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Pre-modern Sanskrit Authors, Editors and Readers

Abstract: Fundamental assumptions in Sanskrit textual criticism hinge upon how we conceive of pre-modern Indian text production and transmission. Our information about these processes are highly deficient and theories about them must remain speculative. This paper will try to get hold of some hardly known actors in this process, as proof readers, or editors of literary bequests, through the traces left by them in pre-modern Kashmirian texts and manuscripts.

1   Introduction

After some decades of reading Sanskrit manuscripts, I noticed that two questions have regularly puzzled me. One is the fact that most manuscripts I could or wanted to read were not aesthetically or calligraphically pleasing, and the other is that many manuscripts were so full of errors that it makes one wonder how these texts were actually understood or used. In the case of the first, one is reminded of the astonishment of A. W. Schlegel who once mentioned that despite the fact that Indian artists were capable of such astounding masterpieces, one may—he once wrote—seek in Indian prints for everything but a straight line. But at that time Sanskrit printing in India had been practiced for merely a couple of decades. It may have to do with our search for uncommon texts, for which no one would have produced a calligraphic illuminated and aesthetically stunning apograph, that we usually do not encounter anything of the sort in our daily work. Often this perception has been distilled into a very critical view of the activities of Indian scribes. As always, there are exceptions to this, there are beautiful manuscripts, there is of course a Sanskrit calligraphy, and we now know more about scribal practices that show that there were sophisticated regional traditions.[1]

I would like to add that any attitude of Western hubris would be entirely out of place here. Some time ago it was found out that a long standing manuscript preservation project in Germany had used microfilms that are now already dissolving. Some of you may remember the scene in the movie by Quentin Tarantino *Inglorious Basterds*, when a cinema filled with Nazis burns down because the film

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1 See Bhattarai forthcoming.

roll catches fire. The latter phenomenon was in fact not uncommon. At that time films were made of something closely resembling the explosive TNT. They caught fire easily, in the worst case they exploded through mere shock. As a result historical copies of films from that era are now kept in archives designed to hold explosives, especially after a regular archive indeed exploded and burned down, because one film had direct contact with metal and suddenly ignited. The historical solution for this problem was the acetate film, which replaced the old material, but it has the disadvantage of disintegrating after some decades, first by exuding a smell of vinegar, then by crumbling into small pieces. This seems to be also the fate of the microfilms for 'preserving' much older manuscripts.

It is only by continuous reiteration of the fact that manuscripts in India had to be copied frequently because the material would not survive too long in the climate, that we tend to forget that no modern reproduction method has been able to reach the life span of Indian manuscripts. If we think of Gandhāra manuscripts the acid paper of the late 19th and early 20th century does not cut a good figure, the acetate film is still worse and digital media are more short-lived than any other medium. It enthuses only as long as we ignore the task of copying and converting. When that fails—as with the digital results of some academic projects that have run out of funding—the rate of loss is quite spectacular.

Coming back to the apparent bad shape of our manuscripts, we all know the text-book explanation for it, namely, that in India the *mukhasthavidyā* was triumphant over mere book learning, and that there were illiterate, uneducated or uninterested scribes, who counted their 32 syllables merely for the single reason that they were paid in units of *grantha*s. For Indian literati who had to read from such materials, this state of affairs was undoubtedly a nuisance, and their inevitable corrections are now populating the apparati critici of our editions. A practising editor grows accustomed to this state of affairs and thus may even become a little disinterested in the manuscripts themselves; precious and cherished, no doubt, for their texts, but not so much as material objects. No resistance to theory is needed to explain the fact that Sanskritists often do not care very much for the physical side of their sources, simply because it is difficult to explain why it would make sense to do so.

A similar development has taken place with anonymous literature, or literature about whose authors we know nothing but a name. We have almost stopped to ask the question, who wrote this, who copied a manuscript, who edited it, etc., simply because we do already know the answer in most cases: that we simply do not know and have no way of knowing it. This understandable attitude has not encouraged reflection on the roles of the author, of proof readers, editors, critics, readers and so forth.

All that is well-known and I mention it here, because when we do get a glimpse of such realia, we are confused by such concrete information beyond our expectation that we sometimes even fail to analyse it properly. In this article I shall try to interpret some such passages and investigate what they imply. In these passages we shall encounter editors, proof readers and individual readers, who are, as it turns out, also potential editors.

2 Authors

First, I would like to introduce one specialized but related topic, regarding which we have also been used to not noticing what we could call the realia around the texts. It is the vexed issue of the author's variant in textual criticism. In textual transmission we sometimes distinguish between variants introduced by scribes and variants that go back to the author. Our working hypothesis is that scribal variants are many and that they are of a lower quality, whereas the author's version is only one, and that it can be recognized through being the best variant. From modern philologies we know that authors often corrected and revised their texts. There may be a first print, a second edition and even a 'last hand edition'.[2] All of these go back to the author, of course there are errors by the printer but they might have been already corrected in the next edition. So why not print the last edition? This is not necessarily a good idea, because the editions that were read and reviewed are more interesting from the perspective of literary history, and these are usually the first, not the last editions. So even when we do have—unlike in Sanskrit editing—printed editions approved by the author, even his or her last will, it is difficult to edit such texts simply because we have all of them. Absurd as it may sound, we may be even forced to print a printer's error as the most authentic text.

To give you one telling example: There is a line in the opening of Goethe's *Faust*, surely one of the most-widely read pieces in German literature, where we simply do not know whether Goethe meant to say 'Mein Lied ertönt (my song sounds)', or 'Mein Leid ertönt (my suffering sounds)'. Since more man power has been spent in Germany on Goethe's works than on most of Indian Literature, this is by the way the only word in the whole work that is still in doubt.[3]

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2 'Edition letzter Hand', the last edition produced by the author himself.
3 Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Faust. Der Tragödie erster Teil*. Stuttgart: Reclam 1971. Editionsbericht, p. 141.

The line is: 'Mein Lied ertönt der unbekannten Menge', which is literally: 'My song sounds to the unknown crowd'. But in fact the first edition of Goethe's *Faust* printed 'Mein Leid (my suffering)', to which Goethe's secretary Riemer added a note in 1809[4] 'Leid lies: Lied', which may seem obviously correct in the context, because a song resounds rather than suffering. But Goethe never corrected the line, it first appeared in an edition produced by the same Riemer and Eckermann after the poet's death.

A second look shows that this reading is not so unlikely in the context:

Mein **Lied** ertönt der unbekannten Menge,
Ihr Beifall selbst macht meinem Herzen bang,
Und was sich sonst an meinem **Lied** erfreuet,
Wenn es noch lebt, irrt in der Welt zerstreuet.

My **verse** is sounded to the unknown throng.
Their very praise my heart must anxious sway;
And those to whom my **song** delight could give,
err on the world dispers'd, if they still live.[5]

Here you see that 'Lied' occurs once more. But are the arguments for or against a repetition weightier? And is the first reading 'Leid' not more accordant with the general tone of the verses? Some scholars have argued that 'Leid' is original, and that 'Lied' is a kind of *lectio facilior* and so forth.[6] The subsequent major editions until now print one or the other and are regularly followed by the lesser editions, as if this were a fashion choice. From 1903 in the jubilee edition we read 'Leid' for half a century, followed by almost all editions,[7] then the 'Akademie-Ausgabe' in 1958 prefers 'Lied' and this is what we read at school. One almost forgets that Goethe's contemporaries were not aware of a reading 'Lied'.

But the main question is of course: was it an oversight, or did the author in the end prefer what is actually, or came into being originally, as a mere type-setting error. If you imagine the mirror-inverted *ie* in front of the type-setter, you can see that it can be confused with *ei*, although traditional type-setters would surely have protested.

This is not the only example to show that the author is not necessarily the solution to the problem of variation, but sometimes its source. But the readiness to accept such interventions by the author and those working with him decreases

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4 Baumgart 1898, 171.

5 Translation by William Barnard Clarke (Freiburg 1865), p. 4.

6 Baumgart 1898, 171, 'unzweifelhaft die richtige Lesart'.

7 Thus, the Editionsbericht.

when we go back in history. Despite noteworthy exceptions the standard answer to the problem of the author's variant in antiquity, as we find in text-books for criticism, is that there are practically no author variants. It seems that many classical scholars expect a good writer to work like Horace told his pupil in his *Ars Poetica*, to publish only when the work has come to perfection, show it to no one before and never change your mind afterwards. Common sense, the fact that this admonition had to be given in the first place, and examples from modern philologies show that this may be an honoured rule, but not necessarily a wide-spread practice. Some authors may have worked without leaving any trace of the production of texts, but it would be quite naïve to assume that all or even most of them did. It would also be unrealistic to assume that textual transmission itself, the copying of texts, would naturally weed out those traces. The problem with this observation is that its practical application remains difficult. If we shout author variant any time we encounter a second convincing variant we need not even start editing.

There are further issues to be borne in mind for the following examples from Indian literature. We tend to think that pre-modern authors were necessarily the only ones involved in the production of texts: a man or woman, a reed pen and a palm-leaf. What about the Goethe scenario: the author composing and dictating to a scribe. Is that inconceivable in India? I think not.

Then there is a further unsolved problem: How did authors publish works? Were they copied only privately by those interested? Did authors give their works to a publishing, that is, copying house, was there a copy editor? Were copies produced only after completion of the work? Was there a second edition? Sanskritists might reject all these deliberations as inapplicable: for many works we do not know the author, how could we know the scribe, or the publisher, if there was one. So what is the point of asking all these questions, when we cannot answer them? My argument here is that without being aware of the questions and the implications of the answers, there is the danger that crucial evidence is overlooked, since its implications are not realised. For instance, if we know that the text was written down from the start, we need not, for that time and region, speculate too much about the orality of literature. If we can prove that the author continued to work on a text after publication we cannot rule out author variants easily.

One of the most interesting documents in this respect[8] is the last Sarga of Maṅkha's *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*, where the author describes how his work was read in the illustrious literary salon of the author's brother around the year 1144.[9] Those

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8 Some of the examples presented in this article are also discussed in Hanneder 2017.
9 See Slaje 2015.

present included his teacher Ruyyaka, Kalhaṇa and other well-known figures in Kashmirian literary history. Maṅkha describes the assembly, all the scholars and poets present, then he opens his manuscript of the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* (*vyastārayat pustakam* 25.142) and reads his text. The audience is absolutely delighted and he offers the work to Śiva.

We can infer at least two things from this account: (1) The main text was not an oral, but a written one. (2) If we regard this public recitation as a sort of publication, we can deduce that Maṅkha had worked on the text after publication, since he obviously added the last chapter, in which the *sabhā* is described. To regard this chapter as a literary fiction is I think unlikely because he would probably not make his contemporaries including his teacher part of such a fictitious meeting. The statement important for our topic is the following, it appears shortly before he introduces the participants individually:

> *santaḥ tādṛśāḥ santi gaṇitāḥ sūktibheṣajaṃ*
> *bhūṣaṇaṃ yaiḥ svavaiduṣyā*t *saujanyena vitanyate* (25.14)

> Such persons are counted as virtuous, who because of their learning and out of goodwill furnish [a poem] with embellishment in the form of the remedy for well-turned sayings.

The verse can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and I have tried to give a neutral rendering. The meaning given by Jonarāja in his succinct, but excellent commentary is much more specific. He says that *sūktibheṣajam* means the remedy for a Kāvya, in the present case for the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*, and that it consists of the removal of errors through the kind experts present at its first recitation: *yaiḥ sadbhiḥ sūkteḥ kāvyasya bheṣajaṃ doṣanivāraṇaṃ saujanyena hetunā svavaiduṣyād vitanyate.* If we then regard the context, in which the participants of the literary circle, who are about to hear the work of Maṅkha, are thus described, it would mean that these experts—please mind that the Ālaṃkārika Ruyyaka was among the listeners—were known or even expected to give hints and corrections to the author.

But if so, then the manuscript mentioned in the text to which these corrections were applied and the last Sarga added, would not have looked like an autograph, but like an exemplar that was corrected. Would all scribes know how to apply the changes and ignore the first version?

3 Editors

If this seems a far-fetched questioning of what is generally not problematised, I can assure you worse is yet to come. In one verse Somendra, who reports in his postscriptum to his father's *Avadānakalpalatā*, tells the startled readers that he had given the work to one *ācāryaḥ*:

> *yasya hastagataṃ sarvaśāstram āyāti śuddhatām*
> *ācāryaḥ so 'tra sūryaśrīr lipinyāsārtham arthita* (E.15)[10]

> We have asked Ācārya Sūryaśīr, in whose hands all Śāstra becomes pure, to commit the [text] to writing.

Now *śuddha*, when it comes to language and texts, means 'correct', often in the sense of grammatically correct. What Sūryaśī was credited for was not to produce a nicely written copy, but to purify the text of errors, in other words he acknowledges, as we would do in a book, the help of an editor.

So far, we have not done badly. It seems, we could open the door behind some texts a little and could get the impression that on the other side there are some hitherto unknown characters silently involved in the production of literature. My argument was that Sanskritists, frustrated by the paucity of sources that could illuminate this background of particular texts, failed to notice it, even when it was staring into their face.

One such failure is connected with the famous *Śivastotrāvalī* of Utpaladeva, which has been edited[11] and also translated a few times.[12] The *Śivastotrāvalī* is a collection of Stotras attributed to the author Utpaladeva, who lived in Kashmir two generations before Abhinavagupta around the middle of the 10th century. It is available in a number of manuscripts, often with a commentary by Kṣemarāja, who is the third in a line of religious transmission from the author.

A study of the manuscript material of this text has been made by Constantina Rhodes-Bailly.[13] She comes to the conclusion that 'there were no major variants in any of the manuscripts that I studied, and that the textual tradition of the *Śivasto-trāvalī* remained intact, without varying recensions.'[14] The actual variants, which include synonyms as for instance *śarīra* for *svarūpa*, are not reported by the editor

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10 See Formigatti 2005, p. 31.
11 In the following I refer to the text as edited by Rājānaka Lakṣmaṇa 1964.
12 Kotru 1985, Rhodes-Bailley 1987, Bonnet 1989.
13 Rhodes-Bailley 1987.
14 Rhodes-Bailley 1987, 3.

and the text of the first edition is made the basis. This is somewhat astonishing, since the edition of 1964 lists quite a few variants, also in the verses itself, and moreover the commentator Kṣemarāja himself mentions and comments upon variants readings.[15]

Rhodes-Bailley understands Utpaladeva's verses as a 'spiritual diary', and that we, the readers, are 'accompanying Utpala on the wanderings on a marvelous pilgrimage.'[16] In this context, the opening verse is interpreted as marking the 'outset of the journey',[17] the initial understanding. In other words, the interpretation of the work is biographical and it is at least implicitly suggested that the journey ends, when the accomplished devotee has become a *siddha*,[18] and this is at the very end of the work.

While I have no objections to such an interpretation in general, I am quite astonished that the presupposition that the Stotras are autobiographical and chronological is taken for granted. This is all the more astonishing, since no reader of the Sanskrit text can avoid being told by the commentator Kṣemarāja in clear terms that Utpaladeva is not really responsible for the form, in which his text appears:[19]

Īśvarapratyabhijñākāro vandyābhidhānaḥ śrīmadutpaladevācāryo 'smatparameṣṭhī satatasākṣātkṛta-svātmamaheśvaraḥ svaṃ rūpaṃ tathātvena parāmraṣṭum arthijanānujighṛkṣayā saṃgrahastotrajayastotrabhaktistotrāṇy āhnikastutisūktāni ca kānicin muktakāny eva babandha |

The author of the Īśvarapratyabhijñā, whose name we have to honour, the glorious teacher Utpaladeva, our parāmeṣṭi-[*guru*], who had realized his own self as Śiva for ever, composed a *saṃgrahastotra*,[20] a *jayastotra*[21] and a *bhaktistotra*,[22] the verses of an *āhnikastuti* and some single verses.[23] [He did so] to reflect on his own self as Śiva[24] in order to bestow grace on those approaching him.

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15 For instance, ad 18.7 and 19.4.
16 Rhodes-Bailley 1987, 2.
17 Ibid.
18 Rhodes-Bailley 1987, 23.
19 For the interpretation of this passage, see also Sanderson 2007, 399f.
20 Stotra 13 is called *Saṃgrahastotra* and Kṣemarāja gives a separate introduction for this.
21 The fourteenth Stotra in the *Śivastotrāvalī* is one such, since every line begins with the word *jaya*.
22 The fifteenth is called *bhaktistotra*.
23 Sanderson takes the last two together: 'also a number of single-verse poetic hymns for his daily devotions.'
24 *tathātvena* 'being thus'.

But then Kṣemarāja continues:

> *atha kadācit tāni eva tadvyāmiśrāni labdhvā śrīrāmaḥ (var. śrīrāmarājaḥ) ādityarājaś ca pṛthak*
> *pṛthak stotraśayyāyāṃ nyaveśayat |*

> When Śrīrāma and Ādityarāja acquired them, they were mixed up and they placed them sep-
> arately into Stotra compositions.

Two persons took care of the literary bequest of Utpaladeva, and they found his
verses in disarray, at least not as ready-made Stotras. So these verses were placed
separately into Stotras. In other words the mixed verses were arranged by the exe-
cutors of the literary bequest of Utpaladeva and it appears that Kṣemarāja, despite
living only few generations after the author, and in the same lineage, had no way
of cleaning up the transmission. The arrangement of the verses is not one conceived
of by the author, but by later redactors. If it reflects the author's spiritual biography,
then the credit must go to the medieval editors, who arranged the materials.

And finally the same applies to the names of these Stotras, as Kṣemarāja further
informs us:

> *śrīviśvāvarttas tu viṃśatyā stotraiḥ svātmotprekṣitanāmabhir vyavasthāpitavān iti kila śrūyate*

> But as has been handed down, Śrīviśvāvartta produced [from these] as twenty Stotras, the
> names of which he coined himself.

The editorial report by Kṣemarāja shows that no less than four persons were in-
volved in the redaction of the so-called *Śivastotrāvalī*: Rāma and Ādityarāja or-
dered the literary bequest into twenty groups, Viśvārtta named the resulting Sto-
tras and Kṣemarāja made sense of the collection by commenting on them in their
sequence. Neither the name of the text itself nor most of the names of Stotras are
original.

But Kṣemarāja is, apart from the parts he considers authentic—as for instance
the *Saṅgrahastotra*—, highly critical of the presentation of the transmitted text.
Already in the second verse he stumbles upon an incongruity, which he blames
on the redactor:

> *pūrvaśloke āmantraṇapadābhāvāt bhavadbhaktīti na saṅgatam eveti katham iyaṃ sto-*
> *traśayyeti śrīviśvāvarta eva praṣṭavyaḥ* (ad 1.2)

> Since there is no term of address in the previous [i.e. first] verse the phrase *bhavadbhakti-* is
> not appropriate. Viśvāvarta has to be asked how this can be a Stotra composition.

Viśvāvarta is criticized more frequently in the long commentary and Kṣemarāja acts like an elegant reviewer by combining polemics with restraint. After commenting on some *ślokas* he considers inappropriate he says (ad 17.49) that this disarray is due to the 'grace' (*prasāda*) of Viśvāvarta and that there are many more instances he, Kṣemarāja, did not disclose, since he wants to comment on the verses.

In one place Kṣemarāja even doubts the ascription to Utpaladeva for reasons of style.

Kvacid apy asadṛśaśailīdarśanād anārṣa ivāyam ślokas tathāpi vyākhyāyate (20.21)

Since the style is in some places different this verse is not authentic, I explain it nevertheless.

Kṣemarāja says he has been sparse with his criticism, but what we infer from his statements is this: he regards the status of the edition of his predecessors, which really is a new composition of fragments, as problematic. The verses were often not intended to be part of Stotras and to treat them as if they were does not do justice to the author.

But as we know from more recent examples, such cautionary remarks never work. A printed text almost invariably creates its own history. It seems that Kṣemarāja mentions the history of the text in such unusual detail to alert the reader to the nature of the text, to caution him that the author was not responsible for the arrangement. This would be what we would expect from modern editors as well, but it seems that while we find such text-critical awareness a millennium ago in Kashmir, it is much harder to find it nowadays.

4 Readers

Up to now we have seen that a number of persons may have been involved in the production of texts even before scribes could add transmissional variants. But what would the function of the scribe actually be? It would no doubt differ considerably. Even if we do not know much about the context of manuscript production we know one thing. There was probably no market distribution for the texts Indologists typically read. It was more likely a copy on demand system. When Ranbir Singh of Kashmir sent scribes into the Srinagar archives to have many manuscripts transcribed into Nagari script, the collection which is now in Jammu, they were working for a royal library. But in other scenarios an individual, the future reader, would borrow a manuscript and have it copied. The copy then would be proof-read, maybe also by the later owner by comparing it with the original. Thus the owner and reader

potentially had much more influence on the product than in a modern publication scenario, but this as we all know has been changing rapidly. In 19th-century book-production the reader was left with no more than choosing the binding, whereas in the 20th century you could only individualize your books with your *ex libris* or if you write into them. Nowadays you have web-based printers who will produce simple or luxury versions of whatever scans you send them.

Bearing this in mind, it seems that the owners of manuscripts become very much part of the process of transmission, not, as in our modern view, passive recipients. The question would therefore not only be whether a manuscript was more correct or more faulty, but to whom it belonged, that is, who wrote or commissioned or corrected it. In some cases these people differed, in others they were one person. In such cases the reader was safeguarding the integrity of the text, by comparing it with the source etc., not so much the people producing the copy.

But how do we know about the activity of owners of manuscripts? I quote a case where the owner somehow makes his appearance through the variants he has produced. The following passage is from an unpublished ritual manual ascribed to Sāhib Kaul, the *Śyāmāpaddhati*,[25] written perhaps in the mid-17th century. It gives the mantras to be employed for the meditation on or worship of the gurus of one's lineage. For the present purpose I need not give much context. After the completion of one ritual action, the adept has to recite one *mūla-mantra* of the Śrīvidyā, then follows the passage under consideration, where the adept has to worship the sandals of his Guru. The text up to the *iti* has to be recited.

> *oṃ aiṃ hrīṃ śrīm hasakhaphreṃ /*
> *hasarakṣamalavaraya ūṃ /*
> *sahakhaphreṃ sahakṣamalavarayaūṃ /*
> *hsauṃḥ shauṃḥ śrīmacchrīvidyādharakaulānandanāthaśrīpādukāṃ*
> *śrībhavānyāṃbāśrīpādukāṃ pūjayāmi namaḥ /*
> *iti daśadhā vimṛśya manasā daṇḍapraṇāmaṃ kuryāt /*

An editor publishing the text from one manuscript would not have to change anything. But let us look at the middle portion in a second manuscript:

> *hsauṃḥ shauṃḥ śrīmacchryamukakaulānandanāthaśrīpādukāṃ*
> *śryamukāṃbāśrīpādukām pūjayāmi namaḥ /*

Now it seems that Bhavānī was like Vidyādhara a personal name. If we know that initiation names for Śrīvidyā initiates end in *-ānandanātha* for men and deduce

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25 For details see my forthcoming edition of the works of Sāhib Kaul.

from the text that those of the spouses or tantric consorts end in *-ambā*, then the text gives the impression that it was the personal copy of someone whose tantric gurus bore those names. It was in other words an individualized prayer book. Naturally every such personal copy had to differ.

Before asking how one should edit such a text, we might first ask how such a text was copied for someone else. In a living tradition reproducing individual names of Gurus would not make any sense unless your guru's name was Prakāśānanda. One would have to indicate that this is to be filled in with one's own data. In one of the two manuscripts just quoted there is exactly such a correction and the corrected text reads as follows:

> *hsauṃḥ shauṃḥ śrīmacchryamukakaulānandanāthaśrīpādukāṃ*
> *śryamukāṃbāśrīpādukām pūjayāmi namaḥ /*

In fact, this is not so much a correction in the sense of the word, but a preparation of the manuscript for general reproduction. Here a personal copy used for one's daily ritual was turned into one for copying, possibly by the owner himself.

5 Dīlārāma, a reader, scribe and editor

My last example is one manuscript that highlights the activities of scribes vividly. It is Ms. Stein Or. g.1, kept in the Bodleian Library, a multiple-text manuscript containing several texts of Sāhib Kaul and his pupils or followers.

2r–2v	*Sahajārcanaṣaṣṭikā* 20b–24d (single folio that fits in the gap between fols 39 and 40)
11v–34r	*Citsphārasārādvaya*
35v	*Saccidānandakandalī* 1–4c
36r–48v	*Sahajārcanaṣaṣṭikā* 3–62
48v–58v	*Svātmabodha*
–119r	Kashmiri texts
120	Postscriptum by Dīlārāma Kaula, partly Sanskrit, partly Kashmiri
134v–135r	verses ascribed to Sudarśana Kaul, Sadānanda Kaul, Cidrūpa Kaul
135v	Saccidānanda Kaul
136r	verses ascribed to Sāhib Kaul
137r	verses ascribed to Sudarśana Kaul

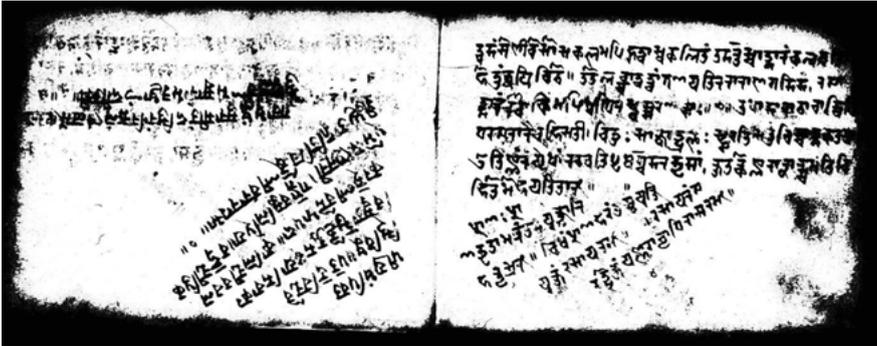At first sight the manuscript is not particularly nicely written or arranged.

Fig. 1: Ms. Stein Or. g.1, fol. 6v–7r, kept in the Bodleian Library.

The pages are written on from all sides, it gives the impression of having been a sort of notebook with fragments of texts added. There is also a peculiarity in the manuscript which I have not yet encountered elsewhere. Many of the pages are covered with blue floral motives, against which the black ink is quite difficult to read. For an editor in the nineties the manuscript for that very reason was a nightmare, because it was impossible to read in a black and white microfilm copy.
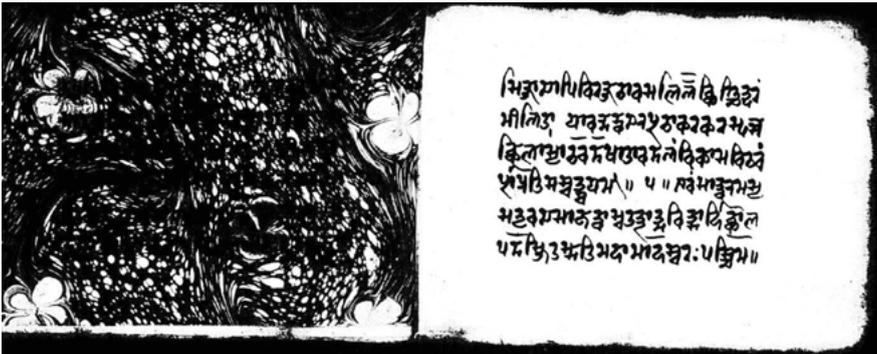

Fig. 2: Ms. Stein Or. g.1, fol. 12v–13r (= 2v–3r), kept in the Bodleian Library.

This is the same page processed through a filter, giving one the feeling of having recovered a palimpsest.
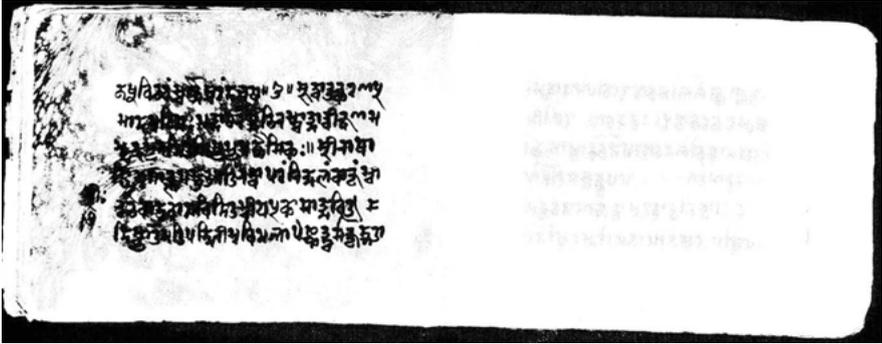
Fig. 3: Ms. Stein Or. g.1, fol. 12v–13r (= 2v–3r), kept in the Bodleian Library.

The manuscript was written by Dīlārāma Kaul who says on folio 130 *mayādīlārā-makaulena likhitam*. Presumably he was also the author of a personal statement added near the beginning of the manuscript.
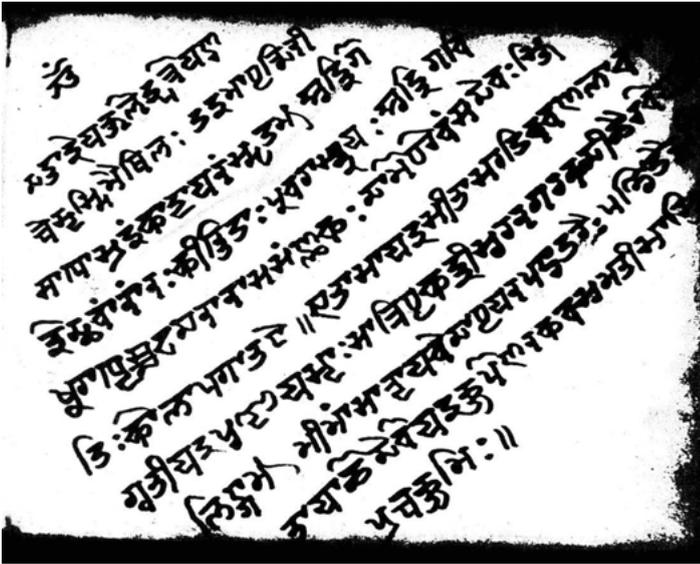

Fig. 4: Ms. Stein Or. g.1, fol. 10r, kept in the Bodleian Library.

> *dattātreyakulotpannaḥ yajurvedy asmimaithilaḥ*
> *tatra mādhyandinī śākhā sūtraṃ kātyāyanam smṛtam*

Dīlārāma here states that he is a *maithila*, which of course does not imply that he was born there, but that his ancestry lies in Mithila, as he proudly says in the next verses, the land of Janaka, famous for scholars in Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya etc. and gives his Vedic affiliation.[26]

When I encountered this piece of information searching for Sāhib Kaul's works I had no idea about its impact, so I showed it to my supervisor at the time, Alexis Sanderson, for whom it turned out to be one of the arguments to reconstruct the history of the Kashmirian Kaul clan. The Kauls of Kashmir were really Mithila Brahmins who had migrated to Kashmir and brought East-Indian Śāktism with them, which merged with older Kashmirian cults,[27] a fact that serves to explain some later developments of Śaivism in Kashmir.

But the scribe Dīlārāma, apart from accidentally supporting historical research, aimed at collecting scattered pieces of Sāhib Kaul's Stotras and verses, some of which are written on the blank pages between texts. Then there are works of disciples of Sāhib Kaul, mostly Guru-stotras directed to their teacher, and there are other similar collections in manuscripts. It seems these booklets were used for collecting and storing works connected to one famous author, and were the places to add all sorts of additional information, in the case of Sāhib Kaul even the etymology of his name. The owners of such manuscripts most likely were far more than readers, they were collectors, and—in a next step—could become potential editors.

I was hoping that with this you would be reminded of our first example, that of the edition of the Stotras of Utpaladeva, which were in fact single verses posthumously arranged and named by editors. In fact, our own modern approach would not be too different, we would collect the Muktakas and publish them together, some might even invent names for these pseudo-Stotras. But if such a collection was made by previous generations nearer to the author, we might argue, for instance, and in good text-critical company with Bédier and others, that the received text merits editing like it is, we would only add a note about the history of the collection and the contribution of intervening generations. This seems to be exactly what Kṣemarāja intended to do, when exposing the history of the collection as he received it. In this he proves to be more of a sound textual critic than some modern translators.

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26 Sanderson 2003–2004, 363.
27 Sanderson 2007, 433.

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