Development and spread of the Rāma narrative (pre-modern)

deposited by John Brockington
and Mary Brockington

This material is part of a continuing attempt to survey presentations of the Rāma story as it has been developed from its origin in the so-called Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, through transformations in all genres, media, languages, religions and geographical areas, up to approximately the end of the eighteenth century. The nature of the sources, however, makes it impossible to comply rigidly with such an arbitrary cut-off date; later material has also been used if it preserves motifs or records trends relevant to the earlier period, but not where it introduces new developments. In an attempt to explore the crucial role played by sculpture and paintings in the transmission and development of the narrative in largely pre-literate societies, we have placed visual material side-by-side with verbal (narratives presented in words, whether written or spoken).

The basis for the survey is: a Bibliographic inventory providing references to everything of value consulted, and a list of the authors’ own publications; a detailed tabulation of the Narrative Elements employed and modified by successive tellers to build up the story; background Notes and photographs; and unpublished Drafts surveying the material or arising from it. Guidance Notes give detailed instructions for use.

The material is a joint project: John has compiled the Bibliographies, composed the Draft on Development (with input from Mary) and many of the notes, and taken the photographs; Mary has identified and tabulated the Narrative Elements, and supplied some of the Drafts and other notes.

The material presented here is far from complete, and we hope to be able to update it from time to time, and to produce further analyses and syntheses of the material. From the nature of its wide scope, much of the compilation has had to be made from translations into the major European languages, or from summaries found in secondary literature, resulting in the omission of material inaccessible by these means; regrettably, we also have no way of knowing whether the translation or summary used has been totally reliable. Where possible, users should always check carefully before placing too much reliance on it. Both compilers will warmly welcome any corrections or supplementary information from scholars specialising in individual fields.

With all its deficiencies, we offer this inventory to scholars in the hope that it may provide a tool to facilitate further research, not as a substitute for such research, and will be pleased to learn of any use to which our work has been put.