmezova 2007).
14 Like Čikobava, Serebrennikov gave examples in Cyrillic.—*E.V.*
15 Serebrennikov 1950: 3.
16 It was the question, in particular, of their relationship with the Slavic, Baltic, Germanic, Romance, Iranian, “and some other linguistic groups that make up the Indo-European system (in the outdated terminology, ‘family’) of languages” (Filin 1950): according to Fedot Petrovič Filin (1908–1982), Marr never denied the proximity of these languages to each other, explaining it, however, differently than specialists in historical and comparative linguistics.
17 For example, in the articles by Čikobava (Čikobava 1950), Ivan Ivanovič Meščaninov (1883–1967) (Meščaninov 1950), Garma Dancaranovič Sanžeev (1902–1982) (Sanžeev 1950), Filin (Filin 1950), Viktor Vladimirovič Vinogradov (1894/95–1969) (Vinogradov 1950), Leonid Arsen’evič Bulaxovskij (1888–1961) (Bulaxovskij 1950), and Pavel Jakovlevič Černyx (1896–1970) (Černyx 1950). The texts also mention (again, in connection with the theories of Marr, who was interested in linguistic prehistory) the “pre-Indo-European” (*doindoevropejskie*) languages (Čikobava 1950), languages of the “pre-Indo-European stage” (*doindoevropejskaja stadija*) (Vinogradov 1950), the “proto-Indo-European” (*praindoevropejskij*) language (Vinogradov 1950), the “proto-Indo-Europeans” (*praindoevropejcy*) (Filin 1950), etc.
18 See, for instance, Čikobava 1950; Čemodanov 1950 (cf. in his article the expression “Indo-European swagger”); Serebrennikov 1950.

pean linguistics”, “Indo-European scholars”, etc.), but as to concrete mentions concerning the “ancient Indian language”, we evidently find them only in the articles of two participants: Čikobava and Serebrennikov.[19]

It is interesting to note the following in this regard: both participants of the discussion who mentioned the examples from the “ancient Indian language”, Čikobava and Serebrennikov, cited them in connection with Marr’s theories (for example, speaking about the place of the “Indian language” in the Marrist stadial classification), and in connection with attempts to refute the “New Theory of Language”. However, at the same time, both scholars who mentioned the “ancient Indian language” were themselves evident opponents of Marr’s theories and supporters of the historical and comparative method in linguistics, which explains their mastery of the corresponding linguistic material: among other things, with a few exceptions, Marr’s opponents had received much better education—including in linguistics—than Marr’s adherents, as the examples from the “ancient Indian language” mentioned in their texts also demonstrate.

Therefore, as we can see, the place of the “ancient Indian language” in the Soviet discussion on linguistics in 1950 turned out to be very modest: it was mentioned by only two of its fourteen participants. There can be several explanations for this. First, unlike the situation during the first half of the nineteenth century, when historical and comparative linguistics was just being formed as an academic current based to a considerable extent on the material of Sanskrit, at the beginning of the second half of the last century the situation in linguistics was different. In general, the historical and comparative direction in linguistics already had a solid reputation, and the very reliance on Sanskrit as a “proof” of the existence of kinship between Indo-European languages was no longer necessary: it was clearly recognised by all adherents of the historical and comparative linguistic “paradigm”, and it was therefore not necessary to refer to Sanskrit. However, there is another explanation for the fact that the participants of the 1950 discussion made such scant reference to the “ancient Indian language”: it is associated with the political and ideological, rather than the purely scientific, nature of this discussion.[20] Stalin’s goal as a politician could hardly consist in a purely scientific justification of the historical and comparative method in linguistics. On the contrary, the return to this method and the abandonment of Marr’s theories were by no means the results of his academic goals. One goal pursued through the 1950 discussion was the political and ideological rallying of the “fraternal Slavic peoples” (and, as a conse-

19 Interestingly, in Stalin’s own article (Stalin 1950), the “ancient Indian language” is not mentioned either, and nor are Indo-European studies and Indo-European languages.

20 The reference to Sanskrit is known to have been instrumentalised in the context of Nazi Germany; a future study could be devoted to the comparison of mechanisms of this instrumentalisation with the Soviet linguistic context.

quence, the strengthening of the "socialist camp", which was then based precisely on the "Slavic countries"), for which the thesis about their ontological relationship (directly connected with the genetic relationship of the Slavic languages) turned out to be politically very useful. This is why, for example, Slavic languages were mentioned with great frequency in the discussion.[21] As for the "ancient Indian language", it remained at the periphery of such a politically directed "linguistic discussion"—even if at the same time it finally returned Soviet linguistics to the historical and comparative linguistic "paradigm", which had once been based to a great deal on the analysis of Sanskrit linguistic material.

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21 Particular attention can be paid to the "Slavic discourse" in Stalin's article in comparison with Marr's works (see Velmezova 2009; Vel'mezova 2014: 292–306), especially in the absence of any mention of the facts of the "ancient Indian language" by Stalin. Already this fact implicitly indicates the ideological priorities of Stalin, who was a politician and an ideologist and by no means a scientist or linguist, and who initiated the discussion.

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PART IV

HINDI AND TRANSLATION

Hiroko Nagasaki

Encounter with the Hagiographies of the Poet-Saint Tulsīdās

Abstract. This chapter investigates how Tulsīdās, a poet-saint devoted to Rāma living in sixteenth-century North India, was portrayed in the hagiographies of different periods and how his image changed over time. Nābhādās, an author of one of the early hagiographies, the *Bhaktamāl*, described him as an incarnation of Vālmīki and a sincere devotee of Rāma. Priyādās provides further details in his commentary on the *Bhaktamāl*. Several legends that circulate today about Tulsīdās are based on Priyādās's commentary. However, the provenance of the other legends is unclear. The *Mūl Gosāī Carit*, composed of a surprisingly large number of episodes, might be one of the sources of those legends. The author of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*, Beṇī Mādhav Dās (Bhavānīdās), claimed to be a direct disciple of Tulsīdās, and the alleged year of the composition of this work is 1687 in Vikram Saṁvat (1630 CE), only seven years after Tulsīdās's death. The life of Tulsīdās as told in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* abounds in miraculous events; Tulsīdās was a great traveller, could appease ghosts, could bring back the dead, and lived to be 126 years old. The respect for the underprivileged, especially women and people of the lower castes, that is found in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* sounds more modern than the date of composition would imply. One of the reasons behind this might be to avert criticism regarding the controversial line in the *Rāmacaritamānas* in which Tulsīdās is said to have discriminated against women and *śūdra*s. To counteract criticism of this line, the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* might have had Tulsīdās save more women and lower-caste peoples with his miracles than is depicted in the *Bhaktirasabodhinī*.

Keywords. Tulsidas, Hagiography, Mul Gosai Carit, Ramacaritamanas, Beni Madhav Das, Hindu Pilgrimage sites

Introduction

Tulsīdās (Tulasīdās) was a poet-saint devoted to Rāma in the sixteenth century in North India. In his work *Rāmacaritamānas* (The Lake of the Deeds of Rāma), Tulsīdās presents an adaptation of the epic Rāmayaṇa in Old Avadhī, an eastern dialect of Hindi. His work is the most influential text in the devotional literature of the Hindi language. For this, Tulsīdās is often compared to Vālmīki, the author of the Rāmayaṇa. The twelve works attributed to Tulsīdās, including the *Rāmacarita-*

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mānas, have drawn the attention of scholars of Hindi. During the colonial period, George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941), an Irish administrator in the Indian Civil Service, and Frederic Salmon Growse (1836–1893), a British civil servant, were quick to take note of Tulsīdās. Admiringly calling Tulsīdās "the greatest of Indian authors of modern times",[1] Grierson searched for Tulsīdās's manuscripts. Growse translated the *Rāmacaritamānas* into English. European scholars have sought to acquire an intimate knowledge of Hindi and bhakti by studying Tulsīdās's works. The treatises on both the *Rāmacaritamānas* and Tulsīdās himself by European pioneers introduced the *Rāmacaritamānas* to the Western world, and Indian scholars in the twentieth century were influenced by these works as well. These included Rāmcandra Śukla, Mātāprasād Gupta, and Viśvanāthprasād Miśra, who all published critical editions of the *Rāmacaritamānas*.[2]

Although Tulsīdās did not write much about himself, numerous legends have been handed down about him. During the colonial period, Western scholars found it difficult to access this information, as sources for his biography were limited. Frederic Growse tried to portray Tulsīdās's life using two early biographies: the *Bhaktamāl* (A Garland of Devotees) by Nābhādās (sixteenth century or early in the seventeenth century), possibly the oldest source for Tulsīdās's biography, and Priyādās's commentary, the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* (Awakening the Delight in Devotion, published 1712). While the reference to Tulsīdās in the *Bhaktamāl* was limited to only one hexastich, Priyādās added more to it in his commentary. Several legends that circulate today about Tulsīdās are based on Priyādās's commentary, but the provenance of the other stories or legends is unclear. One potential key to this question can be found in the recently discovered hagiography of Tulsīdās, the *Mūl Gosāī (Gosāīṁ) Carit* (The Essential of Deeds of Saint). Composed of a surprisingly large number of episodes, this work might be among the sources for those legends. The life of Tulsīdās as told in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* abounds in miraculous events; Tulsīdās can appease ghosts and can even bring the dead back to life. Rather than disregard these tales as spurious, we can take them as potential sources for Tulsīdās's legend because they have contributed to shaping the popular conception of him, especially in the devotional milieu. In this chapter, a comparison of Tulsīdās depicted in these three biographical texts (sec. 1) will reveal the stepwise development of his sanctification, mainly focusing on his travels (sec. 2), various incidents or events that are identified with a year (sec. 3), and Tulsīdās's contradicting attitudes in which the values of the author of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* are reflected (sec. 4).

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1 Grierson 1893: 89.

2 Śukla VS 2030–2031, Vol. 1, Gupta 1949, Vol. 1, and Miśra 1962. As for the contribution of Western scholarship on the study of the *Rāmacaritamānas*, see Lutgendorf 1991: 229–233.

1 Three Hindi hagiographies referring to Tulsīdās

Before analysing the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*, two hagiographies, the *Bhaktamāl* and the *Bhaktirasabodhinī*, traditionally regarded as authoritative sources, will be briefly reviewed. Nābhādās composed the *Bhaktamāl* in around 1600. In this work, not only poets of his era but also legendary saints and gods are praised in *chappayas* hexastiches. Regardless of the brevity of the reference, the description of Tulsīdās is considered to be reliable, since Nābhādās was a contemporary of Tulsīdās. The following is Growse's translation of the text.[3]

1 For the redeeming of mankind in this perverse Kali Yuga, Vālmīki has been born again as Tulasī.

2 The verses of the *Rāmāyaṇa* composed in the Tretā Yuga are a hundred crores in number;

3 but a single letter has redeeming power, and would work the salvation of one who had even committed the murder of a Brāhmaṇa.

4 Now again, as a boon of blessing to the faithful, has he taken birth and published the sportive actions of the god.

5 Intoxicated with his passion for Rāma's feet, he perseveres day and night in the accomplishment of his vow,

6 and has supplied, as it were, a boat for the easy passage of the boundless ocean of existence.[4]

Here, Nābhādās depicted that Tulsīdās, who is the incarnation of Vālmīki, sought devotion to Rāma, and propagated Rāma's sportive action as a salvation for devotees in his era.

After nearly a century, Priyādās, who belonged to the Rāmānandī sampradāy, composed the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* (1712),[5] in which new stories about Tulsīdās are told. This work is called a commentary to the *Bhaktamāl*, but it is far from what we would expect from the word "commentary": Priyādās gives eight new stories that did not appear in the *Bhaktamāl*, namely: (1) Tulsīdās's renunciation, following the counsel of his wife, (2) the encounter with Rāma with the aid of Hanumān in Citrakūṭ, (3) the rescue of a murderer who was a brahmin, (4) the elimination of thieves from his house by the guardian Rāma in Kāśī, (5) reviving a dead man and rescuing the dead man's wife from *satī*, (6) the arrest by the king of Delhi and his

3 Pollet 1974 referred to Tulsīdās as he is described by Nābhādās and gave his own English translation.
4 Growse 1883: iv–v. Although this verse is formulated in a sestina, the first line is repeated and usually written in the editions.
5 See Gupta 1969.

rescue by Hanumān, (7) meeting Nābhādās in Bṛndāvan, and (8) the transformation of an image of Kṛṣṇa into Rāma in Bṛndāvan.[6] Here, new characters, such as Tulsīdās's wife, thieves, a brahmin, and an embodiment of Rāma and Hanumān appear, and specific events are narrated in detail. It might be Priyādās's fictional creation, but it is also possible that he collected the stories from oral tradition.[7] In any case, nearly one hundred years elapsed between Nābhādās and Priyādās, which turned Tulsīdās from a seeker of bhakti to a wonder-working saint who could even revive the dead. It is interesting that neither author mentions the title "the *Rāmacaritamānas*", Tulsīdās's best-known work.

The third biographical text investigated here is the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* composed by Beṇī Mādhav Dās (Bhavānīdās). Beṇī Mādhav Dās, a name unknown except for this work, claimed himself a disciple of Tulsīdās, and according to the final couplets of that text, the date of composition was the ninth day of the white half of the month of Kārtik, 1687 ("soraha sai sattāsi sita navamīkātika māsa"), only seven years after the death of Tulsīdās (Vikram Saṁvat [henceforth VS]. 1680 = 1623 CE).[8] This would make the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* almost as old as the *Bhaktamāl* by Nābhādās. For this reason, the discovery of this manuscript was important news in the twentieth century. The text was published by Gita Press in Gorakhpur, but the manuscript disappeared before it could be examined.[9] There is no way to know what the printed text was based on or if there even was a manuscript to begin with. In particular, the year of creation remains uncertain. Previous studies point out that the text shows more modern traits than a dating of VS 1687 would suggest. Based on those traits, Lutgendorf argues that the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* could even be a nineteenth-century composition. The work has some questionable points, but the intention here is not to examine its authenticity but to identify what episodes were added. In particular, I hope to show how Tulsīdās became a virtuous saint who grants people's wishes in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*.[10]

6 For the original text and an English translation, see Growse 1883: iv–x. The seventh and eighth episodes are a chain of events, so it can be considered that seven stories are described.

7 Lutgendorf 1994: 81–82 points out that the participation of professional Rāmāyaṇī and Vyāses, story tellers of the *Rāmacaritamānas*, was added to Tulsīdās's biography during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

8 *MGC*, *dohā* 119.

9 According to Lutgendorf 1994: 69, Gita Press published the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* in 1934, 1937, and 1938 (*Mānasāṅkh*). I am grateful to Gita Press for giving me a xerox copy of the book which it keeps in its library at Gorakhpur. The date of publication was not mentioned in this copy, but it might be 1934 or 1937. For the discovery and loss of the manuscript, see Lutgendorf 1994: 66–73.

10 For sources of Tulsīdās's life, in addition to the three texts presented in this paper, the *Gautam Candrikā* (1624) by Kṛṣṇadatt Miśra, the *Ratnāvalī Caritr* (n.d.) by Muralīdhar Caturvedī, and the *Śrītulsīprakāś* (n.d.) by Avināśrāy Brahmabhaṭṭ are all included in

Beṇī Mādhav Dās allegedly composed two hagiographies of Tulsīdās, the *Gosāī (Gosāīṁ) Carit* (The Deeds of Saint) and the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*. He himself states at the beginning of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* that "for the sake of everyday recitation, concise [text] will be good" (ati saṁchepa sohāya, kahauṁ suniya nita pāṭha hita), meaning that the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* is an abridged edition of another hagiography that he had previously composed.[11] Since the previous composition, which is claimed to be the *Gosāī Carit*, has not proved as popular as the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*,[12] the following discussions are based mainly on the later text.

The *Mūl Gosāī Carit* is composed of roughly seven hundred lines, in which a standard stanza is composed of nine *toṭakas* followed by one or several lines of *dohā* or *sorṭhā*. *Śloka*, *chanda* (meaning metre in general), and *savaiyā* are sometimes inserted. It is several times longer than Priyādās's *Bhaktirasabodhinī*, describing many episodes of Tulsīdās's life from birth to death, such as childhood; learning Sanskrit texts from his teacher; his wedding; his encounters with Rāma and other gods; his meetings with kings, sages, contemporary poets, and followers; and the composition of sacred books. In the narration of many episodes, Beṇī Mādhav Dās tries to attribute particular characteristics to Tulsīdās. Paying attention to travel, events marked by year, and conflicting attitudes that the other two biographies (the *Bhaktamāl* and *Bhaktirasabodhinī*) do not describe, I will illustrate in the following sections how Tulsīdās is portrayed as an unrivalled poet-saint in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*.

volume 3 of the *Tulsī-Granthāvalī* (eds. Caturvedī/Gupta 1973), although the editors naturally express doubt about their authenticity in the preface. Yet the *Gautam Candrikā* has been considered reliable and is quoted by many scholars, e.g. Allchin 1964: 32–45. Some episodes contained within it correspond with the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*, but there are not as many outlandish stories as in the latter text. Śyāmsundardās and Baḍathvāl's 1931 edition of Gosvāmī Tulsīdās (pp. 18–20, 211–217) refer to the *Tulsī Carit* composed by Raghubardās (17th century?), who was allegedly a disciple of Tulsīdās. Lutgendorf 1994: 70 discusses a manuscript of the same title composed by Beṇī Mādhav Dās, but they seem to be different works.

11 *MGC*, *sorṭhā* 1. In this paper, citations to the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* (*MGC*) are given by the number of the concluding *dohā* or *sorṭhā* in the stanza.

12 Kiśorīlāl Gupta published the *Gosāī Carit* in 1964 and claimed that *Tulsī Carit* is the *Gosāī Carit*. For the controversy over the authenticity of the *Gosāī Carit* / *Tulsī Carit*, see Lutgendorf 1994: 70–73.

2 Tulsīdās as a great traveller

Tulsīdās's life was a journey. He travelled to many places. The following is an outline of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*, which describes his life journey.

> Tulsīdās, who was born in Rājāpur as a son of a brahmin, was abandoned by his parents and brought up by the goddess Parvati. By the request of Shiva, Narharidās brought Tulsīdās to Avadh, the birthplace of Rāma, and initiated him. After staying in Sūkaraṣet for five years, they went to Kāśī, where Tulsīdās became a pupil of Śeṣ Sanātan. After fifteen years of studying four *vedas*, six *āgamas*, six *darśanas*, *itihāsa*, *purāṇa*, and poetry, Tulsīdās went back to his birthplace, Rājāpur. He was married but renounced the world, following the counsel of his wife. After visiting Prayāg, Raghuvīrapurī, and Purī, he began a pilgrimage to Rāmeśvar, Badrīnāth, Lake Mānasarovar, Lake Rūpā, the Nilgiri mountain, Mount Kailās, and the Bhavaban Forest. Then he met the god Rāma in Citrakūṭ and Yājñavalkya and Bharadvāja in Prayāg. He became immersed in the memories of his previous life as Vālmīki and composed *kabitt*s at Sītāmaṛhī. Having received an oracle from Shiva in Kāśī, he moved to Avadh (Ayodhyā), where he composed the *Rāmacaritamānas*. The popularity of the book angered pandits in Kāśī, and they harassed Tulsīdās, but the endorsement of Shiva resolved the problem. Tulsīdās composed the *Vinaya Patrikā*. He revived a dead husband for the latter's *satī* wife in Hansapur. After staying at the place of King Gambhīr near the Gaughāṭ for two years, he preached and saved people such as Manvarū at Kānt Brahmapuri [and] Dhanīdās at Belāpatār. At Bidehapuri, he met a girl who offered him *kheer* [milk rice pudding]. At Kāśī, he composed several books and cured Kāśī of the plague. In connection with his fame, the visit of Keśavdās and the debunking of Yogis and Agora ascetics were described. Upon the request of the brahmin Banaṣanḍi, he examined some holy spots around Ayodhyā.[13] In Malihābād, he gave his book to Braj Vallabh Batrāj. After stopping by Koṭrā village, Biṭūr, Saṇḍīlā, the Naimiṣ Forest, Khairābād, Miśrikh, and Rāmpur, he arrived at Bṛndāvan where he met Nābhādās, Nanddās (late sixteenth century), a brother disciple of Śeṣ Sanātan Swāmī, and Gopīnāth, a son of Hit Harivaṁś.[14] In Citrakūṭ, he performed several miracles and was put in prison by a king in Delhi. Through Mahāban and Audh he travelled to his final resting place at Kāśī, where he composed several works, met many saints and poets, and died at Assī Ghāṭ.

Most of the places where Tulsīdās visited are in modern Hindi-speaking areas. Once Tulsīdās went to Mount Kailās in the north, to Purī in the east, and Rāmeśvar in the south. This reminds the four holy abodes of the Hindu pilgrimage, although

13 Some holy spots around Ayodhyā where Tulsīdās visited are Gaināhī, Sūkharaket, Lakhanaipur, and the bank of Dhenumatī (Gomatī River?).

14 McGregor 1976: 522 mentions another source about the meeting of Nanddās and Tulsīdās in Braj.

Tulsīdās never visited Dvārkā.[15] He was not as active a traveller as Guru Nānak, the founder of Sikhism, who travelled as far as to Mecca, but there are similarities in the descriptions of the two figures, such as meeting people of different sects and sometimes defeating them in debate, which would have established Tulsīdās's authority. That Tulsīdās took milk pudding from a girl who was indicated to be Sītā might be adapted from the story wherein the Buddha received milk pudding from Sujātā.[16] In addition to Kāśī, Ayodhyā and Citrakūṭ, which were already well known, some settlements and shrines have become sacred places today due to their association with Tulsīdās. The description of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* seems to agree with the local legends of such sacred places.[17]

While the *Bhaktamāl* contains no indication as to the locations where the events it describes happened, the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* explicitly names Citrakūṭ, Kāśī, Delhi, and Br̥ndāvan. The *Mūl Gosāī Carit* refers to many places; among them, Ayodhyā and Kāśī are especially important, as Tulsīdās himself often visited them. This is confirmed by noted facts regarding the works of Tulsīdās. In its prologue, he reports that he began the composition of the *Rāmacaritamānas* in Ayodhyā in VS 1631, which corresponds to the year and description of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*. He mentions the plague (*mahāmārī*) in Kāśī in the *Kavitāvalī* (7.176.1, 183.2). In Varanasi today, there are several holy sites that are connected with Tulsīdās, particularly the Tulsī Ghāṭ, which was constructed by Amrit Rao, the adopted son of Raghoba the Eleventh Peshwa of Maratha in 1807.[18] Local people believe it to be the place where Tulsīdās lived and died. There is a small shrine in a corner of the Ghāṭ and, according to the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*, this might be the shrine that Ṭoḍar Mal built for Tulsīdās.[19] This Ṭoḍar Mal is probably not the finance minister of the Mughal emperor Akbar, but a landlord of Kāśī who, with his descendants, contributed to the construction of holy sites connected with Tulsīdās in Kāśī. We will return later to the close relationship between Ṭoḍar Mal and Beṇī Mādhav Dās, an author of this book.

15 The Cār dhām is a set of four Hindu pilgrimage sites in India, located at four points of the compass: Purī, Rāmeśvar, Dvārkā, and Badrīnāth.

16 *MGC*, *dohā* 53: "dhari bālikā bideha lalī" (a lady of bideha took the form of a girl).

17 As far as I know, Bharadvāj Āśram and Sītāmaṛhī now exist as holy places in Allahabad.

18 Singh 2018 [1993]: 15.

19 When I visited a small shrine which contains the pādukā of Tulsīdās in Assī Ghāṭ, a priest said that Tulsīdās had lived there. If we rely on his testimony and take the remark of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* into consideration, this could be construed as evidence that the shrine was built by Ṭoḍar Mal.

3 Incidents given with years

Concerning the life history of Tulsīdās, incidents given with years indicate what seems to have been important for Beṇī Mādhav Dās. These are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Chronology of Tulsīdās's life

***Mūl Gosā̃ī Carit* (Beṇī Mādhav Dās)**			***Bhaktamāl* (Nābhādās)**	***Bhaktirasabodhinī* (Priyādās)**
Period	Age (years)	Incident		
VS 1554	0	Birth		
VS 1561	7	Apprenticed to Narhari		
VS 1583	29	Marriage		
VS 1589	35	Renunciation of the world and the death of the wife		✓
VS 1607	53	Encounter with the god Rāma		✓
VS 1609	55	Receiving a letter from Hit Harivaṁś		
VS 1616	62	Sūrdās's visit		
VS 1628	74	Writing the *Rāmagītāvalī* and the *Kṛṣṇagītāvalī*		
VS 1631	77	Start of writing the *Rāmacaritamānas*		
VS 1633	79	Completion of the *Rāmacaritamānas*		
VS 1640	86	Writing the *Dohāvalī* Writing the *Vālmīkī for Recitation* (the *Kavitāvalī* ?)		
VS 1642	88	Writing the *Satasaiyā* (*Satasaī*)		
VS 1649	95	Encounter with Pihānī Sukula		
VS 1669	115	Death of Ṭoḍar Mal		
VS 1670	116	Encounter with Emperor Jahangir		
VS 1680	126	Death		

Source: The author (compiled on the basis of the three texts).

The incidents in Table 1, except for two (the encounter with Rāma in Citrakūṭ and the renouncement after his wife's admonishment), are not mentioned in the other two works, and it is noteworthy that nothing is shared by Nābhādās in the *Bhaktamāl*. While Beṇī Mādhav Dās gives meticulous details about Tulsīdās's life, the remark that Tulsīdās lived to be 126 years old is hard to believe. The dates of Tulsīdās's life are generally accepted to be 1532–1623 or 1543–1623.[20] The date given for his birth in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* is thirty-five to forty-six years earlier than the generally accepted years, 1532 or 1543, while the year of his death, 1623, is the same. By bringing the year of birth forward, Beṇī Mādhav Dās probably wanted to incorporate the letter from Hit Harivaṁś (1502–1552), a poet and the founder of Rādhavallabh Sampradāy in Braj. In the text, Hit Harivaṁś sends a message asking for Tulsīdās's blessing in VS 1609 (1552 CE), because he is going to die during the *maharās* (*Kr̥ṣṇa līlā* in *śaratpūrnimā*).[21] Tulsīdās replies, "be it so" (evam astu). Following this exchange of messages, Hit Harivaṁś passes away in VS 1609 (1552 CE), the same year as is generally accepted in scholarship. At that time, Tulsīdās is 55 years old in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* but would have been in his teens or twenties according to the common belief. This interpolated episode is given to illustrate the priority of Tulsīdās over the famous poets of Kr̥ṣṇa devotion in Braj, including Hit Harivaṁś, who was his contemporary.[22] It is confirmed by the unlikely travel of the blind poet Sūrdās, who came all the way from Braj to Kāmadgiri to ask Tulsīdās's blessing.[23] To make the story consistent with the description of Hit Harivaṁś, Beṇī Mādhav Dās had to bring forward both the year when Tulsīdās met his guru Narhari (who taught him the Rāmāyaṇa) and the year of his wedding to the period when he was not yet born according to the general belief.

As a consequence, Tulsīdās is pictured as composing almost all of his work after middle age or in his later years. While no titles are given in the *Bhaktamāl* or the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* of any of the known works of Tulsīdās, the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* mentions many works attributed to Tulsīdās, with their year of composition; the *Rāmagītāvalī* (VS 1628), the *Kr̥ṣṇagītāvalī* (VS 1628), the *Rāmacarita-*

20 On the dating of 1532–1623, see McGregor 1984: 109–110, fn. 311. On another view of the date of the poet's birth of 1543 (VS 1699) which is supported by the *Gautamacandrikā*, see Allchin 1964: 35. Lutgendorf 2016 gives 1543–1623 on the cover of his Epic of Ram.

21 *MGC*, *sorṭhā* 8.

22 In the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* Priyādās describes the transformation of an image of Kr̥ṣṇa into Rāma in front of Tulsīdās in Br̥ndāvan, which can be interpreted as a sign of Rāma's superiority over Kr̥ṣṇa. The *Mūl Gosāī Carit* portrays Tulsidas as superior to the poets of Kr̥ṣṇa devotion in Br̥ndāvan.

23 Sūrdās, a blind poet of Sūrsāgar, was sent by Gokulnath to meet Tulsīdās while he was living near the Kamadgiri, although there is no mention of Sūrdās's eyesight in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*.

mānas (VS 1633), the *Dohāvalī* (VS 1640), the *Satasaī* (VS 1642), the *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa* (VS 1669), the *Rāmalalā Nahachū* (VS 1669), the *Jānakī maṅgala* (VS 1669)*,* the *Pārvatī Maṅgala* (VS 1669), the *Hanumān Bāhuka* (VS 1669)*,* the *Vairāgya Sandīpanī* (VS 1669), and the *Rāmājñā Praśna* (VS 1669). The *Vālmīkī for Recitation* is not known; however, this might refer to the *Kavitāvalī*.[24] With a few exceptions, the chronological order of composition of these works agrees with current views.[25]

Specifying the year in highlighting individuals seems to indicate that they were influential or in some cases sponsors of the text. Ṭoḍar Mal, who was a resident of Kāśī, is described twice. The first mention is the story that the manuscript of the *Rāmacaritamānas* written by Tulsīdās came to be kept in the house of Ṭoḍar Mal. The *Mūl Gosāī Carit* goes on to say that many manuscripts were copied from that book. The second mention of Ṭoḍar Mal follows the murder plot and harassment by pandits. As Tulsīdās was leaving Kāśī, Ṭoḍar Mal asked him to stay at Assī Ghāṭ and constructed a new house for him. Tulsīdās's great lament at Ṭoḍar Mal's death in VS 1669 suggests that they were close associates. Being aware of his own impending death, Ṭoḍar Mal divided his estate between his two sons five months before, on the thirteenth day of the white half of the month of Aśvin in the presence of Tulsīdās. According to Śyāmsundardās (1875–1945), this might be supported by the fact that descendants of Ṭoḍar Mal possessed a note in which a benediction and a couplet appeared in Tulsīdās's hand.[26] It is even possible that the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* was written upon the request of Ṭoḍar Mal or his descendants, who contributed to the construction of holy sites connected with Tulsīdās in Kāśī. Similarly, the reason for the special mention of Pihānī Sukula (Śukla?), a name unknown today, might be that he was a patron or supporter of Tulsīdās, although this is not beyond speculation.

24 Beside the *Rāmacaritamānas*, the following eleven works are believed to be written by Tulsidas. The *Rāmagītāvalī* and the *Kr̥ṣṇagītāvalī* are collection of songs for Rāma and Kr̥ṣṇa respectively, the *Dohāvalī* is a collection of couplets. The *Kavitāvalī* is a collection in *kavitt* metre. The *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa* is Rāmāyaṇa in *baravai* metre, the *Rāmalalā Nahachū*, the *Jānakī maṅgala*, and the *Pārvatī Maṅgala* are wedding songs for Rāma, Sītā, and Pārvatī, respectively. The *Vairāgya Sandīpanī* are hymns of salvation and the *Rāmājñā Praśna* is a collection of questions and answers about Rāma. The *Vinaya Patrikā*, which is not mentioned in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit,* is a collection of songs of the petition. The *Hanumān Bāhuka* and the *Hanumān Cārīsa*, which are hymns for Hanumān, and the *Satasaī*, which contains seven hundred verses in name only, are attributed to Tulsīdās due to their popularity but are probably spurious.

25 On years of composition, see Allchin 1964: 32–45.

26 Śyāsmundardās 1931: 108–109. Allchin 1964: 44–45 also gives a reference for it.

4 Benefactor or curse giver

It is a specific feature in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* that the conflicting natures of Tulsīdās, namely, his mercy and cruelty, are described. The text indicates that after Tulsīdās's reputation was fully established, people visited him or sent him letters to gain his blessing. Tulsīdās generally treated them with warmth, but in some cases he reproached or even cursed them. The peaceful meeting or exchange of letters with prominent Hindi poets of the sixteenth century such as Rahīm (1556–1627), who was a courtier of the Mughal emperor Akbar; Keśavdās (1555–1617), who was a Sanskrit and Hindi scholar of Orcha; Sūrdās, Nanddās, and Mīrābāī who were poets of the Kr̥ṣṇa bhakti; and so on, indicates that they respected Tulsīdās. For example, Sūrdās stayed at the hut of Tulsīdās for seven days and had discussions with him on the nature of truth (*satsaṅg*).[27] On the other hand, the court poet Gaṅg (sixteenth to seventeenth century) was cursed by Tulsīdās, because, Gaṅg said, "one who wears a wood garland is a fake devotee"[28], for which Tulsīdās cursed him angrily. An elephant sent by Tulsīdās sprang on him, and his body was broken, while, according to folktales, he is thought to have opposed the act of cruelty conducted by Jahangir (1569–1627), for which he was crushed by elephant by the order of emperor.[29]

According to the text, Tulsīdās brought dead people to life, turned a woman into a man, and made the poor rich. However, the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* also describes his heartlessness. When one person, Kamalabhav, begs Tulsīdās to let him meet Rāma, Tulsīdās tells him to jump on the top of the trident (*triśūl*). Kamalabhav does not have the courage to do so, but a brave of the west (*pachāīṁ bīra eka*) does, and Rāma is manifested to him.[30] Effectively, Tulsīdās drove a pious person to suicide. Thus, he saved people, but he also sent people to their deaths.

By what criteria does Beṇī Mādhav Dās use to determine when to portray Tulsīdās as gentle or as cold? A king of Delhi who had imprisoned Tulsīdās was punished by Hanumān when Tulsīdās implored.[31] Here, the phrase "a king of Delhi" most likely refers to a Mughal emperor, and Tulsīdās seems to have opposed the Mughals. However, the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* presents another episode in

27 *MGC*, *dohā* 29–31.
28 *MGC*, *dohā* 91.
29 *MGC*, *dohā* 92: "chamā kiye nahiṁ srāpadiya, raṅge sānti rasa raṅga. mārga meṁ hāthī kiyo, jhapaṭi gaṅgatana bhaṅga" ([Tulsīdās], who is dyed in the color of śānti rasa, cursed Gaṅg without mercy. An elephant sprang on him in the road, and his body was broken). On the tale of Gaṅg and the elephant, see Busch 2011: 137.
30 *MGC*, *dohā* 113–115.
31 Priyādās describes in detail the anecdote of Tusī's imprisonment by the king of Delhi, but this episode is described only briefly in the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*. According to Wilson 1846: 41, the king of Delhi is Shahjahan.

which Tulsīdās willingly meets with Emperor Jahangir. Jahangir's Muslim faith apparently does not matter for Tulsīdās. The reason for such a favourable portrayal might be due to the common understanding in India that Jahangir provided justice. It is interesting that Tulsīdās complained to Jahangir that one Bīrbal had knowledge but did not worship Hari.[32] This Bīrbal was probably an adviser at Akbar's court who is often depicted in modern folk tales as a cunning minister.

This ambiguity in behaviour and close interaction with the famous Hindi poets of the time has become part of Tulsīdās's canonisation. For the pious attitude of his followers, those who seek in him shelter, Tulsīdās performs miracles. Yet Beṇī Mādhav Dās intends to show Tulsīdās as a sincere inquirer of devotion by showing no leniency to arrogant Hindu believers. Tulsīdās's uncompromising attitude is directed not only at the Hindus but also on occasion at the Muslim authorities, despite their power. Tulsīdās's criteria of to whom he shows mercy or disdain seem to reflect the modern Indian view on those figures, although the author claims himself to be a direct disciple of Tulsīdās.

Conclusion

Beṇī Mādhav Dās referred to all the stories described in the *Bhaktirasabodhinī*, so he probably wrote the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* after he saw Priyādās's work; as such, the production date of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* must be later than the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* (dated 1712). The respect for people in the lower castes and concern for the vulnerable that are found in this text also sound more modern than the date of composition would suggest.[33] Arrogant brahmins and rājpūts who did not respect Tulsīdās or who were not sincere devotees were punished mercilessly, while kāyasths who respected him and weavers who had good relationships with him became wealthy.[34] These stories emphasise that Tulsīdās did not have any prejudice based on caste. In the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* of Priyādās, the husband who is revived by Tulsīdās is a brahmin, but the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* changes his caste to a wine peddler (*kalār*).[35] The change of caste of the saved person reflects the recognition that the target readership for Tulsīdās's biography had become broader. The protection of women's rights is also reflected in the increased number of

32 Tulsīdās expresses his regret that "buddhi pāi nahiṁ hari bhaje" (having gained power, he does not worship Hari). See *MGC*, *dohā* 98.

33 Hawley 1997: 107–134 investigates Hindu hagiographies in earlier centuries compared with the *Amar citr kathā*, the popular comic series of the twentieth century which seeks to spread religion to the masses. He points out that authors of hagiographies try to satisfy the conflicting demands of all faiths and sects in their depictions.

34 *MGC*, *dohā* 69, *soṛthā* 19.

35 *MGC*, *dohā* 84.

saved women and in portraying Tulsīdās as an admirer of his own wife.[36] One of the reasons behind this might be to deflect criticism regarding the controversial line in the *Rāmacaritamānas* that "ḍhola gavāra sudra pasu nārī. sakala tāḍanā ke adhikārī" (drums, illiterate people, *shudra*, animals, and women should be beaten)[37]. To counteract criticism of this line, the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* makes Tulsīdās save more people of lower castes and pay more respect to women with his miracles than in the *Bhaktirasabodhinī*. However, this tendency is not seen in the *Bhaktamāl* at all.

The ultimate remedy against criticism might be this line in the *Bhaktamāl*: "ika akṣara uddharai brahmahatyādi kari jina hota pārāyana" (A single letter would work the salvation of one who had even committed the murder of a Brāhmaṇa).[38] However, the salvation from *brahmahatyā* (a murderer of a brahmin) is modified into another story where a brahmin who has committed murder is forgiven in the name of Rāma, and this interpretation is adopted in the *Bhaktirasabodhinī* and the *Mūl Gosāī Carit*. Changing the eligibility for salvation from brahmin-murderers to murderers who are brahmin would mean something completely different from what Nābhādās intended in *Bhaktamāl*.

Needless to say, the apparent reason behind the change in the character of Tulsīdās from a seeker of bhakti to a great poet-saint who performs miracles is that the authors wish to make Tulsīdās into an unparalleled saint. People needed such stories that were easy to accept, as Lutgendorf (1994) points out: if the authors gathered some stories from storytelling Vyāses, they may have created stories to please audiences of different castes. In many stories, people were granted wealth by Tulsīdās, who himself rejected wealth. This has the ironic result of creating an image of a miraculous saint that is more secular than sacred. The image of a miracle-working saint who responds to people's needs is popular, but it is far from the image of Tulsīdās given by Nābhādās, for that figure was not a giver of worldly benefit but one who "supplied a boat for the easy passage of the boundless ocean of existence" (saṁsāra apāra ke pāra sugama rūpa naukā liyo)[39], as Nābhādās wrote. In other words, the benefit was to be found in the next life.

36 On Tulsīdās's attitude towards women, see Hill 1952: xxxvii.
37 *Rāmacaritamānas* (5.59.6).
38 For the original text of the *Mūl Gosāī Carit* and an English translation, see Growse 1883: iv-v.
39 Ibid.

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Rosina Pastore

"Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind": An Indian Woman Commemorates King Edward VII in the Hindi Women's Periodical *Strī Darpaṇ*

Abstract. This chapter takes into consideration an untitled poem commemorating the British sovereign shortly after his demise. It was published in the June 1910 issue of the women's periodical *Strī Darpaṇ*, edited by Rameshwari Nehru. The aim of this paper is to show how this poem makes for an "exceptional normal" object of microhistorical enquiry. It will be demonstrated that, while the poem follows the general structure of other written expressions of condolences, its form and content may be seen especially as a reaction to the grief of Queen Alexandra. The mourning of the deceased's wife was, in fact, conveyed through her "Letter to the Nation" and indirectly by the media. The poem allows us to uncover the connections between people and rulers and occupies a space between historical and literary, official and unofficial, and public and private dimensions.

Keywords. periodicals, women, Edward VII, colonial, poetry

Introduction

This chapter deals with a piece of poetry published in a leading Hindi women's periodical called *Strī Darpaṇ*. This monthly journal, which ran from 1909 to 1928, was edited by Rameshwari Nehru (1886–1966), wife of Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin Brajlal Nehru, from Allahabad.[1] Therefore, from its beginnings it was connected to the political scene of twentieth-century North India. The title *Strī Darpaṇ* is often translated as "Mirror of Women"[2] or "Women's Mirror".[3] My view is closer to the latter option, as it is possible to render the title also as "Mirror for Women". The journal can be said to be both a mirror of twentieth-century wom-

1 See Mohan 2013 for an account of Nehru's life.
2 Orsini 2002: 264.
3 Nijhawan 2012: 37.

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en's role and condition in North India and a mirror belonging to women—like an instrument in their hands—to channel their struggles and aspirations. In this sense, it is also a mirror for women, dedicated to women, and at women's service, as their engagement in discussions and debates concerning Indian national identity was growing.[4]

As *Strī Darpaṇ* has been the object of several scholarly publications, this article refers to them for extended details about the other women's periodicals of the time and their mutual differences. These studies have investigated various facets of the interaction of women authors with an international dimension;[5] however, my contribution deals with these sources on a less beaten track, the relationship with British rule.[6] This topic will be addressed mainly through the translation of an untitled poem dedicated to the death of King Edward VII (1841–1910, r. 1901–1910), with the contention that it makes for an "exceptional normal" object of analysis.[7] It will be argued that the poem allows us to uncover how a North Indian woman imagined and projected herself as an imperial subject by participating in this occasion of mourning with her poetry. This poem is ordinary on the one hand, as it conforms to the conventions of the genre. Still, on the other hand, it is exceptional because the author builds through it a link of solidarity through womanhood with the widow of the late king, Queen Alexandra (1844–1925). In order to situate the poem in the context of mourning for the death of Edward VII, the following sections will first present briefly the contours of poetical expression in *Strī Darpaṇ*, and then a sample from the official messages sent to the royal family by the Indian kings and princes. The analysis of the poem following this background will shed light on the different facets of the composition about the death of the *śaihanśāh-e-hind* (the Emperor of India, lit. "king of kings") published in the Hindi periodical, paying attention to both literary and political dimensions.

4 Nijhawan 2012: 39–40.

5 See e.g. Nijhawan 2012; Orsini 2002 (esp. ch. 4).

6 This investigation is limited in scope as it considers only the issues of *Strī Darpaṇ* that were available to the author; namely, those published in January, February, March, April, and June 1910.

7 Ginzburg 1993: 33.

1 Poetry in *Strī Darpaṇ*

The poem concerning the *śaihanśāh-e-hind* can be better understood by looking at how it participates in the variety of the poetical forms in *Strī Darpaṇ*. Independent poetry appears in various formats, among which are the traditional prosodical arrangements of *caupāī*, *dohā*, *kavitta*, and *kavitta ghanākṣarī*.[8] The themes of such poetry reflect the political, social, and cultural atmosphere of the time. Free-standing poetry in *Strī Darpaṇ* testifies to the experimentation of forms, contents, and languages intending to produce literature that could be entertaining and useful at the same time.[9] In this sense, as far as the content of the poems goes, the exaltation of education and knowledge is predominant.[10]

On the issue of the function of poetry in the early twentieth century, the essays of the literary critic, editor, and author Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (1864–1938) exemplify the discussions going on at the time. As the editor of the influential Hindi journal *Sarasvatī* (which ran from 1903 to 1920), he took upon himself the task of defining the canon of Hindi *sāhitya*, or Hindi literature; that is, its genres, contents, functions, and—significantly—language. Though his own position on the use of Khaṛī bolī over Urdu and Brajbhāṣā as languages of poetry was not clear-cut, depending also on the audience he was addressing, it can be safely said that Dwivedi thought that literature should benefit the general public; it should provide knowledge for the betterment of people's lives and should make people aware of their own cultural and historical heritage.[11]

As anticipated, several poems in the issues of *Strī Darpaṇ* I have consulted appear to adopt a similar didactic perspective and aim, and they are often normative concerning women's duties.[12] Yet they are also critical of the modern-day

8 See Nehru 1910a: 11–16 for a sample of compositions in these prosodical arrangements. Their language is a form of Brajbhāṣā tending towards Khaṛī bolī. English terms written according to Hindi spelling also appear in these poems, like *pleg* (plague), *faishan* (fashion), and *minaṭ* (minute).

9 Nijhawan 2012: 34 observes how the periodicals were expected to provide "suitable education" for women and achieved it by mixing old and new genres of writings, sometimes in the same article.

10 See e.g. a poem titled "Vidyā kī baḍāī" in Nehru 1910e: 278. See also a *caupāī* in Nehru 1910a: 11.

11 Several books and articles exist on the topic. For a nuanced treatment of Dwivedi's views on the connection between literature, language, and nation, see Mody 2018. For a synthetic version, see Mody 2012: 233–256. Nijhawan 2012: ch. 5 more specifically on the question on how the language of women periodicals related to the intellectual projects of Dwivedi and, before him, Bhartendu Harischandra (1850–1885).

12 See *strī dharma* through the figure of Sītā in a poem titled "Sītā Rāma ke prati" in Nehru 1910e: 279.

fashion-following “Babus”.[13] They recur to references to the golden era of Bhārat, where the social role models are found in King Daśaratha’s sons.[14] These poems can indeed be read as concise instantiations of the debates concerning Indian national identity voiced in an argumentative manner by the more extended essays published in the periodical.[15]

Another form in which we encounter poetry is quotation, preceding or embedded in the body of an article. In the issues examined, there are inaugural Sanskrit *ślokas* drawn from the Vedas and the *Bhagavadgītā*, and other verses incorporated in essays are from the *dharmaśāstra*s by Bhartṛhari (fifth to seventh century), Kātyāyana (seventh to eighth century), Vātsyāyana (third century), and Manu (second century).[16] The only early modern authority figuring sparsely in these volumes is Tulsīdās (second half of the sixteenth century). It is interesting to note that, similarly to the quotations from the juridical Sanskrit texts, the verses attributed to him are used not so much for their poetic or religious value but in a normative sense, to prove and consolidate arguments of social, moral, (and, broadly, historical) import.[17]

The poem analysed in this essay falls into the typology of free-standing poetry, but it is not in one of the traditional metrical formats mentioned above (*dohā*, *caupāī*, etc.). However, it does retain some of their features, like the ear-pleasing

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13 See the section “Mātṛbhūmi kā īśvar se dukh kahnā” in a longer poem called “Prārthanā” by Shrimati Rampyari from Allahabad in Nehru 1910a: 14.

14 See e.g. “Viśvāmitra Daśaratha ke prati” by Mannan Dwivedi in Nehru 1910c: 117.

15 Nijhawan 2012: 312–315.

16 See Nehru 1910c: 122 where *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 12.13.1 is quoted (also Shastri 1983 for a modern edition of that work). See also Nehru 1910d: 199 for the *śloka* by Bhartṛhari; Nehru 1910e: 285 for one attributed to Manu, 288 for Kātyāyana’s verse, and 289 for a quotation attributed to Vātsyāyana. The dates of these authors are indicative.

17 One is found in Nehru 1910d: 183, in an article dealing with the place of women in the development of the nation. I have not been able to retrace it in a precise work among Tulsī’s. It is possible that the *dohā* is a reworking of several verses by the poet, rendered in a form grammatically leaning towards Khaṛī bolī: “tulasī mīṭhe vacana se sukha upajata cahuṁ aura / vaśī karaṇa eka mantra hai pariharu vacana kaṭhora //”. It evokes in its tone a *dohā* in the dialogue between Daśaratha and his wife Kaikeyī in the *Ayodhyā kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmcaritmānas*. The king accepts making Bharata the heir apparent but tries to convince the woman not to force him to send Rāma in exile, at 2.32: “priyā hāsa risa pariharahi māgu bicāri bibeku / jehiṁ dekhau aba nayana bhari bharata rāja abhiṣeku //” (Dear, renounce to your mockery and resentment, ponder about your request with discrimination, so that I may see favourably Bharata’s consecration as crown prince). Kaikeyī’s words are defined throughout the passage as *kaṭu* “bitter, displeasing” (2.29.4, 2.34.2), while Daśaratha’s speech is *mṛdu* “kind” (2.32.2). The second *dohā* is not explicitly attributed to Tulsī but reproduces almost verbatim *Rāmcaritmānas* 1.59kha. See Nehru 1910a: 24. The third instance is a *caupāī* employed to prove that the custom of *pardā* was absent in India before the Muslims’ arrival in the subcontinent. See Nehru 1910e: 297. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

rhymes. Moreover, it shows a tendency towards chronicle as it does not bring the reader back to a distant past, which is sometimes contrasted with the present with an “old is gold” attitude, but interprets a contemporary event without an explicitly moralising tone.[18] This can be understood as a first element indicating the “exceptionality” of this poem among the other poetical expressions of the volumes.

2 Spaces of mourning

Edward VII died on 6 May 1910. Before and after his funeral on 20 May, tributes to the dead sovereign were continuously published by different outlets. They focused mainly on the role of the king’s political persona as a “peacemaker” and on his philanthropic activities.[19] The *Illustrated London News* dedicated *A Special Funeral Number* to the passing of Queen Victoria’s son.[20] British newspapers also reported on the reaction to the news of the king’s death among the general public in India, with the city clearly identified in each contribution. They also offered a selection of obituaries in English from Indian newspapers.[21] The Indian princes were also ready to convey their condolences for the death of Edward VII, and indeed did so in a number of ways, for example through official messages.

2.1 Official messages

News of the death of the king generated a considerable number of telegrams and letters, the content of which shifted between expressing condolences and requesting instructions on how and for how long the king should be mourned.[22]

Nawab Sir Faiyaz Ali Khan (1851–1922) wrote the following to the private secretary of the viceroy from Jaipur in May 1910:

18 The “capacity to engage immediate issues of public interest” is a quality Nijhawan remarks upon in reference to the Hindi periodicals. See Nijhawan 2012: 5.
19 See “Edward VII” 1910: 420; also Cosby: 1910. In its 14 May 1910 issue *The Hospital* published a page titled “The Late King Edward VII: An Appreciation by One Who Knew Him”, with sections about the king’s “Sympathy for the Sick”, “Wise Philanthropy”, and “Influence on Charitable Work”.
20 This was to be published on 24 May, announced the 21 May issue, which itself already contained a large section about the king’s death, including pictures of doctors treating the monarch.
21 See e.g. the 28 May 1910 issue of *The Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*.
22 For example, a telegram from “Maharaja Tagore” proposing a day of mourning in Calcutta with “mass meeting, Maidan, prayers, poojahs, feeding poor”. See *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 10, number 21.

My Dear Sir,

With feelings of profoundest regret I have received the most painful and unexpected news that our beloved King-Emperor has passed away.

All classes of community mourn the sudden and tragic death, which has cast a deep gloom over the whole of India.

May the departed soul rest in peace and may God support the Queen-Empress in her deepest affliction.

It is my earnest prayer that the Great God may grant long life and prosperity to our new King-Emperor.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) Faiyaz Ali Khan[23]

This message from the nawab exemplifies the expressions of sorrow sent by the Indian rulers. The texts first conveyed a sense of loss, which was extended to the whole of the Indian subcontinent. Interestingly, many then assured allegiance to the new King George V. The telegrams and letters were thus significant at a crucial point in the political history of Great Britain, which was then undergoing a parliamentary crisis.[24] However, their function was not unidirectional: by stating their loyalty, the Indian princes also demanded that the new king take an interest in India and grant it the stability enjoyed during his father's reign.[25] Mourning thus becomes a charged diplomatic and political event that, in this case, seeks the confirmation of belonging in a moment of transition.[26]

At the same time, the messages did not come only from kings but also from other groups engaged in social and political activities. For instance, a short telegram, dated 16 May 1910, was addressed from the viceroy to the secretary of state with a message from the Sanatum Dharam Hindu Community of Bharatpur.[27] Women's associations also figure in the collection of messages, as the viceroy informed the secretary of state that the president of the Meeting of Women of Bombay, Lady Jeejeebhoy, sent her condolences and confirmed her loyalty to the new sovereign.[28] According to Amelia Bonea's study, telegrams commenting political events had been published by Indian newspapers since the second half of

23 *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 15, number 31.

24 Wolffe 2003: 24–25.

25 For example, in his letter to the viceroy, the politician and future Indian Congress President, Rao Bahadur Madholkar (1857–1921), specifically mentioned the political reforms undertaken during Edward's reign, to which he referred to as "one of the truest friends of India". See *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 20, number 44.

26 See Saunders/Kamran 2005: 22–23. Mourning has not always been linked to the political sphere in scholarship. For an overview, see Keller Hirsch/McIvor 2019: xiv–xvii.

27 The English spelling of Sanatan Dharm. See *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 22, number 55.

28 *Death of King Edward VII* n. d.: 34, number 84.

the nineteenth century, and it is therefore possible that the telegrams mourning the death of Edward VII circulated widely in India as well.[29]

2.2 “Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind”

Another class of written documents that witnessed the performance of mourning in the regional languages of India are the long poems, biographies, and dramas that were regularly dedicated to the British royals. Though scholarship on this aspect of Edward’s reign is still lacking, we know of several works of *belles lettres* that deal with Victoria’s coronation or jubilee, or that were composed on the occasion of her death.[30]

The untitled poem, which I refer to as “Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind” (He is dead, the Emperor of India), was published in the June 1910 issue of *Strī Darpaṇ*. As mentioned above, the format does not follow one of the traditional prosodical patterns still frequent in the periodical, but the rhyming end of each couplet seem to imitate the *dohā*.[31] A few lines introduce the poem:

> On the occasion of the demise of King Edward VII, Misses Musharan wrote and sent us a poem, which is published [here]. The poem actually was written in Urdu, [but] for *Strī Darpaṇ* it has been rendered in Hindi.[32]

It is not possible to make out clearly the author’s name—which I rendered as Musharan—and she does not appear to have published other pieces in the issues of the periodical available to me. At the same time, these few lines are interesting since they are connected with discourses about the language of literature. We can read in this informative statement *Strī Darpaṇ*’s position not only as a Hindi journal but also supportive of Hindi written in Devanāgarī script. However, the “rendered in Hindī” (hindī meṁ kar lī gaī hai, lit. “made it in Hindī”) is not as

29 See Bonea 2016: 281.

30 The majority of papers presented at the online colloquium “Vernacular Victoria: The Queen in South Asian Languages”, held 26–27 April 2021 and organised by Ashoka University, refer to or are based on a variety of sources in several Indian languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, and Oriya. Shraddha Kumbhojkar’s paper, for example, mentions a Marathi obituary authored by a schoolmaster called Pandurang Govind in 1901. The poem commemorated Victoria and praised first of all the establishment of schools during her reign. The Marathi newspaper *Vijayī Marāṭhā* published also articles concerning Edward’s visit to India when he was still prince. See Kumbhojkar 2021.

31 For examples of *dohā*, see footnote 17 above.

32 “mahārāj euvarḍ saptam ke svargavās hone par misej muśarān ne hamāre pās ek kavitā likhkar bhejī hai jo prākaśit kī jātī hai. Kavitā vāstav meṁ urdū meṁ likhī gaī thī strī darpaṇ ke liye hindī meṁ kar lī gaī hai”. All citations of the untitled poem that follow can be found in Nehru 1910e: 268.

radical as one may think since the poem is not at all shorn of terms and idioms of Perso-Arabic origin. The operation seems to have just been one of transliteration and not strongly driven ideologically by opposing Hindi as the language of the Hindus, of Sanskritic origin, to Urdu as a Muslim language.[33]

Before considering the poem itself, let us take a look at the "Editorial" (*ṭip-paniyāṁ*, lit. "notes") since the piece of poetry following it presents a continuity of content and tone and is a sort of "crowning" of the prose tribute. The first theme treated extensively in the "Editorial" is the death of Edward VII. First it resumes the events surrounding the death of the king; then it comments on his political virtues and achievements. The last part extensively describes his life from birth to death, blending chronological narration with anecdotal recollection.

Akin to what was published by English periodicals and newspapers, the "Editorial" portrays the late king as a mine of virtues and a "peacemaker":[34]

> Your virtues were such that you were loved and respected in your reign and in all your capitals. Associating with all, being affectionate to all—these were long-time habits of yours. In the European countries you obtained the name of peacemaker.[35]

In Hindi, "peacemaker" is rendered as "mel karāne vāle", which—keeping in mind the English term—can be translated as "conciliator". The author attributes to Edward the habit of "associating with all" (*sab se mel rakhnā*). The use of almost the same expression, hinged to "mel", connects the political and public figure of the ruler with the intimate, private sphere. The description in the same line that he was affectionate to or loved everyone ("being affectionate to all", *har ek se prem karnā*) seems to convey the impression of knowing the sovereign personally, and he is later acknowledged to feel a "paternal love" (*paitṛk sneh*) for the people of Hindustan.[36] The dialectic between distance and proximity with the king is also expressed by a constant shift between the second- and third-person plural in the

33 The language employed by the authors published in *Strī Darpaṇ* was quite diverse and did not conform to a standardised version of Hindi. See Nijhawan 2012: 195–209.

34 Edward's role in British foreign politics has been amply debated, with positions shifting from denying his actions had any real political significance to exalting his savoir-faire as decisive from the diplomatic viewpoint. See Glencross 2015. See Robbins 2015 for a comparison of Victoria's and Edward's diplomatic approaches.

35 Nehru 1910e: 261: "āpke apne satguṇ aise the ki jinse āp apne deś aur apnī sārī rājdhānī meṁ prem aur ādar se dekhe jāte the. Sab se mel rakhnā, har ek se prem karna āpko sadā se ādat thi. Yūrop ke deśoṁ meṁ āpne mel karāne vale kā nām pāyā thā".

36 This conception of the sovereign in kinship terms was already alive with Queen Victoria (r. 1837–1901). On Queen Victoria as a mother figure and role model for women, see Taylor 2018: ch. 9.

use of pronouns and adjectives when addressing the monarch and his life.[37] Such an emphasis on the socialising, accessible character of the king can also be considered as responding to Indic ideals of kingship.[38]

Local conceptions of kingship are also evoked in the poem itself. After providing the text and translation of the poem, the analysis below will focus on how the author, "Musharan", participates in the mourning of the ruler's death and how, differently from the telegrams sent by Indian nobility, she expresses her pain and connects with the figure of the deceased's wife, Queen Alexandra.

jhuk gayā aiḍvarḍ haftum āj kyoṁ jhanḍā terā,	Edward VII, why has your flag been lowered today?[39]
inḍiyā iṅglainḍoṁ yūrop kyoṁ mātam sarā.	India, England, Europe—why have they become a house of mourning?
mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind – śāh-e-dil ruyā,	"He is dead, the Emperor of India, the Emperor of hearts", they lamented.[40]
jiske marne kā har ek choṭe baḍe ko g̱am huā.	His death has pained everyone, high and low.
marne se do roz pahile ye ḵẖabar zāhir huī,	Two days before the death, this news was disclosed:
śaihanśā bīmār haiṁ dil meṁ fikar paidā huī.	"The emperor is ill"—in the hearts worry grew.
girjoṁ meṁ aur mandiroṁ meṁ masjidoṁ meṁ jā bajā,	In the churches, the temples, and the mosques—everywhere
jald hoṁ acche śaihanśā kar rahe the sab duā.	everyone was praying: "May the emperor be well."
beasar thī sab duā bekām thī sārī davā,	All prayers were ineffectual, all remedies useless,

37 A sentence using the second plural: "āpkā dehānt aisā akasmāt huā ki āpkī bīmārī kā samācār bhī abhī logoṁ ke kān tak nahīṁ pahuṁcā". In contrast, a sentence using the third plural (honorific): "in sab kāmoṁ ko yuvrāj va un kī patnī ne aisī acchī tarah nibhāyā ki". Nehru 1910e: 261 and 263.

38 See Banerjee 2018: 82, 85. Coincidentally, the expression "mel karāne vāle" figures in the modern Hindi translation of the Gospel of Matthew 5.9 (available at https://www.bible.com/bible/1683/MAT.5.HINOVBSI): "dhanya haiṁ ve, jo mel karānevāle haiṁ, kyoṁki ve parameśvar ke putr kahlāeṁge" (Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God). This version of the Bible, published by the Bible Society of India, was translated from a mix of sources that are not clearly discernible (see https://www.bsind.org/our-history/). Earlier translations of the New Testament, for example from Greek, present expressions parallel to "mel karāne vāle": for example, "dhanya ve jo mel karvaiye haiṁ kyoṁki ve īśvar ke santān kahāveṁge" (*Dharmpustak kā antbhāg* 1874: 10).

39 The "jhaṇḍā" is a triangular flag that, from the late sixteenth century, was among the exclusive symbols in possession of the Mughal emperor. See Gordon 1996: 240–242.

40 The verb in this sentence is not clearly readable. I have read it as "ruyā" and interpreted it as a perfective form akin to *royā* from Modern Standard Hindi *ronā*, perhaps adjusted as *ruyā* to rhyme with the verb of the following *pāda*, which is *huā*.

tīsre din maut kā paig̱ām ākhir ā gayā.	On the third day, the message of death finally arrived.
ye k̲h̲abar sunte hī g̱am kī thām ke dil rah gae,	Upon hearing this sad news, the hearts stopped [beating],
āṁsuoṁ kī śakl meṁ āṁkhoṁ se dariyā bah gae.	rivers flew from the eyes in the form of tears.
thī riāyā cain se is bādśāh ke rāj meṁ,	People lived peacefully during the reign of this emperor,
jaise sukh pāyā kuīn vikṭoriyā ke rāj meṁ.	in the same way they were at ease during the reign of Queen Victoria.
kuīn ailagzanḍrā terā kyā hāl g̱am se ho gayā,	Queen Alexandra, what must be your condition, caused by suffering?!
hai qayāmat āj terā bak̲h̲t kaisā so gayā.	Today is doomsday; how has your fortune fallen asleep![41]
cāṁd se cehre pe tere abr hai chāyā huā,	Clouds dim your moon-like face,
phūl sā cehrā terā hai g̱am se murjhāyā huā.	your flower-like face has withered because of sorrow.
kyā kareṁ dukh bojh hota bāṁṭ lete ham terā,	What can be done? Grief is a burden, and we share yours.
kyā kaheṁ g̱am rāh hotī sāth dete ham terā.	What can be said? Sorrow is a path, and we accompany you.
kyā karūṁ izahār-e-g̱am kuch kar madad merī qalam,	Shall I disclose the pain? O my pen, help out a little.
śāh kā marnā huā hāy sitam hāy sitam.	The King is dead, alas! Alas!
hai duā yah īśvar se svarg meṁ rakkheṁ unheṁ,	One prays to God to receive him in heaven,
mādar-e-murāfiq ke paihlū meṁ jagā deveṁ unheṁ.	May He let him wake up at the side of the benevolent mother.[42]
kuīn mairī-jaurj panjum ke liye haiṁ ye duā,	These prayers are for Queen Mary and George V.
ho mubārak rāj inko cain se rahveṁ sadā.	Hail the King! [May God] let him live in peace always.
īśvar se yah duā āziz viśan hai kar rahī,	[Vishan?][43] prays dearly to God:
śāh jīve sau baras sau sāl kī ho har ghaṛī.	may the King live a hundred years, may every moment last a hundred years!

41 The expression "terā bak̲h̲t kaisā so gayā" recalls the construction "bak̲h̲t-k̲h̲ufta" indicating "One whose fortune is asleep, unfortunate person". Therefore, it could also be translated as "how are you unfortunate!". See Platts 1884: 138.
42 The term employed is "mādar-e-murāfiq", which I have not been able to attest elsewhere. Platts' dictionary gives *marāfiq* as a masculine noun (plural form of *mirfaq*) "Things by which one profits, or gains advantage or benefit; appurtenances or conveniences of a house (as the kitchen, sink, water-closet, and the like); elbows, or elbow-joints" (Platts 1884: 1019). Therefore, I have interpreted the term as indicating the Virgin Mary's quality of being an intermediary between the believer and God.
43 The word is not readable.

The structure of this composition is similar to both the "Editorial" preceding it and to Faiyaz Ali Khan's telegram quoted in the previous section. These different forms of literary mourning seem to develop along the lines of the phrase, "The king is dead, long live the king"[44]: they first mourn the death of the current ruler, then pledge their allegiance to (or wish well) the next. In this poem the mourning part is rather long, going from the first line to "May He let him wake up at the side of the benevolent mother" (in my translation, twenty-four lines). The pledging allegiance/wishing well part unfolds over just the final four lines.

Interestingly, Edward is referred to as "śaihanśāh", a Persian-derived title for emperor (*śāhanśāh*), and not with the officially *Kaiser-i-Hind* officially assumed by Victoria in 1877. The title *Kaiser-i-Hind* was chosen since—in the view of the British—it did not show continuity with the Mughal rule, nor suggested a marked religious identity, but recalled the Roman Empire. The assumption by the queen was considered necessary to communicate that she was not "king among kings" but that her monarchy was singular in India, a country seen by the colonisers as more prone to be despotically governed. Accordingly, the Indian princes, kings, and nobles were assigned English titles to recreate a hierarchy subordinating them to the queen.[45] Notwithstanding the effort, the title of *Kaiser-i-Hind* does not appear to have enjoyed much popularity among the Indian public, who made use of other, locally inflected titles.[46] The use of "śaihanśāh" in the poem can be conceived as a way of domesticating imperial power.[47]

In the part about the death of the king, the author relates the collective reaction of the Indian people to the news, where the dimension of suffering is consistently highlighted by the use of terms such as "mātam sarā" (house of mourning), "g̱am" (suffering), "fikar" (worry), and "āṁsū" (tears). What else is noteworthy here are the six lines focusing on Queen Alexandra. While the telegrams and letters of condolences do mention the widow in passing, the editor of *Strī Darpaṇ* and the author of the poem make a point of manifesting solidarity with the queen, as did many other women. The "Editorial", in fact, reports that the Prayag Mahila Samiti from Allahabad sent a telegram expressing "sympathy" (*sahānubhūti*) with Ed-

44 A traditional proclamation made following the accession of a new monarch in various countries. The seemingly contradictory phrase simultaneously announces the death of the previous monarch and states continuity by saluting the new monarch.

45 See Knight 1968: 488–507. See also Banerjee 2018: Cohn 2012 [1983]: 165–209. On the nature of the British colonial enterprise in India, see Cannadine 2002: 41–57.

46 See Tyrrell 1901.

47 Milinda Banerjee understands the Bengali *caritas*, *kāvyas*, *nāṭakas*, and other poetic compositions depicting Victoria and her successors as just rulers as ways through which "colonial power was anthropomorphised to render it innocuous" (2018: 76). Calling the sovereign with similar expressions, such as "King of hearts" was not a novelty in itself in vernacular. The Bengali press also referred to George V, Edward's son, with such appellative. See Banerjee 2018: 88.

ward's wife.[48] The press had taken particular care in describing that the king's body was kept in the royal apartments for one week because of the queen's request and other elements which would normally be kept private, like her placing a rose in Edward's hands.[49] In the "Letter to the Nation", dated 10 May 1910, Edward's consort confessed that she "lost everything in him, my husband" and thanked the people, "high and low", for the sympathy shown to her through messages. She also asks that they "[g]ive me a thought in your prayers, which will comfort and sustain me in all I still have to go through". The short missive ends with a request to the people to show their support and devotion to the new sovereign, George V.[50]

"Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind" seems almost to respond to the letter Alexandra addressed to her subjects. The poem evokes the sentiment of the pity or compassion (*karuṇa rasa*) produced by suffering, and we have already remarked the preponderance of terms belonging to the same semantic field (*g̱am* appears six times).[51] Moreover, the queen's sorrow itself is described in a way that makes sense to Indian poetic articulations of feminine suffering. First, the moon and flowers are classical terms of comparison for the beauty of a face, conjuring up the portraits of the "heroines" (*nayikā*s) of court poetry in North Indian languages.[52] Second, the inexorable sense of loss and despair is augmented by connecting the husband's death with the end of the wife's life (*qayāmat*), which resonates with traditional Indian conceptions of a woman's life as dependent on that of her male partner.[53] In addition, the author consolidates the connection with the queen by projecting herself and collectively Indian women as partakers of a wife's suffering.[54] The repetition of the interrogative pronoun *kyā* (what), accompanied by the verbs *kahnā* and *karnā* (to say and to do), conveys rhetorically a void in thoughts, words, and actions caused by grief. The enactment of lament, performed also through the *hāy sitām hāy sitām* (Alas! Alas!) gives an oral imprint to the written word, and can be

48 See Nehru 1910e: 262.

49 See Wolffe 2003: 27.

50 For a reproduction of the letter, see British Museum 1929.

51 The traditional text concerning the theory of *rasa*s, Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (fourth to sixth century), lists separation and death of a loved person among the main "causes" (*vibhāva*) for the manifestation of *karuṇa rasa*. See Ghosh 1951: 112.

52 See e.g. Busch 2011: 70. See also the descriptions of the state of separation (*vipralambha*) in the *nayikā* characterised by disease in Keśavdās's *Rasikapriyā* (1590). For the reference to obscuring clouds, see Bahadur 1972: 148–150, 181. Among the consequences (*anubhāva*) of the *karuṇa rasa*, according to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (6.61–63, 7.10–14), are changes in the colour of one's complexion, crying, and lamentation. See Ghosh 1951: 112, 122.

53 In this sense, she was seen as the "half" (*ardhāṅginī*) of her husband. However, in general this must not be understood exclusively in negative terms, or as a static and unchallenged idea. See Thapar-Björkert 1997: 493–504; Orsini 1999: 137–160.

54 Quoting from the poem: "kyā kareṁ dukh bojh hotā bāṁṭ lete hum terā, kyā kaheṁ ġam rāh hotī sāth dete hum terā".

a trace of the laments found in churches, mosques, and churches throughout the subcontinent. Furthermore, it distinguishes the poem from the official messages and telegrams, and further marks it as a site where personal mourning is made public.[55]

3 Concluding remarks

Comparing the poem with other sources than *Strī Darpaṇ*—albeit briefly—has served to determine the contours of “interactions between individual lives and great historical events”[56] in the specific case of King Edward’s death. Poetry was a regular component of the Hindi periodicals, and it was employed to celebrate historical events like the births, coronations, and deaths of royal figures in general.[57] The singularity of “Mar gayā hai śaihanśāh-e-hind” among the other forms of poetry in the consulted issues of *Strī Darpaṇ* stands, as anticipated, in the fact that it comments on a quasi-contemporary event. This chronicle-like aspect links it to the official messages of condolences, which, as has been shown, make their own political statement with respect to the crown.

The poem is also charged with such political statements but—unlike the official letters and telegrams—they are not spelled out explicitly. Aesthetic and rhetorical elements and established literary motives are instead deployed to communicate an additional layer of meaning. The author’s mourning creates a connection with the crown, with the deceased King Edward and the future King George. Still, the poem’s exceptionality lies in resorting to the figure of the queen. The poem creates an identification between the author and Alexandra, subverting the hierarchy and putting them on the same level based on the shared experience of being a woman. What seems to transpire is not only an affective and empathic dimension that erases the differences between Indian subject and British ruling queen,[58] but also the will and aspiration of an Indian woman—positioning herself as representative of *all* Indian women—to become visible on the political scene, on par with other political actors such as the Indian *rājas*. This poem thus demonstrates how commemoration was interpreted politically by educated and largely upper-caste Indian

55 Due to its subversive potential, public mourning came to be increasingly controlled not only by the colonial authorities but also by Indian reformers. See Mukta 1999: 25–47. Women’s periodicals were subject to colonial scrutiny, though they sometimes evaded censorship. See Nijhawan 2012: 6–8.
56 De Vivo 2010: 390. See also Peltonen 2001: 359.
57 For example, Rudyard Kipling composed a poem titled “The Dead King” dedicated to Edward VII, published on 18 May 1910 by various newspapers. See Kipling 1910.
58 According to Nijhawan, women’s periodicals also made a point of demonstrating similarity between their lives and those of Western women. See Nijhawan 2012: 174.

women in colonial times. Moreover, in a period where nationalist tendencies were still not fully translated into anti-colonial sentiments, it offers us a window into how the encounter with the empire took place and how different social groups negotiated British identity and indeed their own.

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Nicola Pozza

The Elusive Double: Mirror Effects and Perplexity on the Roads of India

Abstract. Among modern fictions based on travel in India, two short novels, apparently without any common ground, unexpectedly echo each other in several aspects: *Hariyā harkyūlīz kī hairānī* (1994, *The Perplexity of Hariya Hercules*) by Manohar Shyam Joshi (1933–2006), and *Notturno indiano* (1984, *Indian Nocturne*) by Antonio Tabucchi (1943–2012). In both novels—the first written in Hindi, the second in Italian—an enigmatic Western double causes the main protagonist to embark on an initiatory quest on the Indian roads (the Himalaya in the first one, South India in the second). In both cases the object of the quest seems ultimately to elude the protagonist and in both cases the dominant feeling of the story is one of uncertainty. But beyond their many similarities (reflections on Indian philosophies, significant relations between India and Europe, identity crisis, mirror effect, women as active witnesses of the story, etc.), what do their differences teach us about the knowledge conveyed by the two authors about India on the one hand, and their respective representations of encounters between India and Europe on the other? To answer these questions, this chapter will favour the comparative method by analysing how each of these two texts has developed the central idea of the "double".

Keywords. India, travel, quest for identity, Manohar Shyam Joshi, Antonio Tabucchi

Introduction

While the literary exchanges and influences between India and Europe from antiquity to the mid-twentieth century have been the subject of numerous studies, comparative research on the literary productions of recent decades appears to be much rarer, especially outside of works written in English. Yet, among modern fictions based on travel in India, two short novels, apparently without any common ground, unexpectedly echo each other in several aspects and invite comparison: *Hariyā harkyūlīz kī hairānī* (1994, *The Perplexity of Hariya Hercules*) by Manohar Shyam Joshi (1933–2006), and *Notturno indiano* (1984, *Indian Nocturne*) by Antonio Tabucchi (1943–2012). In both novels—the first written in Hindi, the second in Italian—an enigmatic Western double causes the main protagonist to embark on an initiatory quest on the Indian roads (the Himalaya in the first one,

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South India in the second). In both cases the object of the quest seems ultimately to elude the protagonist and in both cases the dominant feeling of the story is one of uncertainty.

The notion of the "double" is thus at the centre of these two stories, together with the Indian territory that forms their background. Both can work as a main theme of comparison—several other aspects (such as the presence of mirrors, crisis of identity, philosophical thoughts, women as active witnesses of the story, etc.) can also play this role, but at a secondary level. A comparison between the two narratives seems therefore legitimate. However, it is the analysis of the differences in the way they are treated by their respective narrators that will make the comparison relevant to the purpose of this paper. The differences analysed will focus on the *nature of the double* and its role in the two narratives. We will examine this theme in relation to the successive phases constituting the journey and quest of the two main protagonists.

Unlike ancient Western philosophy, and in particular the Socratic method, which proceeds by questioning, following a rigorous path to arrive at a concrete, reliable, and stable result,[1] Tabucchi and Joshi's contemporary and postmodern writings do not follow a linear path and do not lead to a clear-cut and definitive result. Instead, the narrative plot of their respective stories and the interpretive direction their events are supposed to indicate follow a seemingly random path, determined by the encounters and pieces of information that arise at the different stages of the two protagonists' "initiatory" journey. And in the end, the double they were searching for seems to elude them, or to be but another form of the "self". But what "self" are these authors talking about? What initiatory journeys and Indian scenes (*paysages*[2]) do their stories tell us about? Answering these questions will help us to perceive what these differences teach us about the knowledge conveyed by the two authors about India on the one hand, and their respective representations of encounters between India and Europe on the other.

After a very short presentation of the two novels and a short commentary on the comparative method chosen for this study, the chapter will focus on the analysis first of *Indian Nocturne* (hereafter called *Nocturne*), and then of *The Perplexity of Hariya Hercules* (hereafter abbreviated as *Hariya*). A short synthesis will compare the topic of the double. Finally, we will examine the way the two authors deal with the explicit and implicit relations between India and Europe in their novels.

1 Ganeri 2012: 174.

2 *Paysages* (scenes) should be understood here as the perception and representation of a place, as the expression by an author of her/his relationship to the world. See Thévoz 2010: introduction.

1 The two novels

Nocturne is the English translation by Tim Parks, first published in 1988, of the Italian text *Notturno indiano* (published in 1984 by Sellerio editore).[3] English-speaking readers are provided with a completely faithful and reliable version, since Parks' translation perfectly respects the syntax, punctuation, and tone of Tabucchi's version. Furthermore, the (few) terms of Indian origin (*karma*, *maya*, *atma*, etc.) are reproduced exactly as they appear in the Italian text; Parks makes no use of explication nor does he add footnotes. The novel, and the film adaptation of it by Alain Corneau (*Nocturne indien*, 1989), have been the focus of several studies.[4] Tabucchi (who is well enough known not to be introduced here) has commented on the writing of his book and the trip to India that preceded it. In a short essay entitled "L'Inde. Que sais-je?", he explains that he knew nothing about India at the time, that he was travelling completely "ignorant" of Indian cultures, and wonders a posteriori, "if, at the time of *Indian Nocturne*, I had gone to India with the amount of information I have today, would I have written my novel? [. . .] Certainly not".[5] In the same book, his short essay on the books that inspired him with regard to India ("Tante idee dell'India") invites us to see the result of *Nocturne* as a fictionalised version of Pasolini's book *L'odore dell'India* (1962), "the book of a man [. . .] who has realised that India possesses this strange spell: to take us on a circular journey at the end of which we may actually be facing ourselves. Without knowing who we are".[6]

The Hindi novel *Hariyā harkyūlīz kī hairānī* (published in 1994 by Kitabghar Prakashan)[7] was translated into English by Robert A. Hueckstedt in

3 Tabucchi's novel follows the journey through India (Mumbai, Chennai, Mangalore, Goa) of the narrator Roux in search of a friend named Xavier, about whom he has been without news for a year. His journey turns into a quest of identity and becomes the pretext for a meditation on India and its colonial past, particularly Portuguese.

4 For instance, Jansen 2014; Millner 2007; Wren-Owens 2020.

5 My translation (this collection of essays is currently being translated by Elizabeth Harris under the title "Travels and Further Travels" [https://readingintranslation.com/2021/04/12/images-of-imagination-saskia-ziolkowski-reviews-antonio-tabucchis-stories-with-pictures-and-interviews-translator-elizabeth-harris/]). Original: "se a quell'epoca di *Notturno indiano* fossi andato in India con la quantità d'informazioni che oggi posseggo, avrei scritto il mio romanzo? [. . .] Certamente no" (Tabucchi 2010: 137).

6 My translation. Original: "il libro di un uomo [. . .] che ha capito che l'India possiede questo strano sortilegio: farci compiere un viaggio circolare alla fine del quale forse ci troviamo davvero di fronte a noi stessi. Senza sapere chi siamo" (Tabucchi 2010: 118).

7 Joshi 2016. *Hariyā harkyūlīz kī hairānī* is the fourth novel by Manohar Shyam Joshi. It was first published in serial form in *India Today* between March and August 1994, before being published in book form later the same year. Its main character, Hariya, is a middle-aged bachelor who spends most of his time caring for sick people and especially his authoritarian father, Rai Saip Girvan Datt Tiwari, who is suffering from chronic constipation.

2009[8] and it is the English edition that has been used for the textual analysis here. Hueckstedt's translation is apparently targeted at an Indian readership (living in India or belonging to the diaspora), or at least at connoisseurs of Indian religions and philosophies: Hueckstedt closely follows the Hindi text and does not hesitate to keep the pronunciation and kinship names that are specific to the Kumaoni language ("everybody elshe", "bhau", etc.) or insults and religious terms in Hindi ("machod", "poojaree", etc.). The English-speaking reader can therefore, as with *Nocturne*, rely on the English translation, which perfectly recreates Joshi's tone, local flavour, and stunning humour.[9]

Another key feature of the novel is the style of narration adopted. Joshi made this book one of the first fictions in Hindi literature to be part of the postmodern literary trend.[10] Uncertainty is prominent in the narrative, as are a multiplicity of points of view, the absence of an unequivocal and "objective" truth, and the insis-

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Hariya's life unfolds in a mechanical and unsurprising way, and nothing seems to surprise him, until one day, one of his cousins, Atul, shows him in an atlas of Australia an unlikely name for a town: Goomalling. This name, because of the similarity of its prefix with the Hindi word *gū* (excrement, shit), awakens—at last!—Hariya's astonishment. His astonishment turns to bewilderment when Atul explains to him that in Goomalling too, as in Delhi, a person perfectly similar to him is certainly experiencing the same difficulties as he is and sharing a life similar to his own. From that moment on, Hariya becomes obsessed with the idea of this double. Shortly after, following his father's death, he discovers an old trunk in the family's house containing an unexpected treasure: jewels, gold and silver antique coins, precious stones, a gold plate engraved with the Shri Yantra . . . but also pornographic pictures of his father and a letter from a mysterious lama. In this letter, Hariya's father is accused of having stolen this sacred trunk, this *pitar*, from the deity of Gūmāliṅg, a mysterious place located somewhere in the Himalaya—and an improbable homonym of the Australian city. If the treasure is not returned to its owners, Girvan Datt and all his descendants will be cursed. From then on, Hariya is firmly convinced that he must go to Gūmāliṅg to return the trunk and make amends for his father's sin.

8 Joshi 2009.

9 Manohar Shyam Joshi was born in 1933 in Ajmer (Rajasthan) to a family of Kumaoni Brahmins from Almora (in the present state of Uttarakhand, northern India). In 1953 he left Uttar Pradesh to work in Delhi as a freelance journalist, before joining the All India Radio. He then wrote his first poems and became assistant editor to the famous Hindi poet Agyeya for the magazine *Dinmān*. Since the publication of his first novel, *Kurū kurū svāhā*, in 1980, Joshi has made his mark as an outstanding storyteller of unique language, playing with the multiple linguistic registers of Hindi. Making fun of the shortcomings of his contemporaries with finesse and humour, he did not hesitate to write about the most disturbing and perilous aspects of Indian society, such as sexuality or corruption. Although known and respected as a short story writer, novelist, and editor, Joshi is perhaps best known as the scriptwriter of the first Indian television series, *Ham log* (1984, "We People"), which depicts the daily life of a middle-class family. This series and the one that followed it, *Buniyād* (1986–1988, "Foundation"), were so successful that members of Indian families at the end of the twentieth century identified with these characters.

10 On postmodernity, or at least its traces, in Hindi literature, see Pacauri 2010; Ghirardi 2021.

tent presence of the notions of desire and pleasure. Thus, if the beginning of the story seems to follow an ordinary, linear, "modern" type of narrative, it is the uncertainty, the multiplicity of embedded narratives and interpretations that ends up taking over, in a jubilant whirlwind of contradictory and often absurd arguments. Of course, *Hariya* should not be interpreted merely as a by-product of Western postmodern writing. To do so would be to ignore both the tradition of Hindi satire (*vyaṅgya*), of which Joshi became one of the most prominent writers, and the traditional Urdu genre of the *qissā*[11] that the author has revisited and to whose current revival he has personally contributed.

The interpretation proposed in this chapter is only one of the many possibilities offered by these two very rich and expressly "open works" (to use the terminology of Umberto Eco[12]). As Veronica Ghirardi comments on Joshi's novel, "Hariyā's story appears to the reader as a cubist painting where every single element can be seen from several points of view and there is no possibility of establishing a final truth. [. . .] Every aspect of the story is, therefore, suspended in uncertainty".[13] The end of the book does not contradict this interpretation. The following extract is clear on this point:

> The more we investigated and theorized, the more facts and theories piled up, making it all the more difficult to determine what was true and what false. Was something false that seemed true or was it a truth that looked false? For those who had not taken sides, was nothing true? Or nothing false? If impartiality means uncertainty, then is our own perplexity at the perplexity of Hariya Hercules the best we can ever hope for? At night, at the corner paan shop, the facts and theories of one side clashed with those of the other sides and since our community held dearly to the principles of democracy, it was almost impossible for us to accept any one fact or theory as forever and ever true. (150/124)[14]

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11 On the *qissā* (and *dāstān*) genre, see Pritchett 1991.

12 Eco 1989.

13 Ghirardi 2020: 244–245.

14 Here and throughout, paired page references (such as 150/124 above) following quotations correspond respectively to the translated English editions (Tabucchi 1988 / Joshi 2009) and original Italian or Hindi editions (Tabucchi 1984 / Joshi 2016 [1994]). Hindi original: Ham jitnā hī anumān-anusandhān karte cale gaye, hamāre pās utne hī tathya aur kathya jamā hote cale gaye. lekin unke viṣay meṁ satyāsatya kā nirṇay karnā kaṭhintar hotā calā gayā. kyā ve sac-jaise lagne vāle jhūṭh the? yā ki jhūṭh-jaise lagne vāle sac the? yā ki ve kuch sac aur kuch jhūṭh the? kyā jo pakṣadhar nahīṁ haiṁ, unke lie kuch bhī sac nahīṁ hai? yā ki unke lie kuch bhī jhūṭh nahīṁ hai? agar niṣpakṣatā kā matlab anirṇay hai, to kyā ham hariyā harkyūlīz kī hairānī kī kahānī par bas isī tarah hairānī hī hote rah sakte haiṁ? rāt ko nukkaṛ ke panvāṛī kī dukān par pakṣadharoṁ ke jhūṭh ṭakrāte rahe aur unmeṁ se kisī ek ko hameśā-hameśā ke lie sac mān lenā birādarī meṁ loktantra ke zor pakaṛ lene ke kāraṇ asambhavprāy ho gayā.

2 On comparison

In order to compare the two texts and extract the most relevant information possible from them, the question arises of the order in which the texts and the elements to be analysed should be presented. An analysis of one text in its entirety followed by the second according to the same principle brings consistency to the narratives and helps to highlight the structure of each of the texts as well as the arguments that link the different parts together. An analysis which, on the contrary, favours the comparison of some elements or the successive phases of the narrative by alternating the passage of one text with that of the other will have the advantage of strengthening the comparison itself, to the detriment, however, of the internal coherence of each of the texts. An interesting heuristic approach would be to develop both models, which would eventually provide a means of comparing the results obtained. However, due to lack of space, only the first model of comparison (analysis of one text and then the second) will be adopted here.

The comparison here focuses on the theme of the double. The interpretation of this theme is closely linked to the development of its argumentation in each of the two texts. The order of presentation of the texts (*Nocturne* and then *Hariya*) has been chosen according to a basic criterion, that of their original publication date: 1984 for Tabucchi's novel (1988 for its English translation), 1994 (reprinted 2016) for Joshi's (2009 for its English translation). This does not imply, however, that the former may have inspired the author of the latter, despite the prominent place of intertextuality in the writings of both authors.

The second model of comparison (i.e. the comparison of phases and elements) was, however, carried out as a preparatory step, and the results obtained have been incorporated into the subsequent analysis. One finding is that the two books show a certain similarity between the phases of the characters' journey: (i) acknowledgement of the double and beginning of the quest; (ii) state of crisis; (iii) appearance of an important "informant"; and (iv) naming of the Other and disappearance of the "I". This division will be used hereafter in the analysis of the texts. A few elements have been privileged over others to make the comparison of the two books more eloquent in the reader's mind.

3 Analysis of the texts

3.1 The "double" in *Nocturne*

Phase (i): The very beginning of the novel (3), when Roux arrives in Mumbai (Bombay),[15] immediately sets the scene (nightlife, darkness, power relations between different social classes, etc.), as well as the perspective, according to the narrator, that one should adopt to understand India, and any reality at large: any picture we see in a frame is only a *trompe l'œil*, a fragment of reality, if not a total deformation of it.

> Cage District[16] was much worse than I had imagined. I'd seen it in the photographs of a famous photographer and thought I was prepared for human misery, but photographs enclose the visible in a rectangle. The visible without a frame is always something else. (5/15)[17]

This anticipates the explanation given by Christine, the photographer the narrator meets at the end of the novel who explains to him her artistic approach: to be suspicious of "morceaux choisis" (in French in the text). In the case of this novel, it is a matter of being wary of pre-established identities, as in the case of Roux, the main character and homodiegetic narrator who has come to look for a friend in India, Xavier Janata Pinto, who seems to have disappeared a year ago (39).

The friend is therefore the reason for Roux's journey, "short for Rouxinol, Portuguese for nightingale" (23). If his personal identity seems real and distinct from Roux's, unlike Hariya's double, it will become apparent as the journey progresses, that things are not as clearly defined and definable as one would like to believe. From the beginning, however, textual and semantic clues are provided to convey a feeling of confusion. For example, Roux takes a nap after reaching the hotel in Mumbai and when he is awakened by a knocking at the door, he "do[es]n't know how long [he] slept. Perhaps two hours, perhaps longer" (8). Similarly, the girl who had knocked at the door expresses "total amazement" when Roux mentions to her the name of his friend Xavier (9).

Phase (ii): The next phase, in a hospital in Mumbai where Xavier could have been cured, clearly casts doubt on the stability of identities and personal choic-

15 In what follows, the official names of cities that are currently in use are adopted. The names used in the texts are indicated in parentheses.

16 The notorious red-light district in Mumbai.

17 Il "Quartiere delle Gabbie" era molto peggio di come me lo ero immaginato. Lo conoscevo attraverso certe fotografie di un fotografo celebre e pensavo di essere preparato alla miseria umana, ma le fotografie chiudono il visibile in un rettangolo. Il visibile senza cornice è sempre un'altra cosa.

es. Boundaries and paths become blurred. Thus, when Roux tells the doctor who is supposed to have treated Xavier that "he's a Portuguese who lost his way in India", the doctor replies, "A lot of people lose their way in India, [. . .] it's a country specially made for that" (12/23)[18]. But it is not only their way that visitors lose in India. Their psychic integrity can also be subject to the same effect, as is demonstrated by the narrator's comment some pages later when he finds himself overwhelmed in observing his surroundings: "I watched with greater pleasure, with the perfect sensation of being just two eyes watching while I myself was elsewhere, without knowing where" (25/37)[19]. The narrator feels he has lost his grip on the world around him and is no longer able to discern the meaning of the sounds he hears:

> From far away came a slow monotonous voice, a prayer perhaps, or a solitary, hopeless lament, the kind of cry that expresses nothing but itself, asks nothing of anyone. I found it impossible to make out any words. India was this too: a universe of flat sounds, undifferentiated, indistinguishable. [. . .] I had lost myself in distant thoughts. (26/38)[20]

A dozen pages later, we find Roux, after a journey of more than a thousand kilometres, at the Theosophical Society of Adyar, in the suburbs of Chennai (Madras). When his host asks him if he is "familiar with India", he replies, "No, [. . .] this is the first time I've been here. I still haven't really taken in where I am" (40/55)[21].

Phase (iii): After this episode, as the narrator travels back across the country to Mangaluru (Mangalore), his sense of disorientation and doubts about his identity take a further step when, in the middle of the night, at an unlikely bus stop in the middle of nowhere, he comes across an *arhant*, described by the boy accompanying him as a "Jain prophet" (51). Intrigued by this fellow, whose appearance is more that of a "monkey" or "monster" than of a human being (66), and whose occupation is to read "the karma of the pilgrims" (67), the narrator asks him if he can say anything about his own karma. This is the dialogue that follows:

> "I'm sorry," he said, "my brother says it isn't possible, you are someone else."
> "Oh, really," I said, "who am I?"

18 "è un portoghese che si è perduto in India". [. . .] "In India si perde molta gente", disse, "è un paese fatto apposta per questo".

19 E così guardai con maggiore voluttà, con la perfetta sensazione di essere solo due occhi che guardavano mentre io ero altrove, senza sapere dove.

20 Da lontano veniva una voce lenta e monotona, forse una preghiera oppure un lamento solitario e senza speranza, come quei lamenti che esprimono solo se stessi, senza chiedere niente. Per me era impossibile decifrarlo. L'India era anche questo: un universo di suoni piatti, indifferenziati, indistinguibili. [. . .] mi ero perduto in considerazioni lontane.

21 "No [. . .] è la prima volta che ci vengo, non mi sono ancora reso bene conto dove sono."

> The boy spoke to his brother again and the brother answered briefly. "It doesn't matter," translated the boy, "that's only *maya*."
> "And what is *maya?*"
> "It's the outward appearance of the world," the boy replied, "but it's only illusion, what counts is the *atma*." Then he consulted his brother and confirmed with conviction: "What counts is the *atma*."
> "And what is the *atma*?"
> The boy smiled at my ignorance. "The soul," he said, "the individual soul."
> [. . .]
> "I thought we only had our *karma* inside us," I said, "the sum of our actions, of what we have been and what we shall be."
> [. . .] "Oh no," explained the boy, "there's your *atma* as well, it's there together with the *karma*, but it's a separate thing."
> "Well then, if I'm another person, I'd like to know where my *atma* is, where it is now."
> The boy translated for the brother and a rapid exchange followed. "It's difficult to say," he came back to me, "he can't do it. [. . .] you're not there, he can't tell you where you are."[22] (51–53/68–69)

The blurring of Roux's identity increases. The boundary between the narrator, who is looking for his friend, and the Other, that friend at the origin of this search, becomes blurred. However, there is not yet an amalgam or a fusion between the two "characters", even if Roux is clearly no longer himself, no longer the persona he thought he was: "you are someone else". Roux's conviction that the person is limited to her/his actions, to her/his karma, wanes in the face of the destabilising context of India (particularly in that bus shelter lost in the middle of the countryside, in the midst of the night, in the presence of an indescribable being). But if he is not the one he thought he was, who is he, where is he, where is his *ātma* hiding, whose existence he seems to learn? Apparently not in him ("he can't tell you where you are"). In his double perhaps?

Doubt and confusion increase and take over in the next chapter. The narrator, who has come to a Portuguese monastery in Goa in search of information about Xavier, falls asleep in the library and has a strange dream. In his dream he ex-

22 "Mi dispiace", disse lui, "mio fratello dice che non è possibile, tu sei un altro." / "Ah sì", dissi io, "chi sono?". / Il ragazzo parlò di nuovo al fratello e costui gli rispose brevemente. "Questo non importa", mi riferì il ragazzo, "è solo *maya*". / "E che cos'è *maya*?". / "È l'apparenza del mondo", rispose il ragazzo, "ma è solo illusione, quello che conta è l'*atma*". Poi si consultò col fratello e mi confermò con convinzione: "quello che conta è l'*atma*". / "E l'*atma* che cos'è?". / Il ragazzo sorrise della mia ignoranza. "*The soul*", disse, "l'anima individuale". [. . .] "Credevo che dentro di noi ci fosse solo il *karma*", dissi io, "la somma delle nostre azioni, di ciò che siamo stati e di ciò che saremo". [. . .] "Oh no", spiegò il ragazzo, "c'è anche l'*atma*, sta con il *karma* ma è una cosa distinta". / "E allora se io sono un altro vorrei sapere dov'è il mio *atma*, dove si trova ora". / Il ragazzo tradusse al fratello e ne seguì une fitta conversazione. "È molto difficile dirlo", mi riferì poi, "lui non è capace". [. . .] "tu non ci sei, non può dirti dove sei".

plains, in Portuguese, to an old man he believes to be mad, that he has come to find his brother. But the old man tells him that "Xavier doesn't exist [. . .]. He's nothing but a ghost. [. . .] We are all dead, haven't you realized that yet?"[23] (60/78). Everything in this chapter is a source of unease: "I looked at him in amazement"; "I felt a deep embarrassment"; "the room was getting darker and darker"; "I got up, confused"[24] (57–60/75–79).

Phase (iv): As he gets nearer the end of his journey, still in Goa, and starts whistling an old song, he suddenly realises that his friend must have been called "Nightingale" here, in reference to a dialogue he had had with him, during which he said to him: "I have become a night bird" (90). Pinpointing this name finally helps him to find a clue in the hotels of Goa. The story continues for the next few pages as if there were still two separate individuals, Roux and Xavier. But "Nightingale" is also the full English name of Roux himself, as we saw at the beginning of this section. Moreover, we also know that the identity of the narrator has been challenged and that the Other sought is perhaps just another figure of the narrator's self.

This is confirmed in the last chapter where we find Xavier having a tête-à-tête with Christine, a photographer he has just met by chance. Both are having their dinner in some renowned luxury hotel—a common symbol in the novel of the colonial past and the Western world. And there, the narrator, trying to summarise for Christine the book he is writing ("let's suppose I'm writing a book, for example", 100), suddenly inverts the roles: he is Xavier, whom a long-time friend is trying to find.

> "The central idea is that in this book I am someone who has lost his way in India," I repeated. "Let's put it like that. There is someone else who is looking for me, but I have no intention of letting him find me. I saw him arrive and I have followed him day by day, we could say. I know his likes and his dislikes, his enthusiasms and his hesitations, his generosity and his fears. I keep him more or less under control. He, on the contrary, knows almost nothing about me. [. . .]"
> "But who are you?" asked Christine. "In the book I mean."
> "That's never revealed," I answered. "I am someone who doesn't want to be found, so it's not part of the game to say who."
> "And the person looking for you who you seem to know so well," Christine asked again, "does he know you?"
> "Once he knew me, let's suppose that we were great friends, once. But this was a long time ago, outside the frame of the book."
> "And why is he looking for you with such determination?"

23 "Xavier non esiste", disse, "è solo un fantasma. [. . .] Siamo tutti morti, non l'ha ancora capito?"

24 "Lo guardai con stupor"; "provai un grande imbarazzo"; "la stanza era sempre più scura"; "mi alzai confuso".

> "Who knows?" I said. It's hard to tell, I don't even know that and I'm writing the book. [. . .] In a way he is looking for himself. I mean, it's as if he were looking for himself, looking for me: that often happens in books, it's literature." [. . .]
> "[. . .] the book is mainly that: his travelling. He has a whole series of encounters, naturally, because when one travels one meets people."[25] (82–83/102–104)

Thus the "I" has merged into the "double", or rather the "double" has taken the place of the "I". No matter who is who, who is looking for whom, it seems that the quest has vanished, the game is over: "He has been looking at me for a long time, and now that he has found me he no longer has any desire to find me. [. . .] And I have no desire to be found either"[26] (86/107).[27]

3.2 The "double" in *Hariya*

In this novel everything is about echoes, reflections, mirrors, doubles. In short, the existence of the "Other" (*dūsrā*)—which looks like the self without being completely identical to it—is paramount. The expression "*maiṁ hī vah dūsrā*", "I myself am that other" (97/81), which provides an attempt to explain the enigmatic meaning of the place name "Gūmāliṅg" in the Himalaya, sums up these "mirror

25 "La sostanza è che in questo libro io sono uno che si è perso in India", ripetei, "mettiamola così. C'è un altro che mi sta cercando, ma io non ho nessuna intenzione di farmi trovare. Io l'ho visto arrivare, l'ho seguito giorno per giorno, potrei dire. Conosco le sue preferenze e le sue insofferenze, i suoi slanci e le sue diffidenze, le sue generosità e le sue paure. Lo tengo praticamente sotto controllo. Lui, al contrario, di me non sa quasi niente. [. . .]" / "Ma lei chi è?", chiese Christine, "voglio dire nel libro". / "Questo non viene detto", risposi, "sono uno che non vuole farsi trovare, dunque non fa parte del gioco dire chi è". / "E quello che la cerca e che lei sembra conoscere così bene", chiese ancora Christine, "costui la conosce?". / "Une volta mi conosceva, supponiamo che siamo stati grandi amici, un tempo. Ma questo succedeva molto tempo fa, fuori della cornice del libro". / "E lui perché la sta cercando con tanta insistenza?" / "Chi lo sa", dissi io, "è difficile saperlo, questo non lo so neppure io che scrivo. [. . .] In qualche modo sta cercando se stesso. Voglio dire, è come se cercasse se stesso, cercando me: nei libri succede spesso così, è letteratura". [. . .] / "il libro è principalmente questo: il suo viaggio. Fa tutta una serie di incontri, naturalmente, perché nei viaggi si incontrano persone".

26 "Mi ha cercato tanto, e ora che mi ha trovato non ha più voglia di trovarmi [. . .] E anch'io non ho voglia di essere trovato."

27 This notion of an identity that lacks unicity, that is multiple, seen as a "confederation of souls" in Tabucchi's works, is briefly analysed by Ganeri 2021: 26–28 in his monograph on Fernando Pessoa, a major source of inspiration to Tabucchi. My thanks to Philippe Bornet for pointing this out.

effects". We will discuss this crucial passage in detail later, but first let us look at the first appearance of the notion of "double" and its context in the text.

Phase (i): The mention of a "double", a person in every way similar to Hariya, and its association with the Australian town of Goomalling, is the central element of the story, which triggers Hariya's initial astonishment and transforms the linear narrative hitherto adopted into a multidirectional one, with embeddings (the first one starting, significantly, with the opening of Hariya's father's trunk), commentaries, and multiple interpretations. The mention of this double, which awakens Hariya from his routine torpor, comes just after a consideration by Atul, Hariya's cousin, of two issues that are at odds with each other: a discussion, in very crude and colourful terms, on Hariya's father's chronic constipation, and a set of ontological questions about the link between one's fundamental being, one's self, and the body:

> Not only was Atul not revulsed by what he heard, but Girvan Datt-ji's inability to shit prompted him to extend his own speech by adding to it a profound question. That was this: "How is it that a man's body cannot be entirely within that man's control? The part of your babu's body that is paralysed no longer functions, but if it is still his, then why doesn't it do what he says? If it isn't in your babu's control anymore but is still in the control of a part of your babu's brain, then is your babu a being separate from his brain? Or does he fill up only that part of it that works? Where does your babu exist in his body? If his heart keeps working, but his brain dies, then are you going to think of your babu as being alive or dead?"[28] (26/24)

Readers will have acknowledged the implicit reference to the ancient Vedantic debate on the link between the self and the body, here ironically addressed by the context of constipation at the origin of Atul's questioning on the one hand, and by the connotations of the name of the town of Goomalling that the cousin discovers "by chance" at that moment on the other. The existence of a town with such a strange name is therefore the cause of Hariya's initial astonishment. But it is Atul's explanation that in the whole world—and even in such an unlikely place as Goomalling—a person exists who is in every way similar to another living elsewhere and sharing his fate, that definitively throws Hariya into surprise, perplexity, and his continuous questioning about the meaning of life and human condition:

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28 Sunkar atul ghināyā nahīṁ, balki usne girvāṇ datt jī ke apne hī mal ko niṣkāsit na kar sakne ko ek vyāpak praśn se joṛkar carcā āge baṛānī cāhī. vah yah ki ādmī kā śarīr pūrī tarah se ādmī ke bas meṁ kyoṁ nahīṁ hotā? āpke bābū ke jo aṅg laqvā paṛne ke bād kām nahīṁ kar rahe haiṁ ve agar unke hī haiṁ to unkā kahnā kyoṁ nahīṁ mān rahe haiṁ? agar ye aṅg āpke bābū ke nahīṁ, unke dimāg ke kisī hisse ke bas meṁ the, to kyā āpke bābū apne dimāg se koī alag hastī rakhte haiṁ? yā vah utne bhar hote haiṁ, jitne unke dimāg ke hisse kām kar rahe hote haiṁ? āpke bābū apne śarīr meṁ kahāṁ sthit haiṁ? agar dil caltā rahegā lekin dimāg mar jāyegā to āp apne bābū ko zindā mānеṁge ki marā huā?

> "A double?" Hariya's perplexity was now complete.
> "Yes, someone exactly like you, in every detail. Just like the one who looks back at you from the mirror."[29] (28/26)

It is therefore the purely imaginary, hypothetical existence of some Australian double that first prompts Hariya to reflect on his situation and to question his identity.

Phase (ii): The second mention of the double appears some twenty pages later and comes in a crisis situation. Since the atlas episode, everything is subject to astonishment and questions, be it the existence of Goomalling or, because of the presence of the word "ling" (short form for *lingam*) in this mysterious name, sexuality in general (to which he had previously paid no attention).[30] When Hariya visits his father's doctor, Dr Nilambar, he embarks on a series of endless questions, ranging from the deepest to the most absurd, such as whether there is a cult to the "goo" in Goomalling. Also present at the doctor's house, Ganesh Datt Shastri, an expert in religious matters and supporter of the Jan Sangh, cannot help but contradict the answers of Dr Nilambar, a convinced Marxist:

> "That's the kind of absolute nonsense you come up with when you read little books in English about your own religion. 'Ling' does not mean penis. It is a particular mark or sign that is capable of producing in human beings a thorough understanding of creation and destruction. And believing that all things are sacred does not mean we worship our own shit! Don't use that Marx god of yours, Doctor Saheb, to make a goo-explanation of the most profound aspects of our dharma!"[31] (44/39)

It is just after this new philosophico-scatological episode that Hariya has a kind of fit with the characteristics of epilepsy and starts to speak in English, which he had never done before, moreover with a perfect Australian accent, unintelligible to his interlocutors!

At this point in Hariya's life, identification with the double, with the Other, is therefore equivalent to a crisis, to a loss of orientation, to the loss of meaning too. But this identity crisis is not limited to the presence of a single double. After the

29 "ḍabal?" hariyā kī hairānī barakrār rahī. / "hāṁ." atul bolā, "hū-ba-hū āpkā-jaisā koī. jaisā āpko āīne meṁ dikhāī dene vālā hotā hai."

30 "If this world of pleasure and enjoyment has, actually, no stable essence, then why do people worship that, (whadayacallit?), main tool of pleasure and enjoyment?" (agar yah bhog-vilās kī duniyā nissār ṭhahrī to use kyā pūjnā jo, kyā nām kahte haiṁ, bhog-vilās kā khās hathiyār ṭhahrā?, 40/36).

31 "apne dharm ke bāre meṁ aṅgrezoṁ kī pothiyāṁ paṛhoge to aisā hī anargal pralāp karoge. liṅg kā arth śiśn nahīṁ hai. uskā arth hai sr̥ṣṭi aur saṁhār ke kāraṇ kā bodh karāne vālā cihn. aur sab cīzoṁ ko pavitr mānte haiṁ kā arth yah nahīṁ hai ki apne hī mal kā pūjan karte haiṁ! apne mārks devatā kā nām lekar hamāre gūṛhātigūṛh viṣayoṁ kī aisī gū-vyākhyā mat karo ḍokṭar!"

death of his father, who represented the community's tutelary and authoritative figure, Hariya's personality is multiplied—at least that is how the members of the community perceive this phenomenon. And here, too, philosophy and sexuality appear together:

> The explanation of Doctor Nilambar's reached Hariya's ears, too, causing him to think and ask: "If it's possible for many mes to be inside me, why can't it be possible for others just like me to be outside me? One of those would be the one who lives in Goomalling, Australia, whose address—why can't you people find that out? [. . .] To all my doubles, wherever they are, send a telegram."[32] (72/61)

However, this multiplicity of personalities disturbs a large part of his community, which sees this phenomenon as proof of his madness, or the sign of a brain tumour.

Phase (iii): The next major episode related to the question of the double is also linked to a severe crisis. It comes as a heart attack which strikes Hariya upon being informed by the Himachal Pradesh government that there is no place called Goomalling in the state. Refusing to be hospitalised, he continues looking for any valuable information about Goomalling, until the day a man named Harry Smith comes to his house. Smith has a copy of a book entitled *My Travels in North-West India*, the author of which is said to be a "John Moore".[33] Moore explains in the book his journey in the Himalaya in search of Goomalling and his meeting with a "Captain Trevor Meredith". For Hariya, the similarity of his first name with the visitor's name (Harry) and their respective fathers' names (Girvan and Gary) is a surprising but obvious proof of the existence of Goomalling. This reinforces his will to go there to bring back his father's trunk and atone for his sin. He will be accompanied by Piruli Kaiñja, a distant relative linked to Girvan Datt's former life, whose personality is dual, or perceived as such by the community: she is "a

32 Ḍākṭar nīlāmbar kā yah viśleṣaṇ hariyā ke kān meṁ hī paṛā. aur ab vah yah soctā-pūchtā rahā ki jab mere bhītar kaī "maiṁ" ho sakte haiṁ, tab mere bāhar ṭhīk mere-jaise dūsre kyoṁ nahīṁ ho sakte? inmeṁ se ek vah dūsrā, jo gūmāliṅg āsṭreliyā meṁ rahtā hai, uskā patā āp log mālūm kyoṁ nahīṁ kar dete? [. . .] ek se do bhale, do se cār, mere-jaise jitte bhī dūsre haiṁ sabb ko de do tār.

33 One could elaborate on the origin of this John Moore and the source of Joshi's inspiration. Among the many possible sources of inspiration, one of the most likely is that of the veterinary surgeon William Moorcroft (1767–1825), who was one of the greatest British explorers of the Himalaya. Otherwise, it can be the naturalist and explorer John Muir (1838–1914), author of *Travels in Alaska*, but who—to my knowledge—never went to India. Or is it an allusion to Thomas More (1478–1535) and his famous *Utopia* (1516)? Another clue, more pertinent regarding the novel and Hariya's quest than to Moore's name itself, could be Rudyard Kipling's famous Bengali agent, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, in *Kim*. Or perhaps it is even an allusion to John Murray's handbooks for travellers (my thanks to Philippe Bornet for this last suggestion).

Buddhist nun devoting herself to the liberation of the Dalit women" to some (84), a prostitute without morals "whose name the community thought improper even to mention" to others (77).

It is the appearance in the story of Harry Smith, Hariya's Anglo-Indian double, that convinces the latter to embark on the quest for this mysterious place, hidden somewhere in the Himalaya. In this episode too, as in the other passages involving the notion of a "double", ontological questions form the background of the discussion. This time, in the excerpt from Moore's book provided by Harry, it is the meaning associated with Goomalling that constitutes the main issue. The extract is a little long, but since it brings together all the elements of the theme of the double (double, shadow, mirror, Other), it deserves quoting extensively:

> [John Moore:] "Do you mean to say that 'Goomalling' is a word without a meaning?"
> The Captain replied seriously, "Actually, it's said to be so meaningful one could spend one's entire life trying to understand it. As far as I've been able to fathom it, 'Goomalling' means 'I myself am that other'."
> "'That other'," said I, surprised.
> "Yes," he said, "in this people's philosophy of life, one's double is extremely important. They believe everyone has a double, and one's double accompanies one in the manner of a shadow. That's why they have such strict superstitions about simulacra. Everyone here is extremely careful about his own shadow because it is a belief that whatever is allowed to happen to one's shadow will occur also to the individual himself. [. . .] Similarly, mirrors fill them with dread and when they have to collect water from a pond or a river, or if they have to bathe, then they do so with their eyes firmly shut." [. . .]
> Carefully folding the map and slipping it into my rucksack, I asked a final question. "What material thing is worshipped there?"
> Downing the last gulp of brandy and arranging his pack into a pillow, he smiled and said, "A mirror. The poojaree places in front of the pilgrim a mirror that is otherwise always covered with the skin of a musk deer. Then he hands over to the pilgrim the implements necessary for shaving, goes behind the mirror, and lifting back the deerskin, he begins the recitation of mantras. Repeatedly, both the name of the worshipper and 'Goomalling' are heard, as if both were being praised at once. Meanwhile, the worshipper finishes his shave. Then the poojaree leads him with his eyes shut to the sacred lake for a bath. When the bath is completed, the worshipper, with the same mantras recited again, is allowed to see his reflection in the water. With that, the pooja is completed."[34] (97–99/81–82)

34 "āpke kahne kā yah matlab hai ki gūmāliṅg ek bematlab śabd hai?" maiṁne pūchā. / kaipṭen gambhir hokar bolā, "yah to itnā zyādā mānīkhej batāyā jātā hai ki matlab samajhte-samajhte zindagānī bīt jāye. jahāṁ tak maiṁ samajh pāyā hūṁ, gūmāliṅg kā arth 'maiṁ hī vah dūsrā' hai." / "vah dūsrā!" maiṁne āścarya se kahā. / "hāṁ." vah bolā, "in logoṁ ke jīvan-darśan meṁ pratirūp kā mahattvapūrṇ sthān hai. ye log mān ke calte haiṁ ki har vyakti-jaisā ek dūsrā vyakti bhī hotā hai. ye dūsrā uske sāth chāyā kī tarah caltā hai. isīlie inmeṁ chāyā ke bāre meṁ baṛe andhaviśvās haiṁ. yahāṁ har vyakti apnī chāyā ke

The mirror also refers to the notion of the metaphysical double in Indian philosophy, the *vah dūsrā* (that Other). This enigmatic formula obviously echoes the famous Vedantic *mahā-vākya* (great word) *tat tvam asi* (that thou art). But here too, as elsewhere in the novel, Joshi seems to enjoy juggling the most revered Indian concepts (such as the theory of illusion, or the world seen as a divine game) into a parody of philosophy, into a big joke.

Phase (iv): Following this episode, Hariya leaves for the Himalaya in search of Goomalling, which is said to be located near the pass of Takling La (Spiti District, Himachal Pradesh). The route, tortuous and not very precisely described, passes through Shimla, Kullu, and the Shipki La (Kinnaur District, considered on websites as "the world's most treacherous road"!), but there is also mention of a village named Hansi, which means "laughter" or "joke" in Hindi![35] Hariya is accompanied by Piruli Kaiñja. The story of the journey itself is then described by the latter, for an obvious reason: she returns alone. Nobody knows exactly what happened to Hariya—she is herself not very clear about it—and her community argues about the correct interpretation to give to Hariya's disappearance and indeed the meaning of the whole story. In the end, as in Vedantic philosophy, it is the absence of a univocal interpretation that prevails, in favour of the multiplicity of perspectives and points of view, offering to readers of *Hariya* a contemporary version of the enigmatic phrase *neti neti*.[36] This is anticipated by Piruli Kaiñja in her account to the community of Hariya's disappearance:

> A little while after the sun had set, the poojaree returned with Chachang. I asked where Hariya was. He said he had crossed over to the other side of the mirror.

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viṣay meṁ bahut satark rahtā hai kyoṁki mānyatā hai ki chāyā ko jo kuch kar diyā jāye vahī fauran vyakti par bhī ghaṭit ho jātā hai. [. . .] isī mānyatā ke calte ye log darpaṇoṁ ke virodhī haiṁ aur nadī yā jhīl se pānī bharte hue athavā unmeṁ nahāte hue apnī āṁkheṁ band kiye lete haiṁ." [. . .] nakśā acchī tarah moṛkar maiṁne apne piṭṭhū meṁ ḍāl diyā aur ek antim jigyāsā kī, "vahāṁ pūjan kis cīz kā hotā hai?" / brāṇḍī kā antim ghūṁṭ lekar, apne piṭṭhū kā sirhānā banāte hue vah muskarākar bolā, "darpaṇ kā. pujārī tīrthayātrī ke sāmne apnā vah darpaṇ rakhtā hai jo sadā kastūrī-mṛg kī chāl se ḍhakā rahtā hai. phir tīrthayātrī ko hajāmat kā sāmān dekar vah svayam darpaṇ ke pīche calā jātā hai aur mṛg-chāl haṭākar mantroccār śurū kartā hai. uske mantra meṁ bār-bār tīrthayātrī kā nām aur gūmāliṅg kā nām ātā hai. māno uskī stuti donoṁ ko hī samān rūp se samarpit ho. is bīc yātrī apnī hajāmat banā letā hai. phir pujārī pavitr jhīl meṁ āṁkheṁ mīce-mīce snān karne ke lie le jātā hai. snān kar cukne ke bād punaḥ usī mantroccār ke sāth yātrī ko jhīl meṁ apnā pratibimb dekhne diyā jātā hai. iske sāth hī pūjā samāpt hotī hai."

35 An imaginary place name, but not so different from the existing village name of Hansa in Spiti District.

36 This phrase, which first appears in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (3.9.26), expresses the impossibility of qualifying, defining, or describing the *ātman*, which does not belong to the phenomenal world.

> My heart stopped. I asked, “What are you saying? You mean he just now passed away?”
> He said that after meeting the First Female Other, he had crossed over to the other side where it is very difficult to be certain if something is or is not. Or is but also is not. *Or neither is nor is not*. The lama said Hariya has brought peace to his babu’s spirit, he himself has achieved moksha and provided release and prosperity for everyone in his community.[37] (129/107–108; my emphasis)

According to this passage, the narrator has the poojaree-lama say that “moksha” (liberation) is to be understood as a state beyond characterisation, corresponding to the non-duality of the Advaita Vedānta. However, the theoretical framework in which this ultimate “disappearance” occurs is inspired by what seems to be a borrowing—as parody—from the dualistic system of Sāṃkhya: the double of the I, a Woman, is created in response to the ultimate loneliness of the masculine I. But this “compendium” of Sāṃkhya philosophy is coupled with a parody of Vedic etymologies, explaining the origin of words and expressions through episodes from Vedic mythology and cosmogony. The following explanation is given by one of the lamas Hariya and Piruli Kaiñja meet on the way to Goomalling.

> “In the very beginning, when there was nothing in the world, He was alone and His loneliness was so complete He could not stand it. There being no one else, it was even very difficult for Him to believe that He Himself existed. In order to convince Himself, He would shout, ‘I am, I am!’ That’s why even today everyone refers to himself with the name ‘I’. But when there was no one else, who could hear what He said and respond ‘Yes, bhaiya, you are’? So He made a woman just like Himself. Only because of the existence of that woman did He exist. Therefore, in His eyes women are more important. So the very first Other was female, right? Where we’re going is where that female Other is worshipped.”[38] (128/106–107)

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37 Sūraj chipne ke kuch der bād pujārī chachāṅg ko leke lauṭā. maiṁne pūchā ki hariyā kahāṁ hai? usne kahā ki vah āīne ke pār calā gayā hai. / merā dil dhak se rah gayā. maiṁne pūchā, “kyā kah rahe ho? kyā vah nahīṁ rahā ab?” / vah bolā ki āīne meṁ assal strī se milkar vah us pār vahāṁ calā gayā hai, jahāṁ kisī bhī cīz ke bāre meṁ yah kah saknā kaṭhin hai ki vah hai? yā nahīṁ hai? yā hai, magar nahīṁ bhī hai? yā na hai aur na nahīṁ bhī hai? usne apne bābū ke pret ko mukti dilā dī hai, āp bhī mokṣa pā gayā hai aur uske parivār meṁ, birādarī meṁ jo bhī bace hue hoṁge, unkā bhī uddhār karā gayā hai.

38 “Śurū-śurū meṁ jab kuch nahīṁ ṭhahrā duniyā meṁ tab vah akelā ṭhahrā aur uske lie bhī akelāpan bardāśt karnā kaṭhin-jaisā ho gayā ṭhahrā. dūsrā koī na hone se uske lie yah mānnā tak kaṭhin ho gayā ṭhahrā ki maiṁ hūṁ karke. kahne ko vah kāfī zor-zor se kahtā rahā ki maiṁ hūṁ, maiṁ hūṁ. isī māre duniyā meṁ sabhī log āj tak apne ko maiṁ nām se hī pukārte haiṁ. lekin jab koī dūsrā thā hī nahīṁ, to kaun jo uskī bāt suntā aur kaun jo ye kahtā ki hāṁ bhaiyā, tū hai. to phir usne apnī hī jaisī ek aurat banāyī. aurat ke hone se hī vah huā. isīlie āj talak uskī nazar meṁ to aurat hī baṛī hai. to vah pahlā-pahlā dūsrā asal meṁ ‘dūsrī’ thā nā. jahāṁ ham jā rahe haiṁ vahāṁ usī dūsrī kī pūjā kī jātī hai.”

Moreover, no matter the topic, any discourse in *Hariya* that looks serious, academic, or philosophical is perceived as uninteresting, inappropriate, and boring. Thus Piruli Kaiñja's narration is systematically interrupted each time she tries to provide a philosophical explanation of the events that occurred during their journey in the Himalaya. This is the case, for example, when she explains to the community members how she was trying to make Hariya understand the impermanent nature of the "self", reproducing a kind of précis of the Buddhist philosophy:

> "I explained to him that the world is ever-changing and we are ever-changing. You weren't yesterday what you are today, and what you are today you won't be tomorrow. You keep calling yourself 'I', but that 'I' is hardly just one entity. One moment it is one thing, the next it's another. In always becoming something else, you can also become that which you were before. The world changes every moment and so does man. Therefore, in neither is there an eternal essence. [. . .]"
> It does not need saying that, bored and irritated by Piruli Kainja's summary of Buddhist philosophy, we requested her to please get on with the story.[39] (113–114/94)

Any fundamental issue of identity or any serious attempt at explaining the truth is thus systematically rejected by the members of the community. This constant discrepancy between the readers' expectations that ontological questions will be given an answer and the absurdity with which these questions are ultimately treated provides the novel its deeply satirical tone. The incredible story of Hariya, which abounds in philosophical considerations—as very few other contemporary stories do—turns out to be an inexhaustible parody of the philosophical and religious debates of the subcontinent, be they attached to Buddhist, Hinduist, or Orientalist doctrines:

> [Lama Namyang No, to Hariya:] "This piece of garbage written by Moore Saheb you have with you—he was a member of one of London's secret societies. All the Moores-Hoores in that society had one and only one occupation: they made up this Goomalling teertha and wrote about it wherever

39 "Maiṁne use samjhāyā ki duniyā bhī barābar badaltī rahtī hai aur ham bhī barābar badalte rahte haiṁ. tum āj jaise ho vaise kal nahīṁ the aur kal jaise ho jāoge vaise āj nahīṁ ho. tum apne ko 'maiṁ' to kahte cale jāte ho, magar yah 'maiṁ' hameśā ek-jaisā thoṛī rahtā hai. vah to pal meṁ rattī, pal meṁ māśā ho jātā hai. badalkar kuch aur banne meṁ tum vah bhī ban hī sakne vāle ṭhahre jo tum bahut pahle kabhī the. duniyā kṣaṇ-kṣaṇ badaltī hai aur insān bhī. islie donoṁ meṁ koī sār-jaisā hai nahīṁ. [. . .]" / kahnā na hogā ki pirūlī kaiñjā ke bauddh-darśan ke is saṁskaraṇ par hamārī birādarī ne ūbkar aur khījhkar kahānī āge sunāye jāne kī māṁg kī.

> they could in order to confuse and make fun of other scholars and to mock India and Tibet."[40] (119/98)

In the end (142), the double is the driving force that allows the protagonist to reach liberation for some or madness for others. Or neither one nor the other. . .

4 Comparing the two novels and their representation of India

Both texts use the pretext of the Other, a form of double, to narrate the quest for a goal that ultimately eludes its protagonists, Hariya in one case, Roux in the other. The successive phases of the narrative eventually lead to the loss of the initial protagonist, whether he has disappeared into the enigmatic Other of Goomalling somewhere in the Himalaya (in the case of *Hariya*) or whether the Other has been substituted for him (in the case of *Nocturne*). In both cases, the narrative itself is paramount. It is the telling of this quest that provides its meaning, its raison d'être. This observation echoes Atul's point of view, which nearly concludes *Hariya*: "a story [can] not exist without perplexity and our community [can] not exist without stories"[41] (154/127). But, unlike in modern narratives, the final result leaves room for doubt and lacks unambiguous interpretation. After a linear narrative beginning, rather classic in its form, each of the two texts uses the crisis and the journey that follows (including its preparatory phase in *Hariya*) to completely destabilise the persona of the traveller, his certainties, his postulated identity. Although the literary context of her essay is different, the following remark by Cécile Kovacshazy perfectly fits the model we have seen in *Nocturne* and *Hariya*:

> The look-alike (*le sosie*) involves moments of surprise and then of *recognition*, moments of suspension of meaning and then acceptance of identity that allows for openness. The appearance of Sosie suddenly introduces a wedge (*une faille*) and triggers a crisis phenomenon. The figure allows to break an established narrative order, to renounce the postulate of unicity and to bring about an open literature.[42]

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40 "Ye jis mūr sāhab kā likhā huā kūṛā tum sāth lā rahe ho vah landan kī ek khufiyā sosāytī kā membar thā. is sosāytī meṁ jitne bhī mūr-hūr the unkā ek hī kām ṭhahrā ki apne man se ek gūmāliṅg tīrth gaṛh do aur uske bāre meṁ yahāṁ-vahāṁ likh-likhkar dūsre vidvānoṁ ko cakkar meṁ ḍālne kā aur bhārat-tibbat ko badnām karne kā sukh lūṭo."

41 Hairānī ke binā kahānī nahīṁ hotī hai aur kahānī ke binā birādarī nahīṁ hotī hai.

42 My translation. Original: "Le sosie implique les moments de surprise puis de reconnaissance, moments de suspension du sens puis d'acception d'identité qui permet l'ouverture. L'apparition de Sosie introduit brusquement une faille et enclenche un phénomène de crise. La figure permet de casser un ordre narratif établi, de renoncer au postulat de l'unicité et d'amener à une littérature ouverte" (Kovacshazy 2012: 195).

Regardless of the differences between the two novels, in the end, in postmodern fictions it is the *telling* of the quest—the way it is told and the interpretations that are made of it—that matters, much more than the facts.

In relation to the representation of India, it can be extrapolated from *Nocturne* that India symbolises for Tabucchi both an attractive and repulsive destination. But concrete, real, contemporary India seems to remain elusive for him ("India is mysterious by definition", 33), even if such reductive statements subsequently disappear in the novel.[43] It is essentially through the filter of the colonial past, of archives in libraries, of its ghosts too, that India is deciphered and interpreted. As Wren-Owens rightly notes, "[r]eflections on empire and postcoloniality are an important element of the Italian hypotext, as the novel represents a romanticised image of empire: far-off, distant, and embodied through the appearance of a conquistador in a dream encounter".[44] Let us take this "conquistador" (whom we already met in section 3.1) as an illustration of the encounter between India and the Italian author. Everything related to this chapter of *Nocturne* evokes the strong presence of the Portuguese past (we know how much Portugal, its history, and its literature meant to Tabucchi): the Portuguese monastery in Goa, where the narrator hopes to get fresh information about Xavier, and where he has come for his archival research, looking for old chronicles; the old mad man who introduces himself, in the narrator's dream (or, rather, nightmare), as "Afonso de Albuquerque, Viceroy of the Indies" (58); the affirmation of the man who says that Xavier is but a ghost; and his transformation in "Pied Piper of Hamelin", kicking a dead mouse (60). As the saying goes, for Tabucchi, *Dillī abhī dūr hai*!

What about Joshi's novel and its representation of India? The West is of course very present, as the two key moments of the story are linked, on the one hand, to Australia (Goomalling and Hariya's double) and, on the other, to the British colonial past (John Moore's account found by Harry Smith). However, the journey undertaken by Hariya with Piruli Kaiñja in the Himalaya is precisely the opportunity to travel through regions that are not clearly mapped, and therefore outside the political and symbolic power exercised by the former British empire, in a mysterious space on the border between India and Tibet (this mysterious place might also allude to mystical Shambhala, of course). A place from which one does not return exactly the same. . . or from which one simply does not return.

As we did with *Nocturne*, let us briefly return to our analysis of *Hariya*. This episode, which corresponds to the account of John Moore's journey to Goomalling, is much longer than the chapter on the Portuguese monastery in *Nocturne*. We will therefore limit ourselves to pointing out that the picture that emerges from this

43 In Millner's words: "L'Inde n'est jamais un objet réel de la narration, mais une forme d'absence sur laquelle se détachent les faibles traces de la quête" (2007: sec. 12).
44 Wren-Owens 2020: 496.

description is much more complex, the characters much more numerous, and the interrelations between the two worlds (India and Europe) much more diversified than in *Nocturne*. Nevertheless, while there is question of "tantric siddhis" living on the Indo-Tibetan border (97), information on the route to be taken and the meaning of "gūmāliṅg" is mainly provided by British explorers and missionaries. It is Captain Meredith who provides John Moore with the most explanation . . . even though it turns out later that the captain has died a long time ago and that his remains lie in Hansi—here too, ghosts of the colonial past haunt India! The colonial presence is thus very real, as in Tabucchi's novel. But unlike in Tabucchi, the scene described in this "Goomalling gatha", as the narrator calls it (105), is not a nightmare. In Joshi's text, what prevails is the great joke behind the serious explanations provided by the European travellers. A great joke that echoes the philosophy of "the followers of the Goomalling sect", according to whom (says Reverend William Black to John Moore) "the only reason this false world seems so real is because it is an elaborate joke made up by the Supreme Being"[45] (104/87).

5 Concluding remarks

Whatever perspective is adopted in contemporary writings, India seems to represent a place that eludes ready-made answers and suspends any formatted identity. Both novels adopt a fairly similar narrative development, beginning with a linear and assertive narrative, before shifting to a format dominated by multiple voices and uncertainty. In both cases, too, a *woman* plays a crucial role in the outcome of the story: it is a woman who narrates, or has the narrator narrate, the "disappearance" of the initial character.[46] And in both cases, the notion of *reflection* is crucial: it is associated with photography in *Nocturne* and implies showing only a part or an aspect of the reality while hiding the others (the "morceaux choisis"). In *Hariya*, it refers to the mirror, both as a way to see one's double and as the path to the other side of reality, with all the risks this involves. Not to forget, of course, the television screen—which is mentioned in the very first lines of the novel, as well as in the concluding paragraphs—that captures the attention of the members of the community and makes them forget the story of their "herculean" Hariya.

45 "Gūmāliṅg viśvāsī sampradāy ke anusār yah mithyā jagat sārvān islie lagtā hai ki yah param sattā kā racā huā ek pecīdā mazāk hai."

46 This situation—a woman facing a character and his double—strangely echoes a similar pattern in some works of the famous Tamil writer "Mauni" (S. Mani, 1907–1985): "Mauni sometimes complicated the trope in another direction, introducing a third character who witnesses the two members of the double, who constructs their identity in her gaze, and who can, in her reflections, comment on its significance" (Ganeri 2012: 183). My thanks to Léticia Ibanez for pointing this out.

What differs between Joshi's approach and Tabucchi's is the way in which India—its scenes and its philosophies—is described. Tabucchi's novel is limited to a few major Indian concepts—those that have come down to us, in Europe, through the filter of Western writers and travellers (such as Marco Polo, Francesco Saverio, E. M. Forster, Henri Michaux, Hermann Hesse, Romain Roland, Alberto Moravia, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, to name some of the writers Tabucchi mentions in *Viaggi e altri viaggi*). The surface of the Indian landscape seems too difficult to pierce: there are too many odours, too much darkness, too many pasts, too many detours. . . the Western self gets lost. On the other hand, Joshi's novel offers an anthology of multicultural references, whether linguistic (with the presence of local Kumaoni expressions, but primarily through the gorgeous puns on "Goomalling"), philosophical (Vedantic, Buddhist, Tantric, etc.), or politico-historical (Indian politics, Marxism, Orientalism, etc.). In Joshi's case, the readings are truly plural and open. The multiplicity of the interpretations on Hariya's experience thus illustrates the plurality of perceptions at work in India, from the rejection of the Western world (by the pandit Shastri) to the fascination it can exert on others (Atul, Dr Nilambar), not to mention the intermediate and fluctuating opinion of most of the other characters. Joshi's *Hariya* certainly supports Ganeri's statement that, "[i]n the global circulation of ideas, India has always been a major player, and the combination of 'internal pluralism' and 'external receptivity' has fashioned for India a 'spacious and assimilative Indian identity'".[47]

This chapter will end here. But an additional, more personal interpretation of its author's academic journey and the role that the recipient of this volume may have played in it could just as easily be applied to this surprising story of doubles.

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47 Ganeri 2012: 3, in part quoting Amartya Sen's The Argumentative Indian (2005), p. 346.

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Biljana Zrnić

Language Hybridity in *Midnight's Children*: A Comparative Study of the Croatian and Czech Versions of the Text

Abstract. This chapter investigates Salman Rushdie's experimentation with language obtained through code-mixing, used as a constructive means of a binary model that explores reinventions of hybrid traditions in postcolonial India on lexical and syntactic levels. Linguistic reconstructions are approached from the perspective of translation studies in a comparative analysis of the Croatian and Czech versions of the text. The paper encompasses two variants of code-mixing, English and Indian, perceived as complementary components in the code-mixing process. The lexical relations between English and Hindi-Urdu are, in the English variant, equalised, while the Indian variant disrupts standard English. The variants of the source text do not correspond to their counterparts in the translated versions. As a result, the English text shows a higher degree of hybridity than the Croatian and Czech translations. The objective is to demonstrate the consequences of the unilateral method applied in the transfer process, resulting from neglect and misconception of the Indian component in the code-mixing system. The Croatian version insists upon an Anglophone approach. The Czech version is used as a heuristic tool to illustrate the alternative possibilities of the idiosyncrasies peculiar to the bilingual model applied by the author.

Keywords. hybridity, code-mixing, postcolonial literature, transfer process, target language

Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (first published in 1981) figures among one of the most expressive examples of the "contact literature"[1] that attained international fame in the post-Nehru era. The novel, written in Hinglish, is characterised by a heterogeneous mixture of cultural, literary, and linguistic forms, multilayered intertextuality, irony, and remarkable linguistic innovations. Rushdie's style and narrative techniques and the historical and political aspects of the text have all been the subject of many critical studies. Still, the question of language in Indian English writing is insufficiently explored, especially when

1 Kachru 1983: 44.

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perceived through the lens of translation studies. I emphasise this because playing with multilingual forms is one of the most representative features of Rushdie's creative practice. The novel owes much of its success to the writer's double cultural heritage, where language hybridity plays a central role.

Rushdie's experimentation with hybrid forms is known as chutnification. In the context of narration, it can be described as encapsulating culturally mixed, crowded, overlapping, and yet systematically arranged layers of a multilingual Indian society.[2] From a linguistic point of view, chutnification refers to the active application of language obtained through code-mixing that involves linguistic interaction between more than one language code. This implies not only the integration of the domestic vocabulary into English syntax but also the creation of new English terms and playing with the vernacular lexical and syntactic units. Such a method of communication is designed to serve both foreign and domestic interests alike and requires "mutual satisfaction"[3] in the transfer process. As Biljana Romić rightly points out, "Rushdie, who primarily seeks out his identity in language, concurrently adopts both cultural contexts equally and feels good in both—but only in both parallelly, without one of them, it is entirely irrelevant which one, he would be left without himself and home".[4] In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie is not only cautious to balance his binary models but also seeks to transgress them by introducing intentional mistakes and by using hybridity as an ironic tool. That does not suit the Croatian translator of the novel. The incongruencies result from overlooking and misinterpreting domestic inscriptions that form an essential part of Rushdie's language. This paper will focus on lexical and syntactic aspects of Rushdie's hybridity by contrasting Croatian and Czech versions of the novel to illustrate the biases of a unilateral linguistic approach that relies exclusively on the predominance of the English language. Rushdie's text suffers from such a model and requires a dual system where languages are seen as a joined entity.

2 In "The Riddle of Midnight", Rushdie explains what he, as an author, finds the most fascinating about India: "its ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity" and to him, "the defining image of India is the crowd, and the crowd is by nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once" (Rushdie 1992: 32).

3 Venuti 2004: 488.

4 Romić 1997: 95. Translation from the Croatian is mine.

1 Critical approach to the choice of language

In the initial phase of Indian English writing, precedence given to a non-Indian language was perceived as a threat in literary and political terms. Indian critical circles for literature, between the 1930s and 1960s, considered a foreign language inappropriate for conveying Indian topics. The complexities surrounding the integration of English in Indian settings had constructive linguistic consequences resulting in language manipulation that became a distinctive mark of Indo-Anglian writing. Recent studies have challenged the image of English perceived throughout the twentieth century as a superior language and the sole linguistic medium of modernity. In "Introduction: Modernity and the Vernacular", Amit Chaudhuri draws attention to the opposite sociolinguistic phenomenon that took place in parallel with the increasing incorporation of English in Indian linguistic spheres. In contrast to the general consensus, Chaudhuri argues that in the twentieth century, when English was already established as the prime vehicle in all public spheres, for the growing Indian middle class it was not the expansion of English but rather the rise of the vernacular that played a vital role in the process of modernisation.[5] His argument aligns with the misconceptions of regional Indian literatures discussed by Nicola Pozza in his article "Translating from India and the Moving Space of Translation". Pozza opposes the assumptions that the translations of *bhasha* literatures are rare or non-existent and that the minor literatures are highly dependent on tradition.[6] These misrepresentations resulted from Eurocentric methods inappropriately applied to Indian literatures composed in regional languages. By shifting the issue to the Indian context, Pozza displays the prolific tradition of translating the vernacular literatures into English and other languages in India. He also shows that hybridity was an essential component of Indian texts even it started to be perceived as one of the most characteristic features of Indian English texts.[7]

Applying inappropriate unilateral methods to evaluate Indian texts is not peculiar to the *bhasha* literatures. According to Romić, since they are written in English, Indian English texts often risk being read exclusively from the Anglophone perspective.[8] Her claim refers to the narrating process, but from my viewpoint it manifests in the translation as well. The unilateral translation in the code-mixing

5 Chaudhuri 2001: xxi.

6 These claims contradict the way the reception of the Indian English texts was understood. It was perceived in contrast to the texts composed in the vernaculars during the same time. See Rushdie 1992: 50; Mukherjee 2006: 382.

7 Pozza 2010.

8 Romić 2006: 312. The topic is discussed by Kirpal in "Je li Indijski roman shvaćen?" (2006: 314–329). In Rushdie's case, it becomes especially relevant when observed in the light of the mythical dimension of the text. For concrete examples, see Zrnić 2018: 128–142.

case is an asymmetrical act that fails to render the heterogenous cultural folds and is unsuitable for a hybrid text. Walter Benjamin suggests returning to the origin: "Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own he [the translator] must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge."[9] The "immanent hybridity" discussed by Chaudhuri in his text "Lure of the Hybrid" is worth mentioning in this context. Referring to the critics' simplified interpretation of the language, Chaudhuri notices that hybridity can also be hidden and thus reflect the innovations introduced by the author.[10]

2 Rushdie's relation to language

Rushdie's engagement in the language choice-oriented debates demonstrates the purpose of language in his creative writing. In his collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands*, he refers to the matter in the following terms:

> One of the changes has to do with attitudes towards the use of English. Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the view that we can't simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes. Those of us who use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free.[11]

Rushdie argues that Indian writers who choose English as their language of expression do not succumb to British imperialism but interfere with the language by challenging its linguistic assumptions through the infusion of the rhythm, syntax, and vocabulary of native languages. In his novel *Shame*, he goes on to sharply point out the contradiction between the domestic term and its English equivalent by underlying the limits and inappropriateness of the latter to convey the same meaning:

> This word: "shame". No, I must write it in its original form, not in this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and the accumulated detritus of its owners' unrepented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write,

9 Benjamin 2000 [1923]: 22.
10 Chaudhuri 2006: 364–365.
11 Rushdie 1992: 17.

> and so for ever alter what is written. . . *Sharam*, that's the word. For which this paltry "shame" is a wholly inadequate translation. [. . .] A short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance. It was not only shame that his mothers forbade Omar Khayyam to feel, but also embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world, and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts.[12]
>
> To unlock a society, look at its untranslatable words.[13]

In *Midnight's Children*, the author materialises his theory allowing us to observe these two arguments in practice.[14] In "Resisting Power in Language", Pilapitiya uses two terms—deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation—to describe the act of writing in Rushdie's text. The terminology is taken from Deleuze's and Guattari's language theory that involves the reversed roles of "major" and "minor" languages. The process of deterritorialisation refers to a disruption of basic components of a "major" language, such as conventions of syntax and grammar, to deprive it of its hegemonic power. Reterritorialisation, on the other hand, consists of incorporating words from "minor" languages and a fusion of varied elements in order to enrich the dominant language with experimentation and play.[15] In Rushdie's case, these processes complement each other and should be examined together.

3 Translator's relation to the text

Lia Paić's 2000 translation of *Midnight's Children* continues to be the only form in which Rushdie's novel is known to Croatian readers.[16] The text's translation, which I find problematic from the linguistic point of view, has not been revisited or updated since. The omissions are acute in the domain of code-mixing, which can be divided into English and Indian variants. The former is characterised by the equal-

12 Rushdie 1983: 38–39.

13 Rushdie 1983: 104.

14 The figure of Reverend Mother in *Midnight's Children* can be seen as supporting the point Rushdie is making in his novel Shame. A distinctive mark of her speech is the repetitive expression "whatsitsname". Her insistence upon vernacular terms and the persistent refusal to use English terms replaced by "whatsitsname" shape her personality and emphasise her unwillingness to accept the Western influence.

15 Pilapitiya 2008: 52–53. Compared to Elleke Boehmer's "double bind" ("cleaving to and cleaving from Europe"), the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation provide a more precise picture of Rushdie's language transfer. See Boehmer 1995: 105–106.

16 Lia Paić has translated another Rushdie novel, *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008, translated by Paić in 2011), as well as his autobiographical *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* (2012, trans. Paić 2014). From the Italian, she has also translated Umberto Eco's novels *Il nome della rosa* (1980, trans. Paić 2008), *Il pendolo di Foucault* (1988, trans. Paić 2003), *Baudolino* (2000, trans. Paić 2001), and *La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana* (2004, trans.

isation of syntactic relations whereby the lexical items taken from Hindi-Urdu are subdued to standard English's morphological and phonetic rules. Conversely, the Indian variant introduces a disbalance into the English syntax by allowing syntactic features proper to Indian languages to distort its conventional function. Simply put, the Indian variant manifests as Indian English. The Croatian version does not correspond to either variant. Instead what we find is exactly the opposite of the original text's objectives and function in relation to both code-mixing processes. The Czech translation (first published in 1995) by Pavel Dominik[17] differs from the source text and the Croatian version in that it contains a glossary with domestic vocabulary, added at the end of the book. Dominik took a different approach to Paić, as will be explained further in the sections that follow. Using selected examples, I will demonstrate how Rushdie's variants are reflected in the Croatian and Czech versions of the text by approaching them from a broader narrative context and looking at the difficulties they create in the transfer process.

4 Lexical alignment in English variant

Rushdie's language presupposes a polyglot reader familiar with both codes involved in the code-mixing process. Hence the lexical transplantation is without an explanation of the selected borrowings. The vernacular terms integrated into the English text are subdued to the equalisation of the syntactic relations, primarily manifested in morphological inflexions of English applied to the borrowed terms. The purpose of including loanwords in the text is not simply to evoke an exotic atmosphere but to point towards the historical and political background of the novel.

Paić 2006). Among her recent translations from the English into Croatian is the novel *When I Was Invisible* by Dorothy Koomson (2016, trans. Paić 2017).

17 Pavel Dominik is a renowned Czech translator from English and Russian. In 2016 he received the Czech State Award for Translation for his translation of Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (1969, trans. Dominik 2015). Dominik's work focuses primarily on the novels of Rushdie and Nabokov. Besides *Midnight's Children*, he has translated *Shame* (1983, trans. Dominik 2004), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995, trans. Dominik 2013), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999, trans. Dominik 2001), *Fury* (2001, trans. Dominik 2003), *Shalimar the Clown* (2005, trans. Dominik and Zuzana Mayerová 2008), *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008, trans. Dominik 2010), and the compilation of short stories *East, West* (1994, trans. Dominik and Stanislava Pošustová 2006). In 1991 Dominik's translation of Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955, trans. Dominik 1991) brought him the Jozef Jungmann Award. He has translated more than ten works by Nabokov from English and Russian, including *Pale Fire* (1962, trans. Dominik and Jiří Pelán 2011), *Speak, Memory* (1966, trans. Dominik 1998), and *Dar* (1937, translated from Russian by Dominik in 2007). He has also translated theatre plays, such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde (1895, trans. Dominik in 2012), and film dialogues for dubbing.

If we approach the translated versions from this angle, the distinctions between the original and the rendered text are remarkable.

One of the primary challenges the translator of Rushdie's novel encounters is to determine whether the domestic vocabulary should be kept in its original form or rendered into the target language. The Croatian and Czech versions offer two distinctive points of view in this respect. In her translation into Croatian, Paić retains the vernacular items in their original form. It can be argued that such a decision contributes to the preservation of the dialectical link between Eastern and Western cultures. Nevertheless, the domestic elements are an integral part of the (foreign) English syntax, which requires their adjustment to the target language. Thus, even if preserved, a domestic term is subject to a radical change and needs to adapt to its new syntactic environment and simultaneously retain the objectives it has in the original text. The Croatian translation, however, does not follow these requirements. Beyond that, by changing the gender and number, and meaning and function, of loanwords Paić introduces additional grammatical mistakes, resulting in incomprehension of the lexical units and the narrative context to which they are associated. On the other hand, Dominik opted for a different strategy in his Czech translation and decided to render the vernacular items into the target language, raising the question of hybridity's erasure from Rushdie's text. The following example illustrates the type of modification in which changing the domestic term's form leads to the extinction of the rich and multiple connotations of the original text. It also shows how a loanword can be rendered to the point of unrecognition.

Example 1[18]

Original: And in all the cities all the towns all the villages **the little dia-lamps** burn on window-sills porches verandahs, while trains burn in the Punjab, with the green flames of blistering paint and the glaring saffron of fired fuel, like **the biggest dias in the world**.

Croatian: A u svim velikim gradovima i u svim malim gradovima i u svim selima **male svjetiljke** gore na prozorskim daskama, trijemovima i verandama, dok u Panjabu gore vlakovi, mjehurićastim plamenovima zelene boje i zasljepljujućom šafranastom bojom zapaljena goriva, poput **najvećeg *diasa* na svijetu**.

Czech: A ve všech městech, městečkách a vesnicích hoří na okenních parapetech, nade dveřmi a na verandách **malé hliněné lampičky**, zatímco v Paňdžábu hoří zelenými plameny zpuchýřovatělé barvy a planoucím šafránem spalovaného paliva vlaky, podobné **největším lampám na světě**.

18 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 155 / trans. Paić 2000: 129 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 138. Boldface mine throughout.

This extract is part of a paragraph that describes the central moment in the novel—the simultaneous birth of Saleem and Shiva and, at the same time, the proclamation of Indian independence. This explains the emphasis on saffron and green, which explicitly point to the Indian flag. Central to this ambience are the little oil lamps—*dias* (f.)—that appear twice in the sentence but are used in two different forms and convey different symbolic meanings. When introducing the term, Rushdie provides its translation into English ("the little dia-lamps"), doubling the information. In its reappearance at the end of the sentence, the term *dia* adopts the English ending for plural because here it stands alone and refers to the trains that burn in the Punjab ("the biggest dias in the world").

In Paić's version "the little dia-lamps" are rendered as "male svjetiljke", which means that the translator overlooked the domestic term and rendered only the English components (the little lamps). The translator introduces the loanword at the end of the sentence but misinterprets the English inflexion applied to it. The plural form of the term *dia* ("dias") is misunderstood as a masculine noun in the singular, to which the translator applied an additional ending for the genitive singular ("dias-a"). Her choice is supported by the adjective preceding the loanword, which follows the same morphological rule ("najvećeg" taken as the equivalent of "biggest").[19] Since the term *dia* is omitted in the first part of the sentence, the form "diasa", suddenly appearing at the end of the sentence as a masculine noun in the singular, remains entirely incomprehensible to readers, who cannot connect the word to the little oil lamps, nor to the burning trains in the Punjab.[20] In his Czech translation, Dominik offers a different solution and decides to render the term into the target language on both occasions. Unlike Paić, who reduces the doubling by omitting the term *dia* in the first case, Dominik amplifies the information by introducing the adjective "hliněné", which corresponds to oil (adj.)—[lamps]. In this way, Dominik retains the sense of doubling we find in the original. The reader of the Czech version will also notice the nuanced distinction between the diminutive "lampičky" (which corresponds to "the little dia-lamps")

19 Unlike in English, the adjective is in Slavic languages variable and should, in this case, be read as najveće.

20 Misconceptions of gender and number in the transfer process of the borrowed lexical items have a high frequency of occurrence in the Croatian version of the text. They appear in the transmission of loanwords and with terms associated with the intertextual background of the text. Take, for instance, the misrepresentation of the demon Ravana from Valmiki's Ramayana, which serves as an important intertextual layer to Rushdie's narration. Ravana is transformed into a feminine figure in the Croatian translation. The translator misinterprets the last sign of the demon's name as a typical female ending in the Croatian language. Such transfer provides inaccurate information about the Indian epic and introduces ambiguity into Rushdie's relation to the oral tradition. This is important since Rushdie's intertextuality includes intentional inversions of epic and puranic elements included in the novel. See Zrnić 2008: 132–138.

and "lampám" (which corresponds to "dias"). The latter and the adjective specifying it ("největším") are correctly adapted to their plural forms, allowing the reader to understand the metaphoric function of *dias* in correspondence with the burning trains of the Punjab.

The semantic weight of the loanword is noteworthy in this particular example. *Dias* complete the image of the novel's historical background, taking place in parallel to the description of Saleem's birth. Their complementary function is expressed in two different ways, which is why they are used twice in the sentence. On one level, through their association with light, *dias* complete the colouristic ambience emphasised in the text and can be read as the white middle band in the official Indian flag, believed to symbolise light or the path of truth. On the other level, through their association with fire, the writer reuses *dias* to expand their interpretative space. Supported by hyperbole (the burning of the "biggest dias in the world"), the loanword starts to function as a filter of intolerance and alludes to the conflicts that erupted in the Punjab between Hindus and Muslims immediately after India gained independence. The loanword thus establishes a tension between an ideal of freedom and the negative repercussions it may have on the nation. In correspondence to the double aspect, the *dias* also encompass the antagonistic nature of the two boys exchanged at birth—Saleem and Shiva—one of which will by mistake grow up in a Muslim family and the other in a Hindu one. None of these associations is comprehensible in the Croatian version of the text.

Another type of lexical discrepancy noticeable in the Croatian version concerns the translator's misconception of the origin of certain Hindi-Urdu words. As mentioned earlier, the vernacular items incorporated into English syntax are not visually marked in Rushdie's text. Langeland notes Rushdie's intentional elusions of typographical emphasis when introducing domestic vocabulary into his writing and construes it as one of the strategies that distinguishes him from his predecessors. By this means, the loanwords naturally fit into the English syntax.[21] The two translations discussed in this paper differ in this respect. Paić's version, where the domestic terms are mostly retained in their original form, introduces typographical emphasis to distinguish them from the rest of the syntactic elements. This rule does not apply to the Czech translation, where the translator is inclined to render the borrowings into the target language. Equalising the syntactic relations through the visual aspect of the text can be challenging for any translator, especially when languages share the same term conveying different meanings in each language. The following example illustrates the lexical confusion resulting from the misconception of the word's origin and the absence of typographical emphasis in the original text.

21 Langeland 1996: 18.

Example 2[22]

Original: "Tomorrow I'll have a bath and shave: I am going to put on a brand new kurta, shining and starched, and **pajamas** to match."

Croatian: "Sutra ću se okupati i obrijati, obući sasvim novu sjajnu i uškrobljenu *kurtu* i **pidžamu** koja tome pristaje."

Czech: "Zítra se vykoupu a oholím; vezmu si na sebe zbrusu novou, zářivou a naškrobenou kurtu a barevně ladící **pádžáma**."

Only one word in the Croatian version appears in italics (*kurta*), yet the same rule is not applied to the equivalent of the word *pajamas*. The translator renders the latter as "pidžamu" (acc. sing. of pidžama), a term adopted from Persian, corresponding to nightwear. Yet, in the above example, *kurta* and *pajamas* belong to the same category of lexicon and are borrowed from the same language. The syntactic and narrative frames indicate that the word *pajamas* in the original text refers to loose linen or cotton trousers mainly worn by men in North India. Hence, it does not cover the same meaning the Croatian translator ascribes to it. The distinction between the term's two connotations is evident in the Czech translation, where the term "pádžáma" corresponds to the meaning of the original text. This is corroborated by its explanation in the glossary at the end of the book.[23] By rendering Saleem's outfit as "pidžamu" the Croatian translator converts the traditional Indian clothing into Western sleepwear that the main character is unlikely to combine with his *kurta*.[24] The term in question appears several times in the novel and is persistently interpreted in the Croatian language as sleeping clothes, creating a distorted image of Indian culture.

Phonetical anglicisation forms another appealing aspect of Rushdie's creative hybridity. The following example illustrates how the translator's unrecognition of a phonetically disguised vernacular term can mislead the target audience. It also demonstrates the translator's incompatibility with Rushdie's ironic twists.

Example 3[25]

Original: "Let me help, let me help, Allah what a man I've married, who goes into **gullies** to fight with **goondas**!"

22 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 141 / trans. Paić 2000: 118 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 126.

23 pádžáma, pájdžáma (z per. páj = noha, džáma = oděv), volné plátěné nebo bavlněné kalhoty, běžný oděv severoindických mužů (trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 533).

24 As the text subsequently describes, Saleem completes his outfit with a pair of sandals, also misinterpreted in the Croatian version. The translator renders the term as "papuče", which corresponds to slippers and thus misrepresents the whole attire of Saleem.

25 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 39 / trans. Paić 2000: 36 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 46.

Croatian: "Daj da pomognem, daj da pomognem, Alahu, za kakvog sam se to čovjeka udala, koji ulazi među **cijevi** kako bi se borio s ***goondasima***!"

Czech: "Dovol, pomůžu ti, Alláh mě netrestej, co jsem si to vzala za chlapa, který se chodí rvát na **ulici** s **darebáky**!"

In example 3 the ideal reader of the English text instantly perceives two borrowings (gullies and goondas), whereas, in the Croatian version, the reader finds only one (*goondasima*). The first omission in Paić's version is the translator's misconception of the word *gullies*, associated with Aadam Aziz, Naseem's husband. The term is rendered into Croatian as "cijevi", indicating that the translator most likely perceived it from the Anglophone perspective (Eng. gully), even though "cijevi" (Eng. pipes) does not correspond to the English meaning of gullies. Yet the narrative context shows that the donor language in this case is not English but Hindi-Urdu, where we find a homophone *gālī* (f.), which is here phonetically anglicised. The term, read from the Indian perspective, refers to a small, narrow street and, as such, has a strong historical connotation. The incident to which this instance refers is the Jallianwala Bagh massacre which occurred in Amritsar in April 1919 during the Baisakhi festival, right after the British government banned all forms of gathering. A peaceful crowd of Hindus and Sikhs had gathered to protest the arrest of two pro-Indian independence leaders who were partisans of Gandhi's *satyagraha*. The governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer, interpreted it as a conspiratorial sign of an upcoming revolt of Indians, so in response General Reginald Dyer blocked the exit of the Bagh with his troops and ordered his men to open fire without warning on the unarmed crowd, which included women and children. Rushdie retrospectively places his characters in this contextual frame and uses a term that can involve historically oriented possibilities of meaning. Since the term *gālī* is phonetically anglicised in the source text (gully), the Croatian translator does not recognise it and subsequently misleads her readers by choosing a meaning with no connection to the original text. The inverted meaning makes it impossible to follow the logic of Naseem's argument. Cross-examined with the Czech translation, we can see that the term *gullies*, rendered in Czech as "ulici", corresponds to the loanword taken from Hindi-Urdu (*gālī*). This example shows that only when both language codes are considered can the reader grasp the meaning and connect it with the historical dimension of the text.

The next loanword offers a different point of view. Unlike gullies, the word *goonda* is in Paić's version retained and clearly distinguished from the rest of the syntactic components. The term appears several times in the novel with different semantic connotations. It counts among those lexemes the author plays with to introduce ironic twists between Eastern and Western cultures. This is best demon-

strated in Rushdie's explanation of the term in the text: "young goondas, that is to say hooligans or apaches".[26] The author's explanation of the loanword (*goonda*) consists of two terms taken as synonyms ("hooligans or apaches"), but only one corresponds to the meaning of the word *goonda*—hooligans. The other term, apaches, refers to Latino-Americans, intentionally introduced to ironise Western misconceptions of the Indian nation. In example 3 Dominik renders the term *goonda* by selecting the appropriate meaning, in Czech "darebáky", which corresponds to hooligans. In Paić's version, where the vernacular item is retained in the original form, its integration into Croatian syntax does not fit the required inflexion. Paić duplicates the ending for plural by inappropriately adding to its English form an ending that is already there ("goondas-ima") and thus reveals her unfamiliarity with the term's meaning. Through such transfer, she confirms the irony Rushdie points to when he explains *goondas* as "hooligans or apaches".

The examples selected to illustrate the English variant of code-mixing show how insisting upon an interpretation limited to one linguistic code evacuates the cultural exchange, essential for understanding the text in its linguistic, historical, and political aspects.

5 Syntactic disturbance in Indian variant

In the so far cited examples, we have seen that the original text aims to adjust the imported lexicon to the English language system. This is achieved mainly by subordinating the domestic vocabulary to the morphology and phonetics of standard English. In Rushdie's novel, code-mixed language types are not limited to the lexical level of a language. Besides the English variant, the text abounds in a subversive linguistic strategy in which the elements of the English syntax are subject to the syntactic features peculiar to Indian languages. The result is deviations from standard English, typical for Indian speakers, evincing as inscriptions of Indian English. Cases of extended borrowing from Hindi-Urdu, which involve the reorganisation of English syntactic units, are more demanding from a translatological point of view. The idiosyncratic Indianisms appear in dialogues and are, in most cases, repeatedly applied to the same characters forming a distinctive mark of their identity. When referring to Rushdie's different registers, Neelam Srivastava notices that the protagonists' characterisation, except Saleem's, almost exclusively relies on dialogues made "to be as expressive of each character's individuality as possible".[27] Consequently, the reader of the English text is constantly reminded of

26 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 570.
27 Srivastava 2005: 225.

a substantial distinction between the highly stylised British used by the narrator of the novel (Saleem) and different registers used by other characters.

Deviant syntactic forms reflecting the idiosyncratic Indianisms have induced some scholars to requestion Rushdie's use of language. In her article "Postcolonial Literature and The Magic Radio", Gillian Gane raises the following question: if English is the main language of the text, is it at the same time the first language of the characters, or do they rather speak in their native Indian languages, which the writer translates into English? [28] We can distinguish two types of strategies used by Indo-Anglian authors that justify her question: language-naming and its active application. On the example of Saleem's interaction with the Pakistani soldiers, Gane underlines the first type (language-naming) because it shows that Saleem sometimes speaks in Urdu even though his speech is presented in English, and most importantly "eliminates the possibility that all otherwise unattributed dialogue in the novel is in English".[29]

Naming a specific language most likely will not create an obstacle in the process of translating into any target language. On the contrary, its active application can be rather challenging for the translator. In "Writing Translation", Prasad upholds the view that Indian English writers do not translate texts from vernacular languages into English as much as they use different strategies to make their works look like translations.[30] If we approach Rushdie's novel from the perspective of formal manifestation of code-mixing, discussed by Braj B. Kachru in "Toward Structuring Code-Mixing", we notice that the mentioned formations all appear in Rushdie's text.[31] They reflect Rushdie's impressive concern with language hybridity and show English in all its variety, which is lost in the rendered text, so the Indian variant disappears. The following examples aim to demonstrate some of the most characteristic deviations from standard English and what it means to lose them. They also raise an important question: how should a translator deal with intentionally introduced syntactic impurities, and what if such linguistic constructions have no equivalencies in the target language?

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28 Gane 2006: 570. The question is not peculiar to Rushdie's case but concerns many other Indian English texts and has been addressed by some authors as well. When referring to the Hindi translation of his novel *A Suitable Boy*, Vikram Seth noted: "A big part of the dialogue was reconstituted here in that language, where it had been playing in the ears of my mind. The political debates and arguments in the novel are more real in the Hindi. The Hindi-Urdu poetry that had been put into English in the novel has now returned to itself. Being a writer I am surprised to admit that in contrast to my original, this work in the Hindi translation has come out much stronger" (cited in Sadana 2012: 141).

29 Gane 2006: 577.

30 Prasad 1999: 41–57.

31 Kachru's examples of code-mixing formations include unit insertion, unit hybridisation, sentence insertion, idiom or collocation insertion, inflection attachment, and reduplication (applied to nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs). See Kachru 1978: 32–35.

Inaccurate use of verbal tenses, particularly of the present continuous in cases alien to English expectations (such as frequent actions, completed actions, or stative verbs), is one of the most distinctive marks of Indian English and a recurrent feature in Indian English texts. While this frequently occurs in Rushdie's novel, it cannot be seen in its translated versions.

Example 4[32]

Original: [Pia Aziz]: "that is what the Public **is wanting**!"

Croatian: [Pia Aziz]: "to je ono što Publika **želi**!"

Czech: [Pia Azízová]: "po tom dneska lidi **touží**!"

The reader of the novel in English will instantly recognise an echo of the Indian variant in this example. Croatian and Czech languages have only one way of expressing the present tense, which can correspond to the present simple or present continuous in English, depending on the context. In this example, the author's choice of verb tense is replaced with the tense expected in the target language ("želi" in Paić's version and "touží" in Dominik's version). As a result, Rushdie's characteristic use of Indian English is in both translations invisible.

In cases where the present continuous is expected to be used, Rushdie's characters (and Indian-native speakers of English) are inclined to simplify its use by dropping the auxiliary verb. The omission of the indispensable element appears in the declarative and interrogative clauses, where it manifests as an absence of the auxiliary forms *do* or *are*.

Example 5[33]

Original: And Mary: "**You talking** crazy, Joe, **why you worrying** with those so-bad things? We can live quietly **still,** no?"

Croatian: A Mary: "Ludo **govoriš,** Joe; zašto **si zabrinut** zbog tih tako loših stvari? Još **uvijek** možemo mirno živjeti, zar ne?"

Czech: A Mary: "**Mluvíš** jako blázen, Joe, proč **se trápíš** tak ošklivými věcmi? My **přece** můžeme žít v klidu, ne?"

Example 6[34]

Original: [Ahmed Sinai]: "**You coming** with me, son?"

Croatian: [Ahmed Sinai]: "**Ideš li** sa mnom, sine?"

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32 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 336 / trans. Paić 2000: 276 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 280.
33 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 139 / trans. Paić 2000: 116 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 125.
34 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 420 / trans. Paić 2000: 344 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 348.

Czech: [Ahmad Sináí]: "**Půjdeš** se mnou, synu?"

There is no indication of the syntactic impurities in the translations of the above examples. The present tense of the auxiliary verb *to be* in example 5 and the auxiliary form *are* in example 6, lacking in Rushdie's text, are not applicable to the Croatian and Czech present tense forms. "You talking" is in Croatian rendered as "govoriš", and in Czech as "mluvíš", both corresponding to the standard present continuous forms. "you worrying" is in Paić's version reformulated in the participial adjective ("si zabrinut"), and in Dominik's version in the reflexive verb ("se trápíš"). Mary Pereira's utterance also contains reversed word order ("we can live quietly still"), which disturbs conventional English, and a colloquial tag question at the end of the sentence ("no?"). In both translations, the emphatic particle *still*, originally placed after the word it emphasises, is brought back to its proper position ("još uvijek" placed in front of the verbal form "možemo" in the Paić and "přece" placed in front of "můžeme" in the Dominik). The Croatian version endows the provided examples with formality and politeness, visible in the form of the tag question ("zar ne?") in example 5 and the intensifier "li" in example 6 ("Ideš li"). As a result, the Croatian reader gets the impression of sophisticated English used by Mary Pereira, which is exactly the opposite of Rushdie's intention. The Czech translation also eliminates the syntactic impurities but retains the informal style of the character's speech by using colloquial expressions ("jako blázen", "v klidu, ne?").

Even when the auxiliary verb is in Rushdie's text used with the present continuous, Rushdie will still not allow his characters' speech to pass unnoticed. He will then use the absence of inversion in interrogative clauses as another means to distort standard English.

Example 7[35]

[Picture Singh]: "**you are planning** to be married some day? [. . .] **You're telling** truth, captain? **Is a** medical fact?"

[Slika Singh]: "**planiraš li se ti** jednog dana oženiti? [. . .] **Govoriš li** istinu, satniče? **Je li to** medicinska činjenica?"

[Obrázek Singh]: "**máte v úmyslu** se někdy oženit? [. . .] **Mluvíte** pravdu, šéfe? **Je to** lékařsky potvrzený?"

Unlike in English, in Hindi-Urdu interrogative clauses do not require inversion of the usual subject-verb order. The subject can also be left out, as seen in the last clause of the above example ("Is a medical fact?"). Rushdie applies both these

35 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 563 / trans. Paić 2000: 459–460 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 459.

Hindi-Urdu features to Picture Singh's speech to outline his deviated talking style. The readers of both translations cannot discern this background evident in the English text. In Paić's version the subject of the first interrogative clause in English ("you"), placed in front of the verb tense ("are planning"), is shifted after the main verb ("planiraš li se ti") as required by standard Croatian syntax. In the following sentence ("You're telling"), the translator left out the subject "you" ("Govoriš li") but added the subject of the last sentence where Rushdie had excluded it (gender-neutral pronoun "to"). Picture Singh's speech is in Croatian formalised by the enclitic "li", applied to verbal forms ("planiraš li", "govoriš li", "je li"). Dominik rendered the utterance in a similar fashion. The use of personal pronouns with verbal forms is in Czech not in the spirit of the language. The translator thus left them out ("máte v úmyslu" and "mluvíte"). The subject is visible through verbal forms rendered in the second-person plural. The subject of the last sentence is, like in the Croatian version, added after the verbal form ("to"). The readers of both translations thus remain unaware of the idiosyncratic Indianisms embedded in Picture Singh's speech.

Besides avoiding inversion in interrogative clauses, the perturbed word order is also achieved by placing the enclitics *also*, *only*, *even*, *just*, and *still* after the words they emphasise (as seen in example 5). The two following examples highlight this type of deviation from conventional English.

Example 8[36]

Original: [Amina Sinai]: "I never believed, but it's true, my God, they wipe their bottoms with paper **only**!. . ."

Croatian: [Amina Sinai]: "Nikada nisam vjerovala, ali istina je, moj Bože, svoje stražnjice brišu **samo** papirom!. . ."

Czech: [Amína Sináíová]: "Nikdy jsem tomu nevěřila, ale je to pravda, panebože, utírají si zadky **jenom** papírem!. . ."

Example 9[37]

Original: [Saleem]: "Maybe she doesn't like me **even**."

Croatian: [Saleem]:"Možda joj se **čak** ni ne sviđam."

Czech: [Salím]:"Možná že se jí **ani** nelíbím."

In these two examples it would have been possible to preserve the original pattern of speech in both translations and adjust to this aspect of Indian variant to reflect the characteristic features of the characters. However, the displaced enclitics

36 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 127 / trans. Paić 2000: 107 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 115.
37 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 256 / trans. Paić 2000: 211 / trans. Dominik 2009 [1995]: 218.

stressed in the source text are in both translations placed in front of the terms they emphasise ("samo" in example 8 and "čak" in example 9 in the Croatian version; "jenom" and "ani", respectively, in the Czech version).

The purpose of the Indian variant in Rushdie's text is not simply to evoke comic effect. Deviant syntactic forms of English have deeper social connotations. We often find them attributed to the female characters in the novel, which can thus be read as reflecting the patriarchal social structure. In a similar vein, the male characters whose speech is marked by the same domestic influence appear in explicit contrast to their interlocutors, alerting the reader of their weaker position in social rank or their opposite worldviews.[38] Such linguistic distinctions come across in Ghani's interaction with the "Europe-returned" doctor, Aadam Aziz.

Example 10[39]

Original: [Ghani]: "And now our own lady doctor is sick so you get your opportunity. That woman, always sick these days, too old, **I am thinking**, and not up in the latest developments **also, what-what**? I say: physician heal thyself. And I tell you this: I am wholly objective in my business relations. Feelings, love, I keep for my family **only**. If a person is not doing a first-class job for me, out she goes! **You understand me**?"

Croatian: [Ghani]: "A sada je naša vlastita liječnica bolesna, tako da dobivaš svoju priliku. Ta žena, stalno bolesna ovih dana, prestara, **mislim**, nije dovoljno upućena u najnovija dostignuća, **što li**? Kažem: liječnik liječi sebe samog. I kažem ti ovo: ja sam posve objektivan u svojim poslovnim odnosima. Osjećaje, ljubav čuvam **samo** za svoju obitelj. Ako osoba ne obavlja za mene prvoklasno posao, odlazi! **Razumiješ li me**?"

Czech: [Ghaní]: "Naše doktorka je teď nemocná, a tak se vám nabízí příležitost. Ta ženská věčně věků marodí, je už asi moc stará, a o nejnovějších vymoženostech branže nemá **taky** ponětí, **tak co**. Já tvrdím, že doktor se má vyléčit sám. A něco vám povím: ve svých obchodních vztazích jsem zcela objektivní. Pocity, lásku, to všechno si šetřím **pouze** pro svou rodinu. Pokud pro mě někdo neodvádí prvotřídní práci, může jít! **Rozumíte mi**?"

In this example Rushdie reproduces a series of idiosyncratic Indianisms to shape Ghani's personality in front of Doctor Aziz. The inappropriate use of the present continuous ("I am thinking"), the absence of the indispensable auxiliary form *do*

38 There are different variants of Indian English, which vary depending on the region or the speaker's profession. Kachru 1986: 31 claims that Indian English spoken by educated people is only one of the variants in a range of others conditioned by their position in society and geographical location.

39 Rushdie 2008 [1981]: 19 / trans. Paić 2000: 20 / Dominik 2009 [1995]: 30.

in the interrogative clause ("You understand me?"), the displaced enclitics ("also" and "only"), and the archaic form of English ("thyself") are all invisible in Paić's version of the text. In addition, the Croatian translator softens the abruptness of Ghani's tone by turning the reduplication ("what-what?") into a politely formulated tag question ("što li?") and modernises the archaic form, which accentuates Ghani's conservative worldview. The example supports Rushdie's parody of Muslim orthodoxy. As we learn in the novel, Ghani sahib allows Doctor Aziz to examine his daughter exclusively through the overcovering body veil. Ghani's linguistic peculiarity stresses the contrast between him and the more liberal Doctor Aziz.[40] While Dominik managed to preserve Ghani's characteristic speech through archaic expression ("věčně věků") and informal way of talking ("ženská", "marodí", "nemá ponětí", "tak co"), his version, like Paić's, does not reflect the Indian variant. The static verb inappropriately used in the present continuous in Rushdie's text is in Czech version omitted, the truncated interrogative clause appropriately formulated, and Rushdie's displaced enclitics placed in front of the words they emphasise.

The Indian variant cross-examined with the translated versions shows a significant stylistic contrast between the original and translated texts. The alternation of codes is in the translated versions completely dismissed. By absorbing the deviant English as if the author had neatly structured it, the reader is constantly exposed to "aberrant decoding".[41] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin appropriately accentuate thus: "We need to distinguish between what is proposed as a standard code, English (the language of the erstwhile imperial centre), and the linguistic code, english, which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive varieties throughout the world."[42] By opening space for Indian English, Rushdie distances himself from conventions and the exclusive dominance of the ethnocentric language.[43] The anomalous forms of English are therefore indispensable elements of his narration. Such irregularities demonstrate how and why the protagonists

40 Contrasted with Ghani's impure English, we also find the opposite, where the English-native speaker persistently uses a distorted Hindi-Urdu expression applied to William Methwold, Saleem's biological father: "sab kuch ticktock hai". The unit insertion contains a deviant Hindi-Urdu expression whereby the correct *thik-thak* form is replaced with its anglicised "ticktock" variant, repeatedly used by the character in the novel. Methwold's incapacity to properly adopt the domestic expression (*thik-thak*) places him in opposition to Saleem's foster father, Ahmed Sinai, who, deliberately uses "the Oxford drawl" English. Their different ways of speaking reflect the conflict within the Indian and British colonial exchange.

41 According to Umberto Eco, "aberrant decoding" occurs when a message is read by using a code different from its specific source code. Throughout such a process the text is subject to incorrect interpretation (Eco 1972: 106).

42 Ashcroft et al. 1989: 8.

43 Dayal 1992: 433–434.

domesticise once colonised zones or, as Rushdie himself put it, "are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers".[44]

Concluding remarks

In *Imaginary Homelands* Rushdie explains his use of language in the following terms: "Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained."[45] The examples in this paper show that the translators made the narrative available to their reading audiences with rather different values from their English counterpart. The departures from the original text appear in both discussed variants (English and Indian) and differ between the Croatian and Czech translations of the text. The lexical and syntactic exchanges between English and Hindi-Urdu emerge as key concerns in Rushdie's text and align with his presentation of the plot. When juxtaposed with the Croatian translation, both variants are contradictory to the original text. The English variant, which aims to balance the syntactic relations between the imported lexicon and English elements, is in the Croatian version imbalanced. By overlooking the domestic inscriptions, the Croatian translation distances its readers from their meaning and disconnects the vernacular terms from their narrative context. On the other hand, the Indian variant, which is meant to be off-balance, is in Paić's version subjected to distillation. As a result, the cultural differences explicit at the linguistic level are made invisible to Croatian readers and peripheral to the central interests of the text. Contrastingly, the Czech translator considers both language codes of the English variant and selects the meaning which corresponds to Rushdie's loanwords. Even though Dominik retains different registers by using colloquial phrases and expressions, the Indian variant is lost.

Paić's version does not maintain a sufficient degree of lexicographical equivalence because the translator opts for an asymmetrical act of transmission. Her translation of the novel is conducted exclusively from the Anglophone perspective and thus joins the unilateral reading of the Indo-Anglian texts. As such, it is utterly incompatible with Rushdie's language collision. The oversimplified method of the transfer process contradicts the point Rushdie is making "in favour of a multilingual nation".[46] By applying code-mixing in his text, Rushdie enriches his narration with a sociopolitical density inexistent in previous Indo-Anglian forms and expands the characterisation of characters by developing new aspects of com-

44 Rushdie 1992: 64.
45 Rushdie 1992: 17.
46 Srivastava 2005: 228.

munication that are not confined to the anglicised upper-middle class.[47] The alternation of codes in *Midnight's Children* thus entirely corresponds to Kachru's definition of "language dependency", described as "role-dependant and function-dependant linguistic phenomenon".[48] Different variants of English (including its violated forms) used by Rushdie should therefore be visible in translation for they represent heterogeneous Indian society and engage in the political climate of the novel. As Langeland rightly remarks, Rushdie's language functions "as a textual reminder of the colonial past" and outlines aspects of contemporary Indian society after the colonial era has ended.[49] This explains Rushdie's preference for hybrid characters and oppositional standpoints they convey through a wide range of forms a language can take in the code-mixing process. In the Croatian and Czech translations, Hinglish lost its other half.

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47 On different registers in Rushdie's text, see Srivastava 2005: 221.

48 Kachru 1978: 29.

49 Langeland 1996: 17.

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This volume is dedicated to Maya Burger, professor emerita at the Faculty of Arts, University of Lausanne. It gathers contributions by friends, colleagues, and former students that echo the multiple dimensions of her work. Organised in four parts, Indology, History of Religions, History of Orientalism, and Hindi and Translation, these contributions explore different examples of encounters with "significant others". Analysing original historical and literary sources and reflecting on the methodological dimensions, the authors offer innovative perspectives on various processes of interaction and exchange between the Indian subcontinent and the wider world and within the subcontinent itself.